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Artwork that took unexpected detour arrives at Taubman

By Mike Allen on February 8, 2018



Paul Villinski's sculpture "Flower Bomber," designed for the Taubman Museum of Art atrium, has at last arrived in Roanoke.

The 700-pound fiberglass replica of a World War II-era B25 Bomber hung beneath the Taubman skylight Thursday as Villinski stood on a lift to adjust some of the silvery flowers spilling out from its open bomb bay doors. About 3,000 more of those "flowers," made from aluminum cans collected from the New York streets, lay on the atrium floor, the implication being they dropped from the plane.

"The idea of dropping stuff from airplanes goes back to my childhood," said Villinski, 57. His father was a navigator who served in Vietnam, and the artist is a trained pilot himself. With "Flower Bomber," he said, "I think the message is really quite clear. ... I'm just trying to take the image of a tool of

Paul Villinski intended the structure inside the translucent fiberglass of "Flower Bomber" to complement the architecture of the atrium at the Taubman Museum of Art.

warfare and turn it on its head. What if we carpet bombed in a different way?"

Originally scheduled to debut in June, the artwork went on an unplanned road trip when the rental truck that contained it was stolen from outside Villinski's Long Island City studio. About a week later, the truck was recovered, and the sculpture, buried under a stack of tires, was still intact. A different sculpture by Villinski, "Passage," hung in the atrium through January.

"Flower Bomber" will stay on display through July 2020. His accompanying gallery show in the museum, "Farther," has been extended through July 15.

Villinski wasn't able to fully assemble "Flower Bomber" in his studio. "I'm really seeing the piece for the first time," he said. "It's a huge treat for me to finally have it here."