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## Sculpture gives shape to URI quadrangle

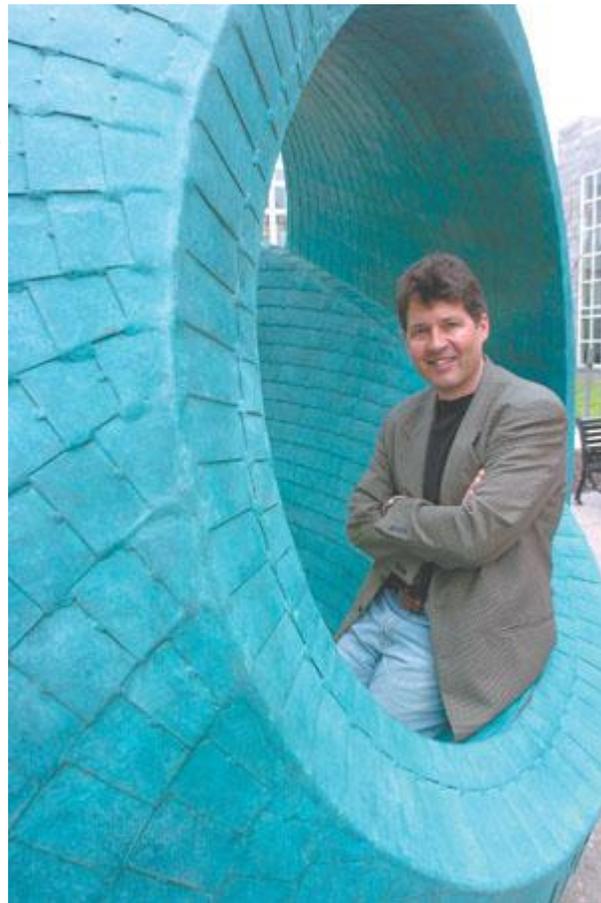
By Doug Norris/Features Editor

KINGSTON - Jamestown artist Peter Diepenbrock's 14-foot bronze sculpture, "Torsion III," is a relative newcomer to the boxy, granite-dominated quadrangle at the University of Rhode Island's Kingston Campus. But its dynamic, spiraling, twisting shape has already caught the attention of students and faculty, some of whom have imagined it as an abstraction of ram's horns.

Diepenbrock, in a ceremony honoring him for the work held on April 26, said lightheartedly that he had paid attention to the sculpture's connection to the school's mascot.

"The ram reference I was aware of 'cause when you're doing these competitions you do everything you possibly can, so I looked at the ram and the curl and the shape and I was thinking of that," he joked, to a laughing audience in public remarks that were posted on YouTube. "I'm glad that was recognized."

Diepenbrock's sculpture was installed outside Lippitt Hall last September. The sculpture was commissioned as part of the state's 1% for Public Art Program, which is administered by the R.I. State Council on the Arts. The program allocates a portion of all state construction funding to provide artwork for new and renovated buildings. Its goal, according to public law 42-



Jamestown artist Peter Diepenbrock poses with his sculpture "Torsion III" last month outside Lippitt Hall at the University of Rhode Island's Kingston Campus. The sculpture was commissioned as part of the state's 1% for Public Art Program, administered through the R.I. State Council on the Arts. (Photo by Selena Millard)

75.2-2 is to create a more humane environment, one of distinction, enjoyment and pride for all Rhode Islanders.

"I do think that objects can carry individual metaphors," Diepenbrock said. "Now there's a few all wrapped into one in this shape."

"Torsion III' is one of series of works he has created exploring the idea that if you have equal opposing forces on an object, you get a twist.

"In some respects I think that's representative of what academics and reality is, sort of, there's a wrestling match there between theory and applied reality, and that's a part of being in the real world and the academic world. So there's tension."

Diepenbrock said that another metaphor is one of passage - in particular, passage as a threshold.

"The university experience for most students is something you pass through," he said. "You spend some time there and then you move on. It provides protection. So there's a shelter in this passage. The shelter is sort of what the university also does. It kind of protects you for a number of years to think without the pressures of reality. You can kind of theorize and explore and discover. That's wonderful, and there's a real gift that comes from that, and that's a special time."

Diepenbrock added that sometimes he begins by considering shape but more often he contemplates the particular use of a material and a way of connecting pieces of it into a coherent whole.

"I tend to be obsessive," he said. "I guess 'cause I like to choose things that I can repeat by the thousands and somehow they sort of transcend their individual nature and they become something bigger than that. It's sort of a reference to cellular growth - the idea of one little thing repeated again and again becomes something that's quite independent of the little part."

The practical aspect of that, Diepenbrock continued, is that the sculpture is something he can build by himself, although in this case he was assisted by a high school senior, who primarily did the grinding and - together with the artist - spent 600 hours fabricating.

"So, with little effort, by using little pieces, you can make a big object," Diepenbrock said. "I didn't have very sophisticated equipment. It was pretty much things I could bend and lift by myself. So in some ways pretty literally this is a 4,000-pound sculpture that was made 6 ounces at a time."

The artist summed up with musings to students and faculty about how to have a vision, emphasizing that "the process of developing a vision is a process, and I think it's something you can teach, I think it's something that can be explored and studied."

Goals are important, he stressed, in helping people achieve vision. The big picture is often realized through a sequence of little picture moments.

"I think that there's a way to use the metaphor of making sculpture to making a life," he said. "And so that would be the idea...if you spend some time in reflection - and a university context is certainly helpful for that - and then define that vision and then set about achieving the vision. It can take your whole lifetime, and it can take a lot of little steps, and it simply needs to take a lot of little steps. Doesn't need to be big steps. It can be a phone call. Spending 15 minutes at a particular desk if you're a writer and writing. If you're a dimensional maker of things, find a spot and go there every day and spend some time thinking. And I think it can apply to pretty much any profession - the idea of have the big vision, take the little steps and just get to work."

[Editor's note: This article is a significantly expanded, revised and corrected version of an article that appeared in the May 6 print edition of The Independent, in which the artist was misquoted.]