

INSIDE ART

by AwA

Irrepressible joy.



Master Printer Sue Oehme

That is what master printer, Sue Oehme, feels when she reveals a new piece of art fresh off the press. No matter if the work is her own or from one of the numerous artists she has helped along the way, there is a sense of magic as a print is pulled. “Seriously, there are times—often!—in the studio that feel like Christmas morning, when we pull a new print off the press. This is hard to describe, but it has to do with the way all the layers interact with each other, offering something new to the artist, different from how they thought it would be,” said Sue. A few of those local artists are Wendy Kowynia, Joanna Webster, Connie Saddlemire, Diane Cionni, Sari Davidson, Jeanne Schneider and Deb Armstrong. She also has upcoming projects with Greg Block and Denver artists Taiko Chandler and Kat Rich.

Sue’s own works have morphed into large-scale “collages” of many various types of “plates” and lots of color. She uses recycled, post-consumer packaging (think of all the thin boxboard that you recycle, like toothpaste boxes, clothing price tags, mesh onion bags, etc.). “I also incorporate hand-painted water-colored layers of washes, and lots of little, tiny brightly colored items that function as punctuation.”

Sue came to Steamboat Springs when she was recruited from New York City in 1996 to run Riverhouse Editions in Steamboat, which she did until 2009. She worked directly as the master printer with a publisher, which is where she learned her craft. Master printers hone their craft over many years, building experience as they go. One indication of a master printer is someone who works directly with an artist from project inception through the final signing and marketing of the work. Master printers demonstrate a mastery of print techniques as they guide each artist through the proper methods and platemaking techniques for their specific type of imagery/work.

The printing process begins with an artist creating an image on a plate (this can be copper, zinc, Plexiglass, or matboard) by any number of means: etching, drawing, carving, etc., which is then processed by the master printer, and once completed, is “inked” by wiping, rolling, and/or scraping ink into the plate. When ready, the plate is placed on the printing press with dampened paper on top and run through with enormous pressure that forces the ink into the fibers of the paper.

Sue Oehme with Collin Parson, Director of Galleries at the Arvada Center for the Arts.
Installation of *The Sum of Our Parts*. 14' x 20'. Mixed collage printed elements with ephemera and pins.



Sue Oehme arranging shapes for *Leave No Trace*, 2021. Assistant, Izzy Van den Heuvel, in the background.

One project that really stands out for Sue is printing a series of 40 antique copper photogravure plates that were from the estate of Gutzon Borglum, an American sculptor recognized for his work on Mount Rushmore. “Just holding these little bits of history in my inky hands was exciting. Robert Ellsworth, a Steamboat resident, and the step-grandson of Borglum, discovered the stash of heavy plates on a property in Texas, and he found me through the Steamboat art world. Even though Borglum has a checkered past, to say the least, it was still wonderful to see these plates and images that were more than 100 years old come back to life.”

Being a master printer means a career in giving, which extends beyond the artists she helps. Sue also sits on the board of the Steamboat Symphony Orchestra (SSO). Sue was a trained pianist through high school and loves music. She grew up on a diet of

classical and early '50s jazz. She has identified as a disco queen and a punk rocker, but the glitter ball in her studio gives a hint as to which one she still relates to. One of her dearest friends in Steamboat, flutist Mary Beth Norris, the founder of the orchestra, was a huge draw for Sue in joining the organization. “The SSO performs an indispensable role in the cultural growth of our community,” Sue noted.

But when one gives, one must also take time to replenish, which Sue does, somewhat regularly, by swimming almost every morning at the Old Town Hot Springs. Yoga and getting outside to hike or cross-country ski are other ways she renews. “Looking, thinking and seeing inspires creativity. Finding balance can be a struggle,” Sue said. But she tries. Her sleep is filled with elaborately staged, crazy-long dreams, with intricate plotlines and interesting characters. She once dreamed that Andy

Warhol was instructing her in art history at a grocery store while sitting atop the shelf displaying Campbell’s Tomato Soup. Asleep or awake, art is at the center of her world. “Art is what defines us as a culture and the only way history will remember us.”

ELEVATE THE ARTS: Take a class with Sue—oehmegraphics.com. You won’t regret it. She can make an artist out of anyone! Purchase a Sue Oehme original at sueoehme.com or visit Jim Kempner Fine Arts in New York City, Space Gallery in Denver, or W Gallery in Steamboat Springs. In January 2024, Sue will have a solo exhibition, concurrent with an Oehme Graphics retrospective, at the Arvada Center just north of Denver. Sign-up your child for a Steamboat Creates’ Young at Art Camp with Sue Oehme. Dance under a glitter ball and keep making art, people. **AwA**

CREATIVE INSPIRATION

by Barb King

COLORS EXPRESSING MOODS AND FEELINGS

All you need are paper and scissors. Your imagination will do the rest. Cut the colored paper into shapes to create a design that shows your personality or mood.

Below is my personality on this given day. This doesn’t need to be beautiful or artistic (I will not be hanging this in my living room), just let your creative juices go.

