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WEEKEND

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

FINE ART | By Lance Esplund

# Soaring Heights

## Paul Villinski: Passage

■ Morgan Lehman Gallery  
535 W. 22nd St., sixth floor  
(212) 268-6699  
Through Oct. 15

Artistic obsession—with a particular subject, motif, material or tradition—is often an artist's primary motivator. Some artworks mask or sublimate impulses; others, such as the homegrown sculptures of Paul Villinski, give personal passions full rein.

Mr. Villinski, a glider pilot and record collector, explores themes from his life, including music and flight; and recycled materials, such as audio paraphernalia, musical instruments, discarded wood and aluminum cans.

The butterfly—thousands of which he has individually fashioned and hand-cut from vinyl records and from flattened cans—is his principal subject. In the backroom of Morgan Lehman, dozens of aluminum butterflies, lyric and delicate, blackened by candle soot, emerge like a genie's smoke from out of a cello and an electric guitar and spiral across gallery walls.

For the main gallery of this exhibition, Mr. Villinski has

created another of his recurring objects, the wood glider. "Passage" (2011), made of refurbished materials, is suspended from the ceiling and has a wingspan of 33 feet. Surrounding the plane is a black swarm of 1,000 aluminum butterflies, which appear, in turns, to thwart and power the unmanned aircraft.

Overtly literal yet Hitchcockian, a nightmare and a metaphor for liberation, "Passage" succeeds more as craft than as sculpture. Embraced, however, as Mr. Villinski's fantastical obsession, it takes flight.



Hiro Ithara

Paul Villinski's 'Passage' at the Morgan Lehman Gallery