

An artistic illustration of a woman with long dark hair lying in bed, wearing a black spaghetti-strap top and a striped long-sleeved shirt. She is resting her head on a striped pillow. Several yellow and white butterflies are scattered around her, some on her skin and some on a plate of food in the foreground. The background is a wooden wall.

# Butterfly Series

Revealed

A book of artwork and thoughts  
by Suzanne Clements

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# Foreword

Suzanne Clements knew from early childhood that she wanted to be an artist. Suzanne says, “I remember as a young girl, sitting up late at night, just fantasizing about brick-and-mortar galleries, openings, finger foods, exciting discussions, interesting people, and networking. I never dreamt of my wedding day; I always dreamt of what it would be like to be an active participant in the art world.”

Suzanne’s interest in art may have been unavoidable. Her grandfather, Bill Clements, is well-recognized in Canada as a gifted sculptor and distinguished educator whose professional career spanned forty years. No doubt that a good dose of artistic genes and Suzanne’s early exposure to her grandfather’s artistic passion, his work, and his studio cemented her orientation to the world of art.



# The process behind the paintings

Many people have asked for a peek behind the scenes in my painting process. In order to help facilitate this, I have always had a webcam set up on my website. This allows visitors to check my schedule and join me during one of my painting sessions. Although this does allow visitors to watch as I paint, it does skip several preliminary steps.

So where does the creative process actually begin? For one thing, I use real dried butterflies as my models. I've been collecting them perfectly mounted and framed for several years now. For this project I purchased 100 unmounted dried butterflies that I could work with and pose as I needed.

I researched how to rehydrate the butterflies and spread their wings, purchased the appropriate supplies, and spent evenings working with a good friend of mine who has some entomology experience. She and I experimented with our techniques, and soon I had a collection of models to work with.



# Common themes and symbols

## **Butterfly**

I use butterflies to continue my exploration of the fragile human condition. Their fleeting lives are fraught with danger from the very beginning, even in the simplest interactions.

Common interpretations of butterfly symbolism include seduction, temptation, an omen (good or bad), resurrection, life, luck, freedom, change, self-destruction, health, impermanence, fragility, and beauty.

After my surgery and the events I explored with past works, I had a new-found admiration for my body. It's a fragile, complicated vessel that I've learned to respect.

For a long time I had wanted to incorporate the butterfly as a symbolic presence in my work, and it took me many months to discover how I would pull the insects into my paintings. I wanted the introduction to be both beautiful and a little overwhelming.



## The Beginning | Butterfly Series Part I

This first subseries includes "Breakfast in Bed," "Empty," "Leftovers," "Hungry Couple," and "Sweet Dreams." From this group, "Breakfast in Bed" was the first painting to finally emerge from the powerful color palette of the "Body Series." Deep shadows, saturated burgundy, and vibrant greens give way to a more serene landscape of soft fabrics and familiar tones.

These paintings are a literal interpretation of the saying "butterflies in your stomach." Our subject looks at her meal, resigned to what she faces. Her food and dishes are covered with the winged onlookers. Eating is inevitable, but with every bite she adds to her upset and anxiety. Eventually our subject gives in to sleep and passes the afternoon as the butterflies linger over her meal.

## **Breakfast in Bed**

“Breakfast in Bed” invites the audience into a world of ornamental detail and lush, soft fabrics. The butterflies linger on our subject’s meal and are an unavoidable presence. Our subject is resigned to this new way of life, knowing with each bite she intensifies her discomfort.



"Breakfast in Bed"  
16"x20"