

Paul 2006

Tony Tasset (American, b. 1960)
painted fiberglass over steel frame
Commissioned by the Art-in-Architecture Program,
Capital Development Board, State of Illinois
Collection of the Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park
2006.01

Tony Tasset earned degrees from the Art Academy of Cincinnati and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He lives and works in Chicago, Illinois.

Tasset has explored photography, painting, sculpture, and installation work by turns, always maintaining a sly sense of humor as he subtly critiques the business of art and the dominant culture – even while conceding he’s part of it. **Paul** is a breakthrough artwork for the artist, in that it is his first monumental, figurative piece. Since its installation, he has created at least one more oversized work: a fiberglass human eyeball 12’ in diameter installed at the Laumeier Sculpture Park in St. Louis in 2007.

Of **Paul**, Tasset has written (in part):
“Paul is my portrait of this American moment. The traditional tall tale of Paul Bunyan is an allegory

of American optimism, power, and consequence. This Paul is a traditional icon projected into current time. Paul has been forced to grow up”

Tasset freely admits to mining popular culture sources, **“Paul contributes to a tradition of vernacular sculpture making. There are over fifty sculptures of Paul Bunyan across America dating back to 1930. The style of this Paul was inspired by sources ranging from Michelangelo to Walt Disney, as well as by the fading roadside attractions that dot rural America.”**

Like many artists before him, Tasset has embedded art historical references in his composition. The face and beard of his Paul Bunyan bear a remarkable affinity with the **Moses** created by Renaissance sculptor Michelangelo Buonarrotti in 1515 for Pope Julius II’s tomb.