

MORGAN LEHMAN

Paul Villinski

Now

Special exhibition at
High Line Nine
507 W. 27th Street, Gallery #4
Ground Floor beneath the High Line

April 30 – May 31, 2019
Opening Reception: Thursday, May 2, 6 – 8
Closing Book Signing: Thursday, May 30, 6 – 8



Morgan Lehman Gallery is very pleased to present *Paul Villinski: Now*, a dramatic survey of works by this long-time New York City artist, in conjunction with the launch of a new monograph which chronicles three decades of the artist's work. The immersive, 270-page monograph published by Vivant Books features insightful essays by eleven noted critics, curators, and authors, and will be available for purchase at the opening and closing events. A book signing and conversation between the artist and scholar Lisa Freiman will also take place at the Museum of Arts and Design on Wednesday, May 15 at 6:30pm.

For over 30 years, Villinski has engaged in a studio practice rooted in what he has termed, "simply alchemy," the transformation of the mundane into the magical, the humble into the revelatory. Employing an array of found materials including cotton gloves, leather belts, crushed aluminum beer cans, and more recently live butterflies and kitchen knives, the artist creates assemblage sculpture that makes reference to the utilitarian purpose of these constituent parts while simultaneously pointing to larger, more universal themes about being a person in the world. The artist's hand is revealed not in the making of marks or carving of forms, but in the coaxing of raw materials from the landscape of daily life into new allegorical constructs, full of poetic charge and beauty.

Villinski's work often addresses highly personal themes: growing up as an Air Force brat inspired a fascination with the culture and metaphors of aviation; he later found a sense of purpose in the progressive politics, naturalism, and environmental leanings of Southern Maine. Through his art, Villinski has also reconciled his own experiences of addiction and recovery. Despite the specificity and personal nature of many of these concerns, his work has broad-ranging implications and visual impact, establishing itself quickly through a gestalt of sophisticated accessibility and seduction, drawing viewers in and then inviting them to think deeply about what, in fact, they are looking at.

Underlying all the works in the exhibition is an interest in what it means to transform, whereby cans become butterflies, belts become blankets, and knives become wings. In this sense, Villinski's works ultimately exude a palpable optimism, one that speaks to our ability to adapt, to locate meaning and unearth beauty, and to become new.

Paul Villinski was born in York, Maine in 1960 and has lived and worked in New York City since 1982. He has a BFA with honors from the Cooper Union. Villinski's work has been widely shown, including solo exhibitions at the Taubman Museum (Roanoke, VA) and the Blanton Museum (Austin, TX), and group exhibitions at the Bellevue Museum of Arts (WA), The New Museum (NYC), and the Museum of Arts and Design (NYC). Recent public works include "SkyCycles," at the Ocean Breeze facility in Staten Island through the New York City Percent for Art Program, and "Dream Desk," commissioned by the City of New Haven Percent for Art Program for the East Rock Magnet School. Villinski's work is in the public collections of the Museum of Arts and Design (NYC), the New Orleans Museum of Art (LA), the Blanton Museum, and Miami International Airport. Corporate collections include Fidelity Investments, Microsoft, Progressive Insurance, ADP, New York Life, Ritz-Carlton, and many others. The artist has been a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts grant, and has been an Artist-in-Residence at the Serenbe Institute (GA), Socrates Sculpture Park (NYC), the Millay Colony (Austerlitz, NY). Villinski's work has been the subject of publications including ARTnews, Artforum, Art in America, Sculpture Magazine, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post, and many others.

Paul Villinski, *Lepidopterist*, steel, aluminum (found cans), stainless steel wire, soot, 44h x 26w x 9 3/4d inches, 2017