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# Art has woman tied up in knots

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The rich colors and exotic beads whisper of other places, a collage of texture and culture. Glass beads from Africa, American Fibro beads, commercially spun wool, hand spun yarn, metal, wood, bone — all interwoven into moods and themes. In an exhibit called "Threads and Beads," Valley artist Barbara Cordy transforms handwoven necklaces into works of art.

"It intrigued me," Cordy said. "I love beads ... I've collected them for years."

The Palmer artist and grandmother said she has piles of colorful beads at home from around the world. And each of her 11 pieces of art featured at Wasilla's Dorothy Page Museum demonstrate Cordy's fascination with yarn and beads.

Some of her necklaces were inspired by one small piece of ceramic or glass.

"My Dog Spot" began weaving itself in Cordy's imagination when she discovered several round beads painted with the head of a panting canine.

Another piece in her exhibit, titled "Thanks to Denise & Clara Jo," was triggered by a friend's homespun yarn. Cordy said her friend was planning on throwing out the lavender swirled yarn so she snatched it up. And so began another artistic endeavor.

In other necklaces, Cordy said she was trying to create a mood. With a particular goal in mind, she searched through her home to find the right strips of color and fragments of texture. The five years she and her husband ran an antique shop in Palmer provided an endless and diverse source of beads.

"I have a lot of yarns at home, and a lot of



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**"Can You Feel the Beat?" is one of 11 exotic neckpieces handwoven by Palmer fiber artist Barbara Cordy.**

See ART, Page 16



# ART: Beaded creations take on life of their own

Continued from Front Page

beads," Cordy said.

With sunset hues of red and purple, "Come ... Dance With Me," is one of Cordy's most brilliant neck pieces. Several of the beads are South American. Others dazzle a '50s shade of red.

"The color says that," she said of the 40-year old beads.

She said the mood she meant to create with the bright neck piece was the exotic air of a Middle Eastern belly dancer.

However, the themes occasionally do not play themselves out on the woven pieces of art the way Cordy intends.

"Can You Feel the Beat," began with a small lizard charm Cordy received from her husband as a gift.

"When I was done, though, it was obvious the lizard didn't belong on it," the artist said. Instead, she used a round bead with a face painted onto it.

"They really take on a life of their own," Cordy explained.

The process begins by drawing an outline of the neck piece and the placement of beads on graph paper. Using pins, Cordy weaves the yarn around the drawn outline. She said the technique is very similar to tapestry weaving.

The neckpieces are merely the



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**Palmer artist Barbara Cordy displays her creativity in unique, handwoven neckpieces such as "And They Swam Over the Dam." An array of yarns and beads, including these tiny fish beads, provide a colorful medium for her skills.**

latest endeavor in her years of experimenting with fiber arts. Although she worked as a corrections officer in the Valley for many years, her interests have often drawn her into the fine arts. As a little girl, she learned how to crochet from her grandmother.

"It really got me interested in working with fiber," Cordy said. "It seems like it was al-

ways there." Since then, she has worked in many mediums, including watercolor and ink, but working with yarn and beads has always fascinated her.

"I think it goes back to my grandmother. She grew up in poverty ... and crocheting didn't cost very much," Cordy explained. "It's about using common materials to make beautiful things."

In 1988, Cordy took her first weaving class. But it was a workshop in necklace weaving last year that really inspired her.

"Weaving can be a rigid medium," Cordy said. "You have to plan it in advance and you have little room to deviate ... It's not like that with these neck pieces."

She said the necklaces allow her creativity to become more fluid. The only aspect of the pieces she has to plan ahead is the structural outline. And she can even add to that later, if she desires.

"Each one has its own personality. I don't seem to control it," she said. "It provides spontaneity I haven't found in loom weaving." She said that creative freedom allows the pieces to develop from her internal emotions.

And the 50-something Cordy is continuing to expand her artistic versatility. Later this year, she will attend a workshop on tapestry weaving. She is also interested in making artistically designed clothing. Eventually, she would like to move into the medium of three-dimensional fiber sculptures.

Her exhibit of handwoven neckpieces will continue through Dec. 6 at the Dorot Page Museum in Wasilla.