



March 25, 2012

**CLEVELAND**, ohio -- Artist Dave Cole from Providence, R.I., teaches old machines new tricks.

For the national debut of his “Music Box” installation, opening Friday at the Cleveland Institute of Art, Cole turned a vintage 1980s CAT Model CS-553 smooth drum vibrator soil compactor, donated by Ohio CAT President Ken Taylor, into a colossal music box.

When a viewer’s presence triggers a sensor in the gallery, the contraption plays the opening melody of “The Star Spangled Banner.”

Commissioned by the art institute, the work communicates everything from the notion of steamrolling political opponents with aggressive patriotism to the idea that prosaic machines can be repurposed for poetic uses.

What’s less obvious is that to squeeze the compactor into the school’s Reinberger Galleries, Cole had to reduce its weight from 11 tons to 1 ton and carve it into roughly 35 individual pieces, each of which could fit through standard double doors in the building.

Here’s a closer look at how Cole, 36, got the job done:

1. Cole visited the Musical Wonder House in Wiscasset, Maine, to study traditional music-box construction. He then created a giant music box on the front end of the compactor with machined steel tines mounted on brass plates attached to a resonating chamber made of varnished cherry wood.
2. Cole removed the original 2-inch-thick steel arms from the compactor, weighing 1,600 pounds apiece, and replaced them with hollow sheet-metal replicas.
3. A motor drives a 19th-century pulley attached to a thick leather belt, which turns the big drum.
4. The original CAT logo remains.
5. Cole fabricated new engine housing plates, missing from the original machine, and “stressed” them with chains, torches and other tools to make them look old.
6. Seams and bolts throughout the piece indicate how it can be disassembled and moved in pieces.
7. Ghostly decals indicate that the compactor once belonged to McAllister Construction Co. Inc. in Yardley, Pa., and Titusville, N.J.
8. Cole removed the entire engine from the machine, cutting its height substantially.

