



Rebecca Bashara uses naturally burnished stones for most of her jewelry. She often incorporates customers' personal items into custom pieces.

Artist Brings Out Nature's Beauty in Jewelry

Rebecca Bashara's jewelry is rough around the edges, which is what she prefers

By Jeanie Senior

Artist and metalsmith Rebecca Bashara looks to nature when designing her custom jewelry.

The rings, necklaces, bracelets and earrings Rebecca creates mostly feature stones she gathers along Washington and Oregon rivers and the north coast of California.

Rebecca says she likes the naturally burnished stones for their luster, shape and subtle color range—from flecked white to amber, dark red, green and black.

"I don't like shiny," Rebecca says.

Bowls, trays and other open containers of stones sit on tables and shelves in

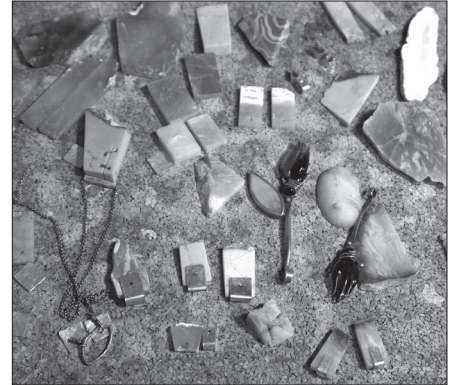
Drift, her studio in the center of Klickitat, which also includes a workshop outfitted with metalsmithing and jewelry-making tools, including a stonecutter's saw.

Rebecca says her studies at the University of Kansas, where she earned a bachelor's degree in jewelry and metalsmithing, included one class in setting faceted stones. It was not her favorite.

"I was doing a lot of silver work, and I was really into metal fabrication," she says.

Soldering silver can be tricky, but Rebecca found she had a knack for it.

When she graduated from college and moved to Hawaii to live with her brother, the islands inspired her. She fashioned silver wire into plumeria blossoms and



picked up ocean-tumbled glass, and sold her jewelry at boutiques or on the beach.

The ocean glass was just a start, Rebecca says.

“Then I moved to the West Coast and there were stones everywhere,” she says.

She moved to Klickitat County 22 years ago after two years in Portland. She first lived in a school bus on friends’ land, then in Swale Canyon and then a house in Klickitat.

Rebecca’s daughter, Surreal, is a college student at Fair Haven in Bellingham. Her son, Inti, is a high school junior.

Rebecca’s jewelry prices range from \$30 to \$3,000, and she markets the pieces at different juried art shows across the country, including shows in Portland, Denver and her hometown of Des Moines, Iowa.

Rebecca also is open to trading her jewelry for goods or services. She has traded for wine, cheese, massages, honey and locally raised pork.

“Bring in something you want to trade me,” she suggests with a smile.

Customers are welcome to bring in stones or other items they would like her to use in a piece of jewelry. Rebecca has bought exotic minerals such as lapis, chalcedony and chrysoprase to

incorporate in her work. She might slice the stones into smaller pieces, but she leaves them unpolished.

Rebecca sometimes incorporates other objects into a design, such as the intricate flower carving that belonged to her late grandmother, which she mounted in silver on a drop necklace that also features a dark honey-colored stone from the Klickitat River.

To have an ample supply of pieces available, Rebecca stays busy coming up with new ideas in the winter. She pushes hard into springtime to get pieces ready for art shows and shops.

“I’m working pretty consistently all the time,” she says.

Every few months, she hunts for more stones—from Puget Sound to the Gorge to Northern California.

When she brings a batch to her studio, Rebecca washes them, drizzles the rocks with olive oil and lets them dry. The oil adds a soft gleam, just enough to suggest the look of a stone under running water. It is definitely not shiny. ■

Her jewelry is sold at Liliانا Spa and Subi Salon in Hood River, Real Mother Goose and Silverado in Portland, her website at www.rbashara.com or by appointment.

Clockwise from left, Rebecca uses a delicate, fine-tooth saw to cut and shape her jewelry. She buys and collects a variety of stones and minerals to use in her pieces. Rebecca makes several types of custom jewelry, including this stone bead bracelet.