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## Before “Eye,” There Was “Paul”

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**For Immediate Release****Before "Eye," There Was "Paul"**

University Park, Illinois, August 5, 2010 - Artist Tony Tasset's towering depiction of iconic woodsman Paul Bunyan made its debut in 2006 at Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park (NMSP) at Governors State University. "Paul" is one of 26 pieces, many by masters of contemporary sculpture, in NMSP's permanent collection.

Since its unveiling this summer, Tasset's "Eye" has quickly become one of Chicago's most talked-about pieces of public art. "Eye" is on display at Pritzker Park, State and Van Buren streets, though October. The Chicago Loop Alliance, the gargantuan eye's sponsor, says it is likely to become a destination for persons who live or work in the Loop, or are visiting Chicago's downtown area. Critics have already asked if it will be seen as an "eye-con" or eyesore.

Anyone who enjoys Tasset's State Street sculpture should consider a trip to the NMSP to experience another of his larger-than-life figures, and the other masterworks in the park's collection.

"Paul" was seen as a breakthrough work for Tasset, who has also explored artistic media such as photography and painting. It was his first monumental, figurative piece. The sculpture was commissioned by the Percent for Art Program of the State of Illinois Capital Development Board, a program that aims to display the work of promising young Illinois artists.

Both "Paul" and "Eye" are constructed of painted fiberglass over a steel frame. They are the same height – about 30 feet – and were fabricated by F.A.S. T. (Fiberglass Animals Shapes and Trademarks) Corp. of Sparta, WI.

The two pieces also share a whimsical quality. After all, how are we to react to a three-story eyeball staring down a street lined with stores and restaurants? Shock? Laughter? Or, perhaps, to sense we are trapped in a cheesy horror movie?

Meanwhile, "Paul" shows a version of a mythical American hero we've never seen before. With graying beard and stooped back, he is no longer a young folk hero. He looks weary; it's clear that after years of cutting down entire forests, his ax has gotten much too heavy.

"Paul is my portrait of this American moment," Tasset wrote of his sculpture. "The traditional tall tale of Paul Bunyan is an allegory of American optimism, power, and consequence. This Paul is a traditional icon projected onto current time. Paul has been forced to grow up."

The Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park is located at Governors State University's main campus in University Park. The park is free of charge and open from dawn to dusk 365 days a year. For more information about the sculpture park, visit [www.govst.edu/sculpture](http://www.govst.edu/sculpture) or call (708) 534-4486.