



Printmaking, Poetry, and More with Mami Yamamoto, the 2024 Cherry Creek Arts Festival Featured Artist

This year's featured artist is Mami Yamamoto, a monotype printmaker based in Colorado. We spoke with Mami about printmaking, poetry, and what it feels like to achieve a goal.

CherryArts: When did you first want to become an artist?

Mami: I grew up in a big city—Osaka, Japan. There was a city municipal museum down the street from my parents' house, and I remember that in grade school, I was already a regular there, seeing any type of art. I was always fascinated by art. Drawing and painting were always my favorite.



CherryArts: How did you find your way to printmaking?

Mami: I sold Japanese antiques, folk art, and textiles for 20 years. That was my prior career. Then a medical event happened. I swallowed a fish bone, and ended up in the emergency room. I was fine, but I felt superstitious. I learned the symbolism of that experience meant transformation. So I decided I needed to do something different with my life.

CherryArts: That's an amazing story! What happened next?

Mami: I'd always attended the Art Students League of Denver show, and I'd always thought that maybe one day I would take a class. I realized I had a big collection of printmaking, so I started studying printmaking, and learning about different techniques. I came across monotype, monoprint, and it was described as very intuitive, and I loved the way that sounded. I took my first printmaking class in September 2014, and I have been printing ever since.



CHERRY CREEK ARTS FESTIVAL

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CherryArts: What a story! Thank you for sharing that with us. You've exhibited at the Cherry Creek Arts Festival in five or six previous years. How did you feel when you were asked to be this year's featured poster artist?

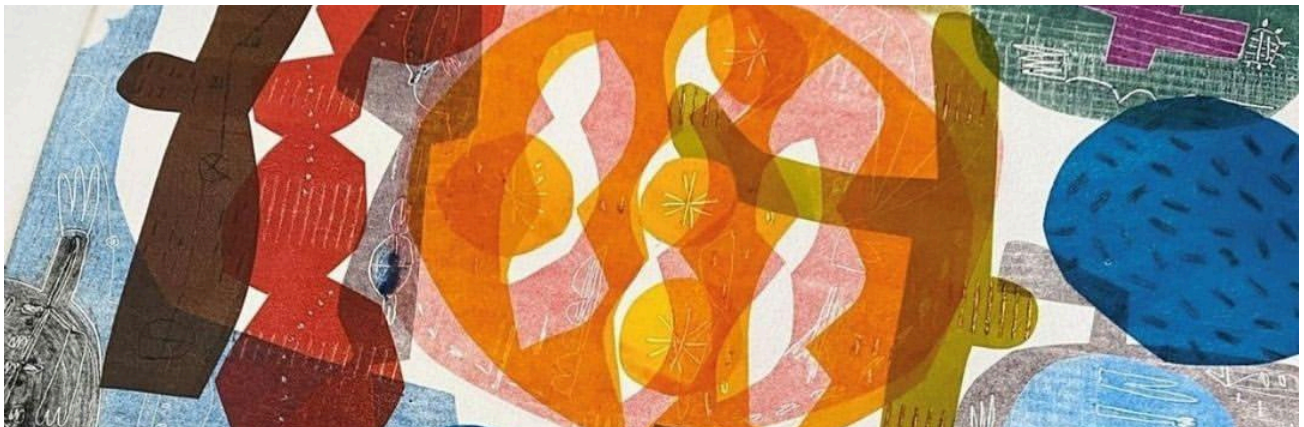
Mami: Oh my gosh. As a printmaker, I always have goals. At first I wanted to be not in front of a tent looking at work but standing at the back of a tent, selling my work. When I started at the festival, I learned about the poster, and I thought, *Someday, I'm going to be the poster artist*. That became a goal for me. But when Tara and Amy called me this year, I thought they were calling to say something was wrong with my application. When they asked me to be the poster artist, I was shaking. I'm so very delighted and so grateful.

CherryArts: That's wonderful. We've always been intrigued by the titles of your work. How do you title your pieces?

Mami: I believe having a little smile, or laughter, is an important aspect of our everyday life. I come from Osaka, Japan, where so many comedians originated. We love to laugh. We always want to finish with laughter. It's almost required. I see so many abstract works that are not titled. But for me, as a person, when there is a title, it's a lot easier for me to connect with a piece as a person. With my work, I don't have a title at the beginning. But the work starts speaking to me as I layer over and over. Sometimes it's about what I feel that day, or what I'm feeling that season. I like to incorporate those feelings into my work. Titles can almost be like poetry, and I do love poetry. I tend to squeeze my emotions and expressions into just a few words.

CherryArts: That's so interesting. What do you like about exhibiting your work?

Mami: I love the nature of meeting people, talking about my work, my process. It's a wonderful way of connecting with people.



CherryArts: When you're at a festival, what question do you get asked the most?

Mami: The question people ask me the most is how I actually do it, how I make a print. A lot of people, when they think of a print, they think it will be very inexpensive, like it's been photocopied. I take some of my plates, and some pictures, and some tools, to give people a visual of the process. And I tell them about it, like how the paper has to be soaked in water prior to each layer.

CherryArts: We love that talking with artists is a big part of the Cherry Creek Arts Festival. Speaking of artists, who are one or two that you admire?

Mami: One is Shikoh Munakata, a Japanese artist from the early 1900s. His dynamic approach to his work is so powerful and energetic. His work continuously inspires me, visually and almost spiritually. Another person is Joe Higgins. He was my first teacher at the Art Student League, and he still teaches there. He makes beautiful monoprints and monotypes. And he's the best. He always has something positive to say to any work. I'm very thankful that I took a class with him.

Thank you to Mami for speaking with us!

Plan on meeting Mami and enjoying her work at the Cherry Creek Arts Festival this July 5, 6, and 7, in Denver's Cherry Creek North neighborhood. Take a look at this year's poster, featuring Mami's work, [right here](#).

