

# THE ROANOKE TIMES

## 'Flower Bomber' no longer MIA

By Mike Allen

The saga of stolen artwork that plagued a Taubman Museum of Art exhibition has a happy ending.

New York artist Paul Villinski created “Flower Bomber,” a 30-foot wide replica of a B-25 bomber, for the Taubman’s atrium.

Saturday, the artist loaded “Flower Bomber” and three other sculptures into a rental truck parked outside his Long Island City studio. Sunday, he discovered the truck had been stolen.

Thursday, the museum hung a similar work by Villinski in the atrium — “Passage,” a 33-foot-wide sculpture modeled on a 1950s-era glider.

Friday, a representative from Penske Truck Rental called Villinski with the news that the missing truck had turned up in Brooklyn. The company located it using OnStar.

A photo sent to the artist by Penske showed the trailer loaded with tires. Villinski said police told him it’s common in New York for trucks to be stolen and loaded with tires or construction debris and then abandoned, a form of illegal dumping.

A second set of photos from Penske shows that when workers unloaded the tires, they found all of Villinski’s artwork, strapped in place exactly as he’d left it. The fiberglass sections of “Flower Bomber” are scuffed up from having tires piled on them but otherwise intact.

“I’m really, really thrilled and happy,” Villinski said. “It’s really miraculous to me.”

Taubman officials plan to keep “Passage” in the atrium through January, then replace it with “Flower Bomber” in February. Villinski said he’s considering leaving some of the damage to “Flower Bomber” visible. “It might become part of the history of the piece.”