

Making jewelry with a fiber arts approach

Astoria artist preserves and showcases very old treasures

BY KATHERINE LACAZE

Intricate. Unique. Durably elegant. These are a few of the words that embody the hand-crafted jewelry made by Astoria artist Celeste Olivares.

For 30 years, she has used a needle-weaving technique to make pieces of wearable artwork that incorporate vintage beads and handmade wire cord.

“I can’t really stop at this point,” said Olivares, who exhibits and sells her work at Imogen Gallery in Astoria. “The work just calls to me to be made.”

Although Olivares has been stringing beads since she was a little girl, she was first introduced to the needle-weaving style 30 years ago by an artist who invited her to study one-on-one in California.

“She saw I resonated with it very strongly,” Olivares said.

Olivares was drawn to the technique’s meditative quality, the practice of patience, and the dexterity required of the fingers and hands. The cord has to be kept taut while the piece is being created. Unlike cabochon jewelry, Olivares’ style “evokes that spirit of fiber art, of weaving.”

“It’s such a pretty way to have something elegant but really sturdy,” she said.

Preserving people’s treasures

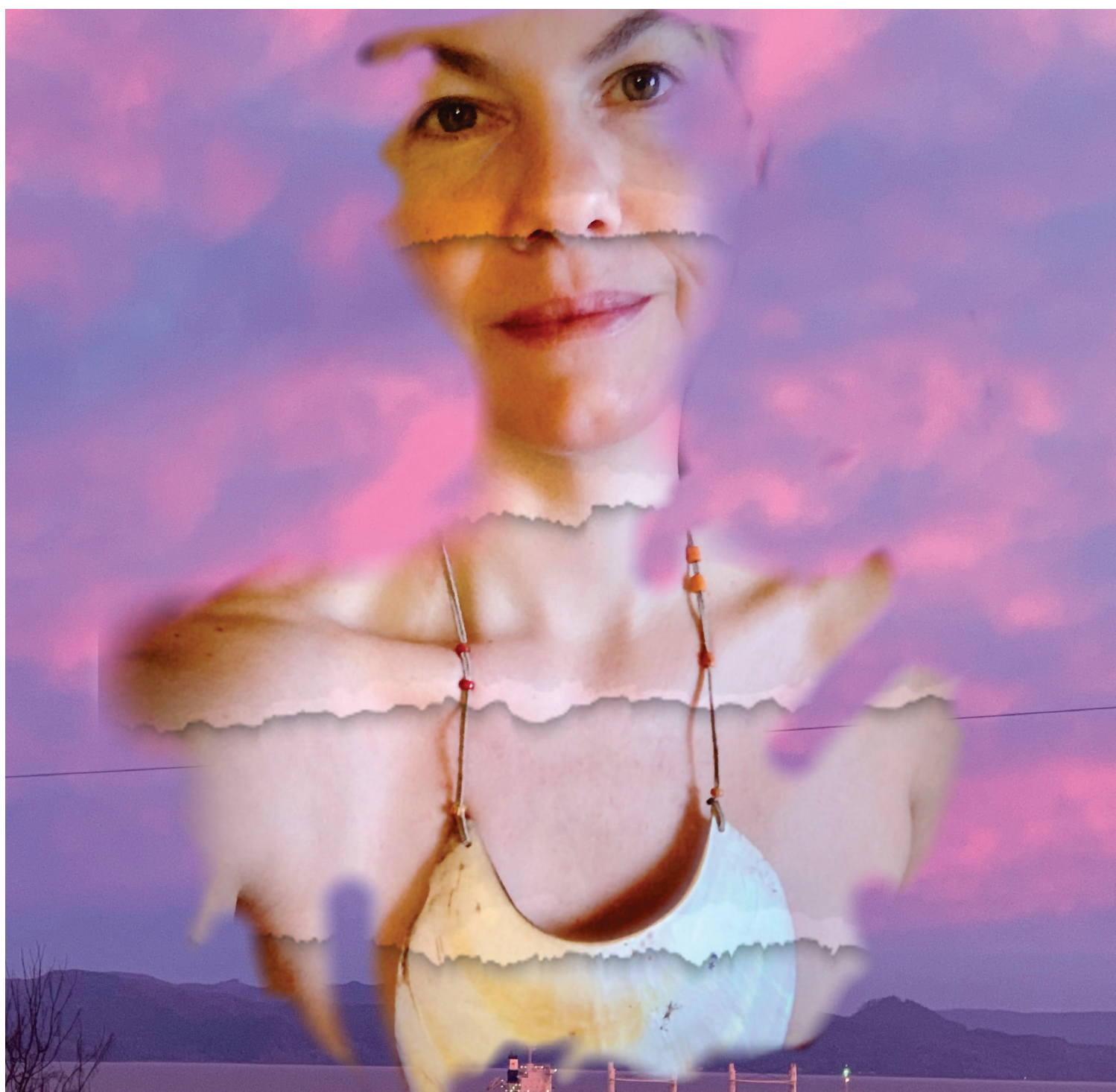
Originally, Olivares relied heavily on the use of seed beads for her bracelets and other jewelry. Her passion has evolved over time — she now works with unique vintage beads, crystals and heirloom pieces.

“When I walk into a bead store, it’s like a candy store to me. I’m wide-eyed, mouth agape,” she said.

Olivares has also refined her style and started making her own hand-woven cord to showcase beads and other alluring trinkets she finds.

Looking back at pieces she made during

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Astoria jewelry-maker and artist Celeste Olivares showcases a recent custom work that incorporates a large, striking shell. The portrait is overlaid with a view of the sunrise from her coastal home.

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