

Ever see CU students walking around campus with balloon animals at finals time, or kids playing with balloon swords on Pearl Street? It's likely the work of Bongo, the balloon-making clown. Asking to be referred to as Bongo, and nothing else, the clown is used to making balloon animals for the people around Boulder.

'BONGO' TO A DIFFERENT BEAT

Balloon-making artist patrols Pearl with latex creations

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Bongo can make a variety of different balloon shapes – he's been working with balloon animals for over 20 years. Still, customers often want to know:

Which balloon is the hardest to craft?

"It's all a dog to me; it doesn't matter," Bongo said. "But I know whichever balloon I say will inevitably be the next balloon I have to create."

The self-taught balloon artist can usually be found somewhere on Pearl Street.

During the summer, Bongo works downtown for up to 45 hours a week. Once the school year is in session, Bongo cuts his time down on Pearl to the weekends and during good weather.

"He is really good with kids and brings business to [Peppercorn] and brings Pearl Street business," said Chance Kraegel, a Peppercorn employee.

It's an obvious venue for Bongo.

"[Pearl Street] is one of the few venues in the nation where someone can show up and do their craft," Bongo said.

CU periodically employs the artist. He has participated in CU's Midnight Breakfast, an evening activity during finals time, as well as events that kick off the school year.

"He's good to work with and students enjoy him," said Megan Bell, the assistant director at the UMC Student Programs Office.

Between working with CU and working on Pearl Street, many students are likely to have the opportunity to get their very own balloon animal – at least once this year

“He has no competition,” Kraegel said.

Contact Campus Press staff writer Cameron Naish at cameron.naish@colorado.edu