

Arch of Monarches

Have you ever heard about monarch butterfly migration? Some of you may have seen it with your own eyes. I haven't, but as soon as I heard about it, the breath-taking phenomena caught me right away. Imagine tens of millions of monarch butterflies gathering to spend winter in a very specific forest in Mexico. They travel up to 2,500 miles from Canada (and America) to Mexico. I dream to see it with my own eyes someday. But I learned that this amazing phenomena is in danger. The monarch butterfly itself is not an endangered species, but the migration population is quickly decreasing. Scientists said that climate change and the loss of habitat may be to blame.

If you get close to my paper monarch butterflies, you will see some print underneath the ink. The butterflies are made of recycled paper. They used to be copy paper, old documents, random notes, drafts of my artworks, leaflets, postcards, news paper, and so on. The world paper consumption is increasing each year. I measured how much paper I used during a month and was surprised to find that it weighted almost 10 pounds all together. I thought I was cautious not to waste any resources, especially paper. I was stunned. Yes, I use a lot of paper for my art, but my daily usage of paper was much greater. I tried to carry a hand towel, so I didn't need paper towels. I tried. Unfortunately, I often forgot. I ended up using them - one or two sheets a day, and it accumulated a small pile in a month. It quickly adds up to rolls and rolls of paper towels a year. Suddenly, I saw a mountain of waste paper in an innocent sheet of paper towel.

A small thing doesn't seem to impact anything. A sheet of paper or a butterfly is such a small thing, but if it comes in a large quantity, the meaning shifts. One day, I painted carrots and added a Japanese beetle as a charm. Another time, I painted a tree branch covered with Japanese beetles. This time it was not a charm anymore, they were vermin. It is the same Japanese beetle, but the quantity changes everything. Even though the monarch migration is an amazing phenomenon and Monarchs are one of the most beautiful butterflies, the overwhelming amount of butterflies may give you the creeps.

Of course, giving you the creeps is not my intention. I created the installation because I think it is beautiful. I believe that beauty is not refined.. Unlike an angel, we human beings are both good- and bad-natured, and probably something in between. That's why you are beautiful. That's why I am interested in you. The beauty consists different elements. If we purify and extract only beauty, it may not be as beautiful as original. Sounds tricky? I tackle the question every time I create artworks. I am trying to reshape the beauty I find in nature to share and celebrate the simple joy of experiencing it. Just as the beauty of a monarch butterfly led me to learn more about environmental concerns, I hope that my paper monarch butterflies will do the same and eventually help to bring these issues to the table.