

Casual observations of nature have led me to realize that butterflies are rarely found in groups; they often exist alone or in pairs. This behavior, when contrasted with human tendencies to form communities and interpersonal relationships, is especially interesting to me. Why are some organisms social creatures, while others rarely congregate? I began research on butterfly social habits with this question in mind. An article I read investigated butterflies who roost together to form a collective defense against predators, which is unusual behavior for often solitary insects.

Inspired by my research, I aimed to visualize the idea of unlikely communities, and how different people (or butterflies) can find solace in each other in a number of circumstances. I decided to use water-based ink, which is relatively transparent. The properties of this medium enable the artist to print over areas that have already been inked to form overlapping shapes and a sense of busyness. Additionally, working with linoleum carvings allowed me to quickly reproduce multiple species of butterflies. The mixture of shapes and colors suggest that the butterflies are individuals, and the composition of my piece shows how they can exist together.

THE IRONY OF THE SOCIAL BUTTERFLY

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