

---

Tony Tasset

---

All Things Must Pass

---

Laumeier Sculpture Park

---



---

# Tony Tasset

---

## All Things Must Pass

---

Organized by Laumeier Sculpture Park

---

Laumeier Sculpture Park would like to give special recognition to Crown Vision Center for their support of this exhibition. Special thanks are also due to Tony Tasset for producing an excellent exhibition and for bringing fresh, thoughtful dialogue to the world of contemporary art. Further thanks go to Anthony Elms for the exceptional, thoughtful and insightful essay about the exhibition.

**Support for this exhibition provided by:** Regional Arts Commission, Arts & Education Council, Missouri Arts Council, Mark Twain Laumeier Fund, Cowles Charitable Trust, Crown Vision Center, Friends of Laumeier Sculpture Park, St. Louis County Parks, and by the Aronson Endowed Chair for Modern + Contemporary Art, UM-St. Louis.

This publication was produced on the occasion of the exhibition *All Things Must Pass*  
Essay by Anthony Elms Cover: Tony Tasset, *Eye*, 2007

---

**EXHIBITION DATES** October 5, 2007 to January 13, 2008

---

### acknowledgements

It is a great pleasure to be able to present the exhibition *Tony Tasset, All Things Must Pass*, at Laumeier Sculpture Park. The installation shares a sampling of the artist's work from over a 10-year period and references the passage of time in both direct and indirect ways. The catalogue essay by Anthony Elms speaks to a complex overlay of meaning in the show and pulls out individual works that together underscore darkness and light as viewed through a lens of time.

For the exhibition, Tasset created a large-scale outdoor sculpture titled *Eye* – a 12 foot diameter, hand-painted sphere – that will soon be the newest addition to Laumeier's permanent collection. I want to convey my congratulations and thanks to Tony Tasset for producing such a compelling exhibition and for making a fantastic new outdoor sculpture for Laumeier Sculpture Park. My thanks and admiration goes to Kim Humphries, Director of Installations and Collections Management, for proposing the Tasset show and for realizing it in such a thoughtful way.

I want to thank Laumeier's Board of Directors for all of their contributions that make the institution a sustainable community asset and an organization of international significance. Thanks also to the entire Laumeier staff for the ongoing teamwork and commitment to the institutional vision that sets Laumeier in motion each day. Laumeier Sculpture Park is fortunate to have many generous patrons who provide ongoing support in wonderful ways. I wish to acknowledge them here for their unflagging believe in Laumeier's programs and mission.

Thanks to Anthony Elms for sharing his perspective on Tasset's work and for his contribution to the catalogue. Special thanks to the Collection of Peter Norton, Santa Monica; Bard College, Center for Curatorial Studies, Annandale-on-Hudson; and Beth Rudin De Woody, Chicago; for their support in lending important works to the exhibition.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and everyone at Laumeier I would like to extend extra special thanks to the Regional Arts Commission, the Arts and Education Council of St. Louis, the Missouri Arts Council, Crown Vision Center, the Mark Twain Laumeier Fund, University of Missouri, St. Louis, Aronson Endowed Chair, St. Louis County Parks, Laumeier's docent corps, volunteers, friends, and student ambassadors for the amazing support you provide individually and collectively each day.

**Glen Gentele**, Director, Laumeier Sculpture Park and  
Aronson Professor for Modern + Contemporary Art, UM-St. Louis



Hard Rain, 2007

---

## All Things Must Pass

---

"Is this the generation stuff that you hear about all the time? What's going on anyway? Am I part of the old folks now? Is Dylan?" <sup>1</sup>

Before getting ahead of ourselves, let's back up. From his earliest "domestic abstractions" with animal hides, through the "comfortable abstractions" bench sculptures, the "display sculptures" with vitrines and bubble wrap and such, and through to the most recent works viewed here, Tony Tasset has been finding form in simple touches. He has fabricated, photographed, molded, carved and cast, or as we begin here, patted. *Mud Pies*, dumb, simple, just enough effort to have basic shape, plant a flag, or rather two twigs and a feather. Sculpture starts here, gesture, touch, and form. Greed takes over, or maybe narcissism, you pat more and more, one mud pie becomes two mud pies becomes seventeen mud pies—an assembly line begets a horde begets a territory to be surveyed. Who will survey? *The Eye*, an eye, a child's eye, a photograph of Tasset's son; Henry's eye in close up becomes a youthful perceiving subject to decadence. The decadence of a day spent playing in the mud, or a different decadence, one loosely based in the crypt located under Santa Maria della Concezione. More later.

The most obviously visible aspect of Tasset's touch is the appeal to populism and giving the audience what it wants. For Tony, that means realism and entertainment. He deals in veracity (yes, he really peed his pants). A time or two the likenesses are faked—the *Mud Pies* are not made of mud, *Rotting Jack O'Lantern* is painted bronze, and *Grotto* is plaster—but even then, his objects aim to look exactly like their real world referent. He has little time for high culture/low culture dichotomies, or ideas like anthropomorphism. When Tasset deals in the abstract, he'll look for the practical angle, as anyone might, "here's a convenient place to rest my hat." Like *Abstraction with Hat*. His abstract always has a story, and amusing anecdotes are always a way to humor the audience and a sure-fire way to win friends.

"...I often feel that all my work is one big story." <sup>2</sup>

"One big story." This exhibition is titled after George Harrison's 1970 triple LP *All Things Must Pass*. Certainly the air of melancholy in the phrase—all things must pass—connects with the waxing and waning in many of the works exhibited, *My Parents*, *I Am UR Me*, *In My Room*, *Rotting Jack O'Lantern*, *Grotto*, *I Peed My Pants*, and *Capuchine Chandelier*. But this story is older than 1970, maybe 1960, when Tasset was born. Family recurs in Tasset's work from 1994 on. *Hard Rain*, *I Am UR Me*, *In My Room*, *I Peed My Pants*, *My Parents* and *The Eye* here representing just a brief sampling of the works that look at himself and his closest relations: father, mother, wife, son. A gentle heartfelt sentiment pervades, driven by a desire to publicly present those who hold meaning for Tasset. The source of love, anxiety, care, fear and hope. They are touching. These works occupy places from which to watch age, generational and gender differences, a familiar smile or the pleasantness of a moment with a loved one. Temptation requests we dismiss this dopey impulse as a blatant case of middle class white-male narcissism. But do you recall,



**Snowman, 2006**

"the personal is political"? Another view recognizes that in a Postmodern world of shifting ideologies and competing value structures, why care about anything if everything is relative? More directly: everything is relative. Pun intended, Freudian slip avoided.

*Hard Rain*, a collaboration with photographer Melanie Schiff, is the latest to feature son Henry, here made-up in reference to the 1976 live album *Hard Rain* by Bob Dylan. The quotation is not exact, the Dylan image allows room for his unruly hair and is monochrome sepia, the image by Schiff and Tasset is cropped tighter and is full color; Dylan looks over his shoulder, Henry is in three-quarter view; Dylan's head tilted down, Henry's defiantly juts upward; Dylan's face betrays a rundown weariness, Henry's a standoff gruffness; Dylan's face is stained with white face-paint; Henry's face is also whitened, but one eye is red and one eye blue. The original album cover reads as psychic exhaustion, the remake as patriotic bruise.

Looking at this photograph in relation to other recent works, Tasset's "one big story" more accurately begins in 1963, when "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" appears on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. The song is famous for its darkly biblical visionary lyrics that seemed to perfectly capture a time of protest, social upheaval and fear of atomic war. Fast-forward to 1976, the Vietnam War has finally ended a year earlier. The album *Hard Rain*, funny enough, doesn't include the song, but recordings from the same tour, Dylan's infamous Rolling Thunder Revue, feature fanatically up-tempo performances of "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" that transform the song from apocalyptic lament to brimstone screed. As Dylan spits out the lines, his gruff howl unmistakably steers toward the politically outraged spatter of Joe Strummer in U.K. punk group The Clash, formed the same year (their first show is July 4th no less). One of their first songs is "I'm So Bored With the U.S.A." In the moribund seventies protest cedes the floor to embittered rage. Fast-forward to 2006, three years into yet another lingering, inconclusive war; Schiff and Tasset make *Hard Rain*, Dylan is one of Tony's favorite performers and Henry has a punk band. Vietnam is to "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" and *Hard Rain* (the album) as Iraq is to *Hard Rain* (the photograph). Nothing's changed except the speed of exhaustion.

As populist as Tasset's sources are, lately he refuses to shirk from the shadows they readily cast: age, shock, decay and loss. He will also capture the bizarre shadows, as with the alarmist *Snowman* frozen in tragic-comic holler. In a conversation on *Grotto*, Tasset described wanting to make a "memorial that acknowledged the violence." A populist memorial not rooted in the generalized minimalism that has become the de facto form for public mourning, instead a memorial that with readily available imagery alludes to the violent urge that necessitated the memorial in the first place. Memorials of this nature would capture an ethics, say the ability to tell right from wrong, important from trivial, caring from cauterizing, ridiculous from horrified. Several works in *All Things Must Pass* fit this description: the aforementioned *Snowman*, as well as *Hard Rain*, *I Peed My Pants*, *Rotting Jack O'Lantern*, and *Capuchine Chandelier*.

On a trip to Italy Tasset's family visits the seventeenth century Santa Maria della Concezione in Rome. Under this church a crypt features the remains of over 4,000 Capuchin monks formed into Rococo decorative motifs. *Capuchine Chandelier*, with skull baubles and spinal column armature recalls the beautiful skeletal ornamentation of



Capuchine Chandelier, 2007

this ossuary. Macabre and imposing, in its first installation, at VONZWECK in Chicago, *Capuchine Chandelier* struck a massive presence in the tiny room, the candle lights falling at chest height, the looming fixture overwhelmed, pushing visitors to the walls. It was both an object and an ending to be avoided at all costs. At Laumeier it hangs at a height more appropriate but it is no less unnerving and you still want to keep a safe distance. The question returns: At what cost? For some, if riches afford the extravagance, they make their glamour decadent in every sense of the word. By any measure the path lit by *Capuchine Chandelier* is a costly one, upwardly mobile affect, netherworldly effect. It is worth quoting Thelonius Monk, from the unattributed epigraph to Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day*: "It's always night, or we wouldn't need light." The peculiar thing is, *Capuchine Chandelier* illuminates with darkness, offering a grim view.

*Eye*, a monumental blue eyeball, stands perched upon the landscape. Ridiculously large, this oversized organ of sight certainly sees farther than our mortal peepers. Is it the Masonic Eye of Providence? Is it the unblinking eye of God? Does *Eye* judge? Is it young or old? "Oh, what did you see, my blue-eyed son?" Placed on watch in Saint Louis early fall, 2007, let us ask what this ocular witness in the expanded field has perceived.

I saw a newborn baby with wild wolves all around it

I saw a highway of diamonds with nobody on it,

I saw a black branch with blood that kept drippin',

I saw a room full of men with their hammers a-bleedin',

I saw a white ladder all covered with water,

I saw ten thousand talkers whose tongues were all broken,

I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children,

And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard,

And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sam Shepard, *Rolling Thunder Logbook*. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2004, 128

<sup>2</sup> Stuart Horodner, "Interview with Tony Tasset" in *Tony Tasset: Better Me*. Normal: University Galleries of Illinois State University, 2003, 29.

<sup>3</sup> Bob Dylan, "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," Special Rider Music, 1963.



*I Am UR Me*, 1998, and *Abstraction with Hat*, 1994. Above: *I Am UR Me*



Left to right: *Grotto*, 2005; *My Parents*, 1994; and *Rotting Jack O'Lantern*, 2006 (also above)



Left: *I Peed My Pants*, 1994  
Above: *My Parents*, 1994



*In My Room*, 2000

## artist bio

Tony Tasset emerged as an influential conceptual artist in the mid 1980's. The artist is a professor at the University of Illinois Chicago in the College of Architecture and the Arts, and was a 2006 recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in the Arts.

## education

1985 M.F.A., The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL.  
1983 B.F.A., The Art Academy of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH.  
1983 Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.

## selected solo exhibitions

2007 *All Things Must Pass*, Laumeier Sculpture Park, St. Louis, MO  
2006 *Frownland*, von Zweck Gallery, Chicago, IL  
2003 *Better Me*, University Galleries, Illinois State University, Normal, IL. (catalogue)  
Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Portland, OR.  
2002 Feigen Contemporary, New York, NY.  
2001 *Judy*, Donald Young Gallery, Chicago, IL.  
Christopher Grimes Gallery, Santa Monica, CA.  
2000 Feigen Contemporary, New York, NY.  
*Tony Tasset: As It Is*, The Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, OH.  
1998 *Tony Tasset*, Institute of Visual Arts, Milwaukee, WI

## selected group exhibitions

2007 *Sympathy for the Devil: Art and Rock and Roll Since 1967*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago  
*Into me, out of me*, MACRO Future, Rome  
2006 *INTO ME / OUT OF ME*, Kunst-Werke Berlin e.V. - KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin  
*Into me / Out of me*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, NYC, NY  
*The Subverted Object*, UBU Gallery, NYC, NY  
*Painting As a Way of Living*, Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, Istanbul  
*Figures in the Field: Figurative Sculpture and Abstract Painting from Chicago Collections*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL.  
2005 *Situation Comedy: Humor in Recent Art*, Independent Curators International, New York, NY; The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu, Hawaii; The Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, IL; Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, FL.  
*25 Years: Selected Solo Exhibitions*, Baumgartner, Gallery, New York, NY.

## collections

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL.  
The Baltimore Museum, Baltimore, MA.  
David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Pittsburgh, PA.

Goldblatt's Building, City of Chicago, Chicago, IL.  
Institute for Genomic Biology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL.  
Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA.  
Museum Fur Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany.  
Nathan J. Manilow Sculpture Park, University Park, IL.  
The San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco, CA.

## exhibition list | Tony Tasset | All Things Must Pass

### gallery 1

*Capuchine Chandelier*, 2007, plastic, stain, wire, steel, lamps; 40 x 40 x 30"  
*The Eye*, 2000, Cibachrome; 48 x 60"  
*Mud Pies*, 2007, gypsum plaster, acrylic, aluminum, resin, brass, plastic, dye, silk; 18 x 32 x 32"

### gallery 2

*Abstraction with Hat*, 1994, cast bronze, hat; 44 x 36 x 34." Collection of Peter Norton, Santa Monica  
*I Am UR Me*, 1998, video, :30 loop with sound

### gallery 3

*I Peed My Pants*, 1994, Cibachrome; 83.25 x 38.25." Collection of Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. Gift of Peter Norton  
*Rotting Jack O'Lantern*, 2006, oil paint on bronze; 10 x 10 3/4" x 11 1/2". Loan courtesy of Beth Rudin De Woody  
*My Parents*, 1994, Cibachrome; 52 x 72"  
*Grotto*, 2005, plaster, wood, acrylic paint, candles; 86 x 52 x 50"

### gallery 4

*Snowman*, 2006, polystyrene, resin, steel, brass, acrylic and oil paint; 48 x 85 x 30"

### gallery 5.1

*Hard Rain*, 2007, digital C print; 12 x 12;" photograph made in collaboration with Melanie Schiff

### gallery 5.2

*In My Room*, 2000, video, 4:48, silent

## outdoor gallery

*Eye*, 2007, fiberglass, resin, oil paint, steel; 144 x 144 x 144"

All works by Tony Tasset are courtesy of the artist unless otherwise noted



*The Eye, 2000  
and Mud Pies, 2007*

---

## Tony Tasset | All Things Must Pass

---

Published by Laumeier Sculpture Park, St. Louis  
12580 Rott Road, St. Louis, MO 63127  
314.821.1209 [www.laumeier.org](http://www.laumeier.org)

ISBN #978-0-940337-19-0

©2007 Laumeier Sculpture Park

### 2007 Laumeier Sculpture Park Board of Directors

Nancy Kranzberg and Kenneth Kranzberg, *Co-Chairs*

Judith S. Aronson, Ph.D. *Vice-Chair*, Sheldon K. Stock *Vice-Chair*

Joan Abrahamson, Grace Brod, Judy Champ, Lawrence Cohn, Carol Crouppen, Barbara Eagleton, Alison Ferring, Georgia Frontiere, Barbara Gervais, Susan Goldstein, Edna Gravenhorst, Karl Grice, Lise Herren, Kathleen Higgins, Barry Horn, Nina McVey, Kim Miller, Lawrence E. Mooney, Dorte Probststein, May Reay, Marc Scher, David Schlafly, Pat Schuchard, Frank H. Schwaiger, Mary Ann Srenco, Kenneth B. Steinback, Sissy Thomas, Andrew Trivers, Robert Williams, Jr., John Wuest, Patricia Wycoff

*Ex-officio: Glen Gentele, Jody Bailey, Jahn Epstein, Lindsey Swanick*

### 2007 St. Louis County Council

Charlie A. Dooley *St. Louis County Executive*

Hazel Erby *District 1*, Kathleen Burkett *District 2*, Colleen Wasinger *District 3*, Michael O'Mara *District 4*, Barbara Fraser *District 5*, John Campisi *District 6*, Greg Quinn *District 7*


### Laumeier Sculpture Park

Glen Gentele *Director + Aronson-Endowed Professor for Modern + Contemporary Art, UM-St. Louis*

Nancy Bender *Volunteer Coordinator*, Bill Briggs *Operations Supervisor*, Clara Collins Coleman *Curator of Interpretation*, Jennifer Duncan *Deputy Director*, Robert Goetz *Exhibitions Preparator*, Kim Humphries *Director of Installations and Collections Management*, J.D. Magurany *Cultural Site Manager*, Karen Mullen *Curator of Education*, Julia Norton *Administrative Coordinator*, Marie Oberkirsch *Development Associate*, Mary Ruskin *Accounting Director*, Jennie Swanson *Museum Services Coordinator*, Mike Venso *Director of Communications*, B.J. Vogt *Assistant Preparator*, Joy Wright *Librarian*

Laumeier Sculpture Park partners with St. Louis County in the development, operation and preservation of this unique cultural institution.

**Catalog information** This catalog was printed by Stolze Printing, St. Louis, on Topkote 78# cover and 110# text, using the Helvetica Neue font family. All photos by Mike Venso. Distribution through the inter-library exchange program. Call 314.821.1209 extension 17 for more information.



ISBN #978-0-940337-19-0

**Laumeiersculpturepark**  
ST. LOUIS