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## This ought to be a real smasher



Emily Wobb's senior thesis involves dropping a full-size minivan replica from a height of 150 feet from a crane.

By [Eric Heyl](#)

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Any time you can obtain college credit for destroying something by dropping it from a crane, you should seize the opportunity.

Emily Wobb is about to do some seizing. To say the Carnegie Mellon University art major's senior thesis is unorthodox is an understatement.

Wobb is not preparing some narcoleptic treatise on, say, Appalachian attitudes toward camels as reliable means of transportation. She's preparing a public display of destruction, a re-creation of some ruins and, hopefully, a thoughtful but not morbid

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### About Eric Heyl

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contemplation of death.

Free barbecue also is involved.

"I want to create a spectacular, exciting event," said Wobb, 22, of Oakland, who specializes in sculpture and installation. "I'm trying to make this really absurd spectacle."

The spectacle will occur April 25 in the Wayne Bluming Crane Service and Tree Removal Co. storage lot in Robinson. A hint of what will transpire can be found in the title of Wobb's project, funded in part by a grant from CMU's Frank-Ratchye Studio for Creative Inquiry.

The work is called "Minivan Drop: A Thesis from Pieces."

Wobb is building a full-sized upholstered replica of a minivan that will be videotaped as a crane lifts it 150 feet before releasing it, undoubtedly smashing the thing to smithereens.

"After the minivan is broken and we all celebrate its demise, I'm going to take the pieces and rebuild the sculpture into a couch for the senior thesis show the following week," she said. "The minivan couch will be sitting in front of a 57-inch rear-projection TV, and the viewer can sit and watch the video of the minivan drop over and over again while sitting back in comfort on the original sculpture."

Repeatedly viewing the drop would appeal to fans of monster truck rallies, but what's the draw for fans of conceptual art?

"The minivan's an icon," Wobb explained. "By destroying one by way of an event and then presenting the performance in a mock living room setting, I'm trying to start a conversation about the American fascination with the spectacle of death where there is a comfortable detachment."

Oh.

The barbecue volunteers plan to serve to those who attend the minivan drop aren't meant to inspire meditations on mortality. Wobb said she wants to create a tailgating atmosphere, "something that you'd find outside a NASCAR race."

Bluming said the replica minivan drop is the most unusual request he's had in more than a decade in the crane and tree-removal business.

"I've never dropped anything (from a crane) before, accidentally or on purpose," he said, adding with a chuckle: "That's some strange (stuff) there."

Be it creative triumph, strange (stuff), or some combo, Wobb is looking past this project to artistry of even greater ambition.

"One of these days," she said, "I'd really like to try this with a helicopter."

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