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INSIDEOUT

Cayman's Home & Garden Magazine

A flutter of butterflies

WHIMSICAL ART INSTALLATION CREATES BEAUTY OUT OF TRASH.

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Almost the entire interior wall of a house in the Cayman Islands has been covered in beautiful blue butterflies by renowned New York City artist Paul Villinski.

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Famed for his work transforming salvaged soda and beer cans into replicas of different species of butterflies, Paul created the art installation during a two-day visit in October 2018.

The design spans approximately 25 feet and includes 160 butterflies, which were delivered by international courier prior to his arrival on Grand Cayman.

Each insect is made from metal cans picked up by homeless people on the streets of New York, with many of the butterflies bearing textures of aluminum crushed by car wheels.

“I have a relationship with Sure We Can, a reclamation center started and staffed by homeless ‘canners’ in Bushwick, Brooklyn,” says Paul. “We had to convince the canners to collect the crushed cans, as these cans can’t be redeemed for deposit, and are truly worthless. I pay the canners more than the going-rate for the cans and have donated an installation, which is in the facility.”

The dainty and delightful butterflies have been painted a deep hue, often referred to as Yves Klein Blue – a color created by the celebrated post World War II French artist of that name.

This bold pigmentation complements the myriad blue shades of the sea and sky, which are framed by the glass doors adjacent to the butterfly wall.

Paul, who hadn’t visited the island prior to working on the commission, took inspiration from photographs of the water, and direction from the homeowner that she wanted “something with waves.”

In the resulting installation, the butterflies are configured in undulating lines, ascending the wall.

“I created the work on the spot,” says Paul, whose work can be commissioned through the Jonathan Ferrara Gallery in New Orleans.



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A career-artist, Paul made his first butterfly in 1994 during a transformative period in his life, and since then he has made hundreds of thousands of the replica insects.

Paul's works are shown in museums and galleries across the United States and are much sought-after by private collectors. He has also undertaken many major public-works commissions.

