

## Compatible Views

R

oots and dragonflies grace the walls of Shelburne's Furchgott Sourdiffe Gallery this month. They are among the subjects repeating in series by Joan Curtis and Carolyn Shattuck. Two of Vermont's most inventive and well-established visual artists, they don't simply jump from one idea to another with each work. Instead, Curtis and Shattuck prefer to fully explore the aesthetic possibilities of the images they have unearthed.

Shattuck's contributions here include large monotypes and handmade books; dragonflies appear in both. In two of the prints, a large, central specimen is splayed out as if in an entomologist's collection. The bugs have gossamer, translucent wings that lighten the value of the patterned backgrounds.

"Dragon Fly IV" has a blue background of squares formed by crossed lines, while in "Dragon Fly X" the insect rests on a more free-formed, gray-and-black background.

The monotype "Moth" is also a close-up; the flying insect is diagonal on the picture plane and rendered in dark lines on a textural, gray field. A matrix of brown shapes, hexagonal like a honeycomb, are in the picture's upper left corner.

Shattuck's two-dimensional works continue in other series entitled "Elements" and "River" — though only one print represents the latter series in this show. "River III" has just a few light-red lines in a mélange of blue and green patterns. Some of the artist's patterning appears to be inspired by American folk art. Other shapes, and a particular shade of indigo recurring in her work, are reminiscent of Adire cloth from Nigeria. In any case, textiles certainly inform Shattuck's work.

"Elements II" restates the hexagons in "Moth," except that the matrix is in alizarin crimson. Several layers of patterning occur in this series, including abstracted floral forms and a host of visual textures.

Shattuck's four handmade books on display are no less rich. "My Cat" is a small, black-and-white book. "Dragonfly" is a large, 10-paged book that stands on stiff pages shaped like the insect's elegant wings. "Perennial Garden" is a veritable feast of multilayered patterns, while "Sticks and Stones" features geometric abstractions and surprising pop-up features. For example, a silvery page with a childlike illustration of a yellow girl is opposite a small flap. When this is opened, the sweet question underneath reads, "Will you be my best friend?"

The exhibit does not reveal whether Curtis and Shattuck are best friends, but their works certainly fit together well. Neither upstages the other, and both collections are playful, opulent and extremely well crafted. ⑦

### EXHIBIT

Joan Curtis and Carolyn Shattuck, new works in acrylics, monotypes and handmade books. Furchgott Sourdiffe Gallery, Shelburne. Through June 28.

### PHOTO

Marc Awodey