Paul Manship's *Prometheus* and Rockefeller Center

Rockefeller Center, New York's "city within a city," is a complex of twenty-one buildings located in Midtown Manhattan. The Center was developed by philanthropist John D. Rockefeller Jr. in the 1930s at the height of the Great Depression. The original core thirteen buildings are grouped around the seventy-story tower located at 30 Rockefeller Plaza. In addition to the various cultural events that take place in the open spaces that are part of Rockefeller Center, the public artwork contributed greatly to its iconic status. The artwork was commissioned around the themes of the New Frontier and The March of Civilization. Despite the overall modern design of the architecture, many of the artworks feature mythological and classical iconography. In particular, Paul Manship's *Prometheus* and the *Atlas* statue of Lee Lawrie and Rene Chambellan were some of the first artworks commissioned and dedicated in the 1930s as the buildings were still being constructed and depict overt mythological gods. The artworks in the promenade and on the central axis in line with 30 Rockefeller Plaza also feature mythological iconography. The mythologically-inspired artworks are thus in the most important locations and are central to understanding the entire art program and Rockefeller Jr.'s legacy. Their location and their effect on the visitor is an example of the principles of the City Beautiful movement. This paper will analyze *Prometheus* and its critical reception in the context of Rockefeller Jr.'s intentions for Rockefeller Center and the City Beautiful movement. In addition, a careful analysis of the iconography of *Prometheus* reveals a meaningful syncretization of different elements from the Prometheus myth.