

Masks of the Americas



Moves in the Night by Becky Olvera Schultz

Aptos artist Becky Olvera Schultz took the pain and sorrow she experienced a few years ago, after her brother unexpectedly committed suicide, and released it into her artwork. What came of it were intricately painted clay masks of Native Americans.

Olvera Schultz's work is part of "Masks of the Americas," an ongoing exhibit at the at the Marin Museum of the American Indian.

Marin Museum of the American Indian

STORY BY JAMIE OPPENHEIM



Talks With The Moon by Becky Olvera Schultz

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHEILA MASSON

"I'm a very practical, down-to-earth girl, and when I created these pieces it started as a need to work with my hands and to calm myself," she said. "Even though I lost my brother, if that hadn't happened I may not be doing what I'm doing now."

Olvera Schultz studied art in college, but abandoned her dream after her family placed pressure on her to pursue a more practical career. She reconnected with her art after the tragic incident.

"The gift that I got from (my brother's) death gave me something back," she said. "It let me continue on what I wanted to do when I was 18 years old."

The whole exhibition combines the contemporary masks of Olvera Schultz with the more traditional masks from the museum's archives.

Colleen Hicks, director of the the Marin Museum of the American Indian, said when she curates a show she prefers to combine the old with the new.

"We'll try to do traditional pieces, yet with contemporary pieces, so it shows the culture is still alive," Hicks said.

The more traditional masks are often stylized in their respective cultures, which contrasts with Olvera Schultz's almost freestyle creations.

"Overall, of all the hundreds of portraits, the masks are just images that come out of the clay," she said. "I don't try to tell a story. I create these faces because it

➤ MASKS: See C-6



Spirit Warrior by Becky Olvera Schultz

Masks of the Americas

Marin Museum of the American Indian



Xwixwi Mask by artist George Hunt of (1854-1933) British Columbia, Canada. Wood, pigment.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHEILA MASSON

➤ MASKS: From C-1 feels good to do it." The current show will be on display until April 30. Upcoming, there will be a Native American Dress Show to benefit the Marin Museum of the Native American that will feature contemporary dress and historic regalia of California Native Americans. Dress pieces from both private and museum collections will be on display. There will be storytelling, dancing, and contemporary and historic apparel modeled by native participants. This event will take place Saturday, Feb. 23 at 6:30 p.m. at the

Showcase Theater at Marin Center, Exhibit Hall, 10 Avenue of the Flags. Tickets are \$25. Call the Marin Museum of the American Indian at (415) 897-4064 for more information.

The Marin Museum of the American Indian is located in Miwok Park at 2200 Novato Blvd and is open Tuesday through Friday from noon to 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. (weather permitting) and closed Mondays and holidays.

Admission is \$5 general and free for children under 6. For more information visit www.marinindian.com.

Right, foreground: Warrior Mask by artist Allen Long, Ah-ni-yv-wi-ya (Cherokee) Cherokee, North Carolina. Wood, pigment. Example of a Booger Dance mask, the rattlesnake coiled on the brow marks it as a warrior mask. The wearer would identify with the powerful medicine of the rattlesnake, a feared creature associated with the Underworld.

Right, background: Buffalo Mask by artist Allen Long, Ah-ni-yv-wi-ya (Cherokee) Cherokee, North Carolina. Wood, pigment. Distant linguistic relatives of the Iroquois, the Cherokee also retain healing masks. One of the highlights of the winter Corn Festival is the Booger Dance. As the Booger Masks are affiliated with ghosts and spirits, the dance is held in midwinter so as not to affect the crops or vegetation.

