

Art takes flight at the McNay

By Lea Thompson
lea@laprensasa.com

Beer cans, discarded records and rusted metal may sound like a trash collection to some, but for Brooklyn-based artist Paul Villinski it means a new source of beauty.

In “Burst,” his newest art installation, Villinski has managed to transform some of these discarded materials into a flock of colorful bird sculptures now on display at the McNay Art Museum.

“I’m very engaged in that idea of transformation, taking things that seem to be worthless and turn it into something that has meaning and beauty,” Villinski added.

Although Villinski began his career as a painter, he has become well known for his sculptures and art installations, which often deal with themes of flight.

“Flight is always something

that has really interested me. As an artist, I’m stunned that there are so few artists that work with images of flight, because it permeates culture; it permeates popular culture and pop music,” Villinski said.

A self-described “frustrated musician,” Villinski has combined the artistic and musical themes of his generation to represent the humanitarian and environmental ideals he grew up with.

Villinski formed these three-dimensional bird sculptures using his childhood LP records. A closer look at the sculptures will show the music of artists like Elton John, Fleetwood Mac and Joni Mitchell who embodied the music culture.

“You could point at any one of these albums and there’s some allusion to flight in the lyrics. Its theme is really present in a lot of music, but it’s hardly been explored in visual art,” Villinski

said.

“These are the ideas of the musical artists I loved growing up, that really shaped me, are taking flight, and moving out into the world and dispersing itself widely,” Villinski added.

Villinski repurposes and recycles his materials to give new life and meaning to his art. He began creating bird sculptures after Hurricane Katrina in 2008, making “Burst” the third project in his series of bird-related art installations.

“I feel that we have enough stuff in the world already, we’re surrounded by stuff, the last thing I want to do is make more stuff. The alternative is to take this stuff that is basically headed for the landfill and try to transform that, give it new life,” Villinski said.

Villinski’s “Burst” exhibit will remain on display in the AT&T lobby of the McNay Museum until July 2015.



Artist Paul Villinski hangs the bird sculptures for his new “Burst” exhibit, now on display in the AT&T lobby at the McNay Art Museum. (Photo, Lea Thompson)