

Artist Profile

Olvera Schultz captures the expressions of the natives

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Of Aptos Life

Clay masks, photography, dolls, serigraphs, shields ... Aptos artist Becky Olvera Schultz doesn't focus on just one type of artistic medium.

But their connection to Native American culture is what ties all these pieces together.

Olvera Schultz, whose father is Mexican-Indian, has strong ties to Native American culture, she said.

"I've felt very connected to the native culture," she said.

Originally an art major in college, Olvera Schultz pursued a career in the advertising and newspaper industries, and

was a sales representative for the Register-Pajaronian.

She became so involved with the career that "I put aside my artistic goals," she said. "Besides, interviewing, writing copy and photographing business owners was a creative outlet."

In early 1993, not long after her brother's death in 1992, a local Native American organization suggested that she take a Native American drum making class as grief therapy, and she found that the class brought back the artistic side of herself that she thought she had lost, she said.

"I always had an interest in the culture," she said. "I just thought, 'why not?' I'd forgotten how good it was to work with my hands. It brought me back



Mixed media/photo transfer, "Traditional." Courtesy of Becky Olvera Schultz



Becky Olvera Schultz examines one of her raw hide shields at Aptos Coffee Roasting Company. Photo by Erik Chalhoub/Aptos Life

to who I was."

In an attempt to connect with her art past further, Olvera Schultz took a clay class, which she said she found "very soothing."

For the last project, Olvera Schultz crafted a face based on a photograph of a Native American woman.

"The instructor told me, 'I think you found your thing — faces,'" Olvera Schultz recalled. "That stuck with me."

Inspired, once the class finished, Olvera Schultz bought her own clay and found a place to fire her work in a kiln, creating Native American-inspired masks.

Most of her mixed media masks are created out of clay and adorned with horse hair, natural domestic bird feathers, bison fur or horn, although she has created masks from gourd and cast paper. Other items on a mask might include earrings crafted out of turquoise, brass or copper.

Olvera Schultz has had solo museum exhibitions dedicated to her work. In

addition, she has also had her work featured in international magazines such as *Cowboys & Indians* and *Native Peoples*. Her work has also been in art galleries throughout the U.S.

Despite having her work displayed in museums, Olvera Schultz said she also enjoys displaying her work at the local level, and is always planning to have her work displayed at other local venues.

"I like to keep my work up locally," she said. "Any local venue that gives me the opportunity to display my work, that's a good thing."

She recently had an exhibit of her work at Aptos Coffee Roasting Company, which ran through September.

Olvera Schultz will be a vendor at the West Valley College Powwow in Saratoga on Oct. 6, displaying her work.

To see more and to purchase her work, visit www.native-expressions.com, www.powwow-power.com or www.native-art-gift-shop.com.