

By the Book



Photo by Albert J. Marro

Carolyn Shattuck at work on a new pop-up book for which she is known. Book illustration has grown in popularity among artists in recent years.

Carolyn Shattuck brings her story art to the Chaffee

By GORDON DRITSCHILO

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Carolyn Shattuck's life is an open book. Several open books.

The Rutland artist gave a talk on book illustration at the Chaffee Art Gallery on Saturday.

Book illustration, which has grown in popularity among artists in recent years, is the creation of three-dimensional art works as simple as a stitch-bound collection of prints or as ornate as an accordion-like collection of pop-up works.

"They can be really complicated in terms of getting everything to work," Shattuck said.

Shattuck, who had long worked as a painter and printmaker, said she started making books seven or eight years ago.

"I thought it was time to get off of printmaking and devote myself to making books," she said. "I did that for three years. I started by telling stories that were

personal to me. As an artist, you can get sidetracked and forget why you're making art. With books, I never had any intention to sell them. It was a way to tell stories about my life."

Her work, arranged on a table at the corner of the gallery, included a folding depiction of the American flag, a book that folded out into a carousel-like star formation with each section depicting a different part of a wedding she attended and another with abstract and representational depictions of the house she grew up in.

After a few years, Shattuck said she took up printmaking again, but still had a number of old prints she never sold or exhibited. She decided to recycle them after a class on a particular kind of stitch binding in New York.

"I cut them up," she said. "It was very brave, but also very fun. You start seeing compositions in a new light when you cut

them up."

The result was a small collection of prints that looked like a normal book.

Another creation she showed off was a book of prints in the shape of dragonfly wings. A dragonfly body popped out of the center of the book when it was opened.

Shattuck said there are a number of resources for those interested in book illustration.

"Book art has absolutely exploded in the last four or five years," she said. "We have a book artists guild with 90 members in northern Vermont. ... The UVM library has the best artist's book collection in New England. You can go up there and make an appointment and spend hours going through all the structures."

Shattuck will teach a class on book illustration at the Chaffee in November.

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