

Sheryl Jaffe - Artist, Art Teacher and Master Paper Maker

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Ludlow, MA



Sheryl makes paper and teaches paper making on lower Khandroling

I was in awe of the totem poles and Japanese masks that I saw at the Brooklyn Museum when I was young. We would go ice-skating at Prospect Park and then walk around the museum. Those works spoke to me, they had power. Then I had a chance to take a clay class at the museum, and I got hooked on the tactile quality of the clay, the many different stages of the clay, and I could make something useful. A cup or a vessel that could be filled and emptied, it could be held and touched, cups and bowls could be offered and accepted. They connected me to others.

Many years later I was introduced to making paper from plant material by Elaine Koretsky, renown paper historian and world traveler. The tactile process of transforming cellulose fiber into sheets of

paper that could then become sculptures, prints, books, clothing, rattles, really touched me. After traveling to Japan, I understood that paper could become anything, shelter, doors, balloons, and scrolls. Drawings and writings, ideas, thoughts and images from the 9th century can be here with us in the present, because of paper as their vehicle. I became fascinated by paper's role in connecting people, across oceans, across generations, centuries, across languages, and how the fibers of these connections were similar to the way paper is made. It is the way in which the cellulose fibers connect and become intertwined with each other that gives paper its strength, in fact is what makes paper, paper.



What do you see little frog?



Printing Little Frog

I offered a day of papermaking in 2013 as part of my exhibit “Corn and the Connecticut River”; participants made floating molds of five-foot long sheets, and Tatiana Shannon was one of my students. She and I made a connection and she introduced me to Naomi Zeitz and Jacqueline Gens. These two amazing women visited my studio and introduced me to the teachings of Rinpoche, which has strengthened my understanding of how profound these connections can be. Through Yantra Yoga especially I feel the power of these connections, through the breath.

Some of us founded the [Khandroling Paper Cooperative \[khandrolingpapers.blogspot.com\]](http://khandrolingpapers.blogspot.com), which represents a group of independent artists dedicated to making handmade papers using recycled sacred texts and plant inclusions from the sacred retreat land of [Khandroling](#) founded by the Tibetan Dzogchen Master [Chögyal Namkhai Norbu](#) in Buckland, MA. Inspired by his teachings on collaboration, we formed the paper cooperative as a place to flourish personally through artistic expression as well as develop sustainable livelihood possibilities for ourselves and our Community.

To learn more about this community, visit the Tsegyalgar East [website](http://tsegyalgar.org/) [http://tsegyalgar.org/] and our Community blog [tsegyalgar.blogspot.com].

My work explores ephemeral natures: sunlight on water, the sound of a breeze in the leaves, the transformational power of hope and humanity. In my exhibition entitled; “Basho’s Pond, Lotus leaves, frogs and the spirit of transformation”.

Furu ike ya

Old Pond

kawazu tobikomu

Frog Jumps In

mizu no oto

Sound of Water (kerplunk/splash)

This famous Haiku, written by Japanese Zen poet, Matsuo Basho (1644-1694) was the inspiration for this installation. Out of the timeless serene summer twilight of the old pond comes the “kerplunk” of the frog’s splash. As the Buddha changed with noticing the morning star, we can be transformed by the “kerplunk” of the frog. The lotus is known for its purity and beauty that is born from the mud and muck of the world, frogs are living reminders of rain, fertility, transformation and rebirth. Their well-being is closely linked to that of our environment. They are considered an indicator species, indicating various aspects of climate change. Amphibian means two lives, (one on land and one on water); most of us have at least two, some of us many more. Our brains carry the memories from one part of our life to the other and it can be challenging to move through these many lives. Frogs are a great metaphor for these transformations; eggs to polliwogs to froglet to adult frog.



Ma Ze Kaze



Floating Mind

Frogs are considered common creatures; paper is a common material, readily available, taken for granted, “not special”. What if we transform our ideas of these creatures and this material and see them as fantastic, as adaptable, as extraordinary and as beautiful as they really are.

Transformation is the thread that connects and repels. As living beings we change, grow and are transformed by events, relationships, emotions, experiences. Change is constant this is both difficult and refreshing. In my studio practice I engage with plant fibers that are transformed by heat, water, pounding, movement, color and me. My paperworks are all made of plant fibers, they will continue to absorb the moisture in the air, the ambient light and the mood of the viewer.

My life is continuously being transformed; by meetings of minds, sharing closely held beliefs, chance encounters, and relationships with people I previously thought impossible. I believe in the power of transformation, the sick get healed, the addict gets sober, and depression can give way to joy and empathy. Life is filled with such transformations. I welcome you to consider leaves and frogs, fibers and artwork and their power to transform.

My studio practice is fraught with uncertainty; it is usually like a meditation. I must get quiet enough to hear the small inner voice; to see what can happen that will reflect and interpret these interior emotions and experiences. Sometimes they are completely abstract and surprise me.



Happy papermaker using handmade paper instruments

Sheryl Jaffe is an artist, papermaker, swimmer and teacher residing in Ludlow MA. Please visit sheryljaffe.com and contact me about all things paper.