



Contact: Katrina Carl  
(805) 884-6430  
[kcarl@sbma.net](mailto:kcarl@sbma.net)



Diana Thater, *Untitled Videowall (Butterflies)*, 2008 (Installation View). Museum purchase with Suzette Morton Davidson Art Acquisition Endowment Fund. Photo credit: Fredrik Nilsen.

***Diana Thater Video Installation Marks Museum Debut...  
and Return of the Monarch Butterfly to the Central Coast***

October 24, 2009 – January 31, 2010

October 13, 2009 – The ***Santa Barbara Museum of Art*** announces an exhibition by internationally recognized film and video pioneer, Diana Thater. Titled ***Diana Thater: Butterflies and Other People*** the exhibition features two recent video installations that render the gallery space as landscape, utilizing the existing architecture of two Museum galleries to create color- and light-saturated environments and projections.

***Diana Thater*** describes her work as Neo-Structuralist Installation, a reference to Structural Film of the 1960s that has informed her own work and, along with performance art, is one of the major foundations of video art. Through a variety of techniques, including “the erased video rectangle, upturned monitors, and oddly placed equipment, all as choreography,” states the artist, “I create sculpture with images of nature in space.” The natural world has been a recurring motif in Thater’s work since the early 1990s, bringing the outdoors into the gallery, and addressing the relationship between modern technology and notions of beauty and the sublime. Through devices such as interrupting and dissolving the surrounding architecture with projections, and filtering natural and existing light sources through colored gels, the viewer is surrounded by the work, thus becoming part of it. [excerpts from ***Re-titled*** fall 2008]

The first work in the exhibition, ***Untitled Videowall (Butterflies)*** (2008), arises from the ***Monarch Butterfly Project*** of 2006-2008—Thater’s response to an invitation by three curators in Mexico City to make an artwork drawing attention to the threats to the butterfly’s winter home in Michoacán, Mexico. This multi-monitor piece shows footage of the migratory resting place on six flat-screen monitors that rest on the floor. The placement of the monitors reflect the position of the butterflies upon Thater’s arrival—thriving on the forest floor due in part to the increasing lack of forest foliage (where they normally take refuge). The presentation at SBMA represents the museum debut of this work and coincides with the peak season of the Coronado Butterfly Preserve in Goleta.



Left image: Diana Thater, *Pafat Devotion Two* 2005 (Installation View, Haunch of Venison, London, 2005).  
Right image: Diana Thater, *Pafat Devotion Two* (2005), 35mm Production Still [Diana Thater 2005]

*Pafat Devotion Two* (2005) is the second work in the exhibition, featuring rescued tigers from the Shambala Preserve, a big-cat-rescue in Southern California founded and run by actress Tippi Hedren. The subjects of *Pafat Devotion Two* are Simba, Mona, and Zoë, who were discovered together as cubs, and, like most of the cats that live at the ranch, were rescued from the black market trade of exotic animals (others are rescued from zoos). Thater filmed them over the course of a single day, from sunrise to sunset, on ten rolls of 35mm film, each roll becoming a source for each work of the series.

Subject matter, technique, and presentation are all highly integral elements of the work of Diana Thater who states that she is devoted to working with “nature as an abstraction, as culture’s other.” The examination of, and play with different species allows Thater to present other ideas of knowledge, especially knowledge achieved through patient and quiet observation. Ideas related to the way nature is mediated, through human intervention and technology, for instance, are highlighted by the editing process inherent in each work. *Untitled Viddwall (Butterflies)* is edited in space, or, broken up in the gallery on six monitors arranged in a set composition. *Pafat Devotion Two* has been edited in a more conventional manner between 35 mm film, with the camera positioned on a crane, and hand-held super-8 film.

Thater was born in San Francisco, received her BA in Art History at NYU and her MFA at Art Center College of Design, and lives and works in Los Angeles. Thater has been the subject of numerous catalogs and books. Her work is in the collections of The Art Institute of Chicago, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Walker Art Center, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary in Vienna, Kunsthalle Bremen in Germany; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, and many others. Recent exhibitions include *Diana Thater: grillagnilla* at the Kunsthaus Graz in Austria (a collaborative project with the Natural History Museum, London, England).

### ***Related Exhibitions***

*Diana Thater: Butterflies and Other People* coincides with the exhibition, *Diana Thater: Tigers and Other People* at Towner Art Gallery in Eastbourne, England on view September 26 – November 29, 2009 [www.eastbourne.gov.uk/leisure/museums-galleries/towner/exhibitions/](http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/leisure/museums-galleries/towner/exhibitions/) Her newest work is also the focus of a concurrent exhibition, *Diana Thater: Between Science and Magic* at the Santa Monica Museum of Art on view January 16 – April 17, 2010 [www.smmoa.org](http://www.smmoa.org)

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is a privately funded, not-for-profit institution that presents internationally recognized collections and exhibitions and a broad array of cultural and educational activities as well as travel opportunities around the world.

***Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA.  
Open Tuesday - Sunday 11 am to 5 pm. Closed Monday.  
805.963.4364 [www.sbmanet](http://www.sbmanet)***