

# IN HOUSE

MAY 2010

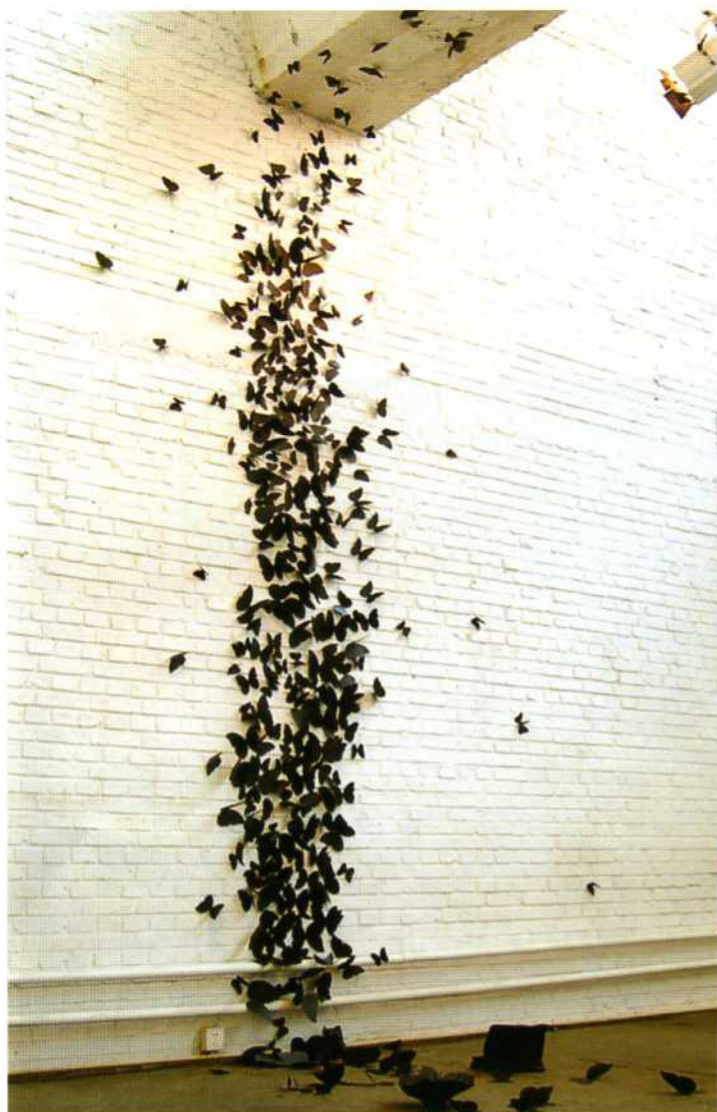




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Every year the aforementioned butterflies travel 400 kilometres to reach their breeding grounds north of the island. Dyer envisaged 400 butterflies defecting from the migrating swarm to EAST in Hong Kong. "It's playful in that here is this amazing event and here we are in Hong Kong, an incredibly built, man-made environment, and nature has broken through and actually entered this space, and sent them here so that they may be able to take over the space as well and have some engagement," says Dyer.

The orange hue of the butterflies she has chosen is in tune with the identity of the hotel. "The signature of EAST is reflected through the butterflies and through the space," adds the artist. This is the first time Dyer has added any colour to her butterflies, as in past exhibitions they have always been black. "I have been doing work with black butterflies for projects which are related with the nature of ephemerality, transitions, the way we are in no fixed place."

Dyer's fascination with the tiny winged creatures which she always depicts in flight, movement and transit, began when she was invited to create a piece of art for a museum in Sydney, Australia. The museum was the former home of Governor Macleay who oversaw early colonial life in Australia during the early 1800s. He was also an eccentric and amateur entomologist and he had one special room - the largest in his mansion - devoted to his 4,000 books on butterflies and a butterfly collection. "It was the largest number of books that came to Australia then, which had a developed indigenous culture but not a white culture at that stage," notes Dyer.



**S**wire Hotels' new property EAST, has some permanent guests of the butterfly variety perched above the bar at Feast, the hotel's main restaurant. Perhaps they're having a drink to take the edge off after a long trip from whence they came. At least that's part of the premise behind Australian artist Jayne Dyer's installation - except maybe for the drinking bit. Butterflies are in a constant state of flux, transition and migration, themes that the hotel's business traveller guests can easily identify with.

"The idea is that the butterflies take you to the bar and to Feast to eat, from downstairs on the ground level. The orange butterflies are perched at the ceiling level of the ground floor and then when people come to the first level they appear to be coming from the floor, then skirting across walls and finally resting at the bar," explains the affable artist who had been up all night coordinating the installation.

If it's butterflies you want, Dyer is most certainly the person to call on because they have been a recurring motif throughout her career. Her proposal for the installation at EAST was entitled the 'Butterfly Effect', which refers to the theory that when a butterfly flutters its wings in one location, the slight changes in the atmosphere it causes can greatly alter or impact an environment thousands of miles away. With this in mind, she has taken the Spring migration of millions of butterflies that cross the North-South Freeway in Taiwan as a point of reference for her installation.



"We are in Hong Kong an incredibly built, man-made environment, and nature has broken through and has actually entered this space."

'The Library of Forgetting', Elizabeth Bay House Museum, Sydney



Artist in Residence, Lingnan University, Hong Kong

Macleay eventually went bankrupt and his entire collection of butterflies and books were dispersed to different collections or simply got lost. In 2007, Dyer thought it was time to bring them back and created an installation of 4,000 black butterflies in the space. "That started a real interest in the idea of the power of this symbol which I then took into other projects that I've done in different parts of the world. Every country has a story about this idea of transition through the butterfly." Dyer believes that for Hong Kong it also represents hope and luck.

The artist, much like the subjects of her installation at EAST, is also in transition and has made a new home for herself in Beijing. "I've always travelled extensively for projects but something about Beijing hit me between the eyes. Having lived and completed some projects there, I realised that what in fact was a city in transition, was actually a city I needed to keep going back too. I then took leave from my university in Sydney because I was doing some projects in Beijing for a year with the intention of returning to Australia, but I simply didn't want too, so I stayed and it's been two years since I've been living there as a full-time artist."

It's impossible for Dyer to contain fascination for butterflies as she derives endless meaning and symbolism from them. "Transitory, mysterious and fugitive, butterflies represent change and rebirth. A Native American legend says that if you have a secret wish, capture a butterfly and whisper it your wish. On releasing the butterfly the secret is safe and the wish will be granted," she adds, ever ready to further discuss the fluttery objects of her affection.