



Art pieces created for the Taubman, stolen and recovered in NYC



By Caitlin Francis | Posted: Tue 5:31 PM, Jun 13, 2017

ROANOKE, Va. (WDBJ7) An artist based in New York City is here in Roanoke installing pieces for an exhibit at the Taubman.

But his road to get here, was filled with unexpected twists and turns, and ended up taking flight.

Paul Villinski is hard at work preparing for the opening of his exhibit at the Taubman, and nothing goes unnoticed, from the lighting, down to the placement on each of these butterflies' wings.

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But one big thing was missing.

“We parked the truck outside the studio with the idea that we’d get in early Sunday morning, get in, drive down here and start installing, and I came out Sunday morning to get into the truck and it was gone,” Villinski said.

The rental truck had a piece Paul calls “Flower Bomber,” a to-scale replica of a WWII B-25 he created specifically to hang in the atrium of the Taubman.

The truck with “Flower Bomber” and four other pieces had been stolen.

“People steal them and they load them up with debris, construction debris, or old tires, stuff they want to get rid of, and then they abandon it,” he said.

Which is exactly what happened. The truck was located with 300 tires stacked floor to ceiling. The art, still in the truck.

“It looks like things are worse for wear but it doesn’t look like anything is catastrophically damaged.”

“Flower Bomber” will be installed in February, 2018. And in the meantime, Paul came up with a replacement piece which has been installed for this exhibition.

“14 beautiful works, half of the exhibition is original works created for the Taubman Museum of Art,” said Della Watkins, Taubman Museum.

And appropriately, a theme in his work is turning negatives into positives.

“I’m kind of interested in creative expression that is based in some kind of loss or pain or despair or darkness, and tries to take that and turn it around into an expression of hope,” Villinski said.

For Paul, that creative expression takes flight, and takes form in birds and butterflies.

“We all want to leave our earthly concerns behind, and take wing, and soar above it all.”

This exhibition, a 25-year mid-career retrospective, will be on display at the Taubman until January. Paul Villinski will be speaking to the public about his work at the museum this Thursday at 6:30 p.m. He’s hoping the average person takes away a sense of possibility.

He’ll be back in August to hold a community workshop where people can create their own birds to display in the Taubman, and then take home after the exhibition ends.