

Leventhal sculpture inspires Baycrest senior

Art can have a profound effect on a person. Just ask Helen Rynski.

The 86-year-old resident of the Apotex Centre, Jewish Home for the Aged, remembers the day she spotted the whimsical 15-foot sculpture in the courtyard outside the WA Café. “The first time I saw it, I knew I had to make it!” says Rynski, whose youthful spirit belies her age.

With a little help from Brenda Lass in the Creative Arts Studio, and volunteer Marvin Fagan, Rynski created a 20-inch clay model of the Ian Leventhal sculpture, “The Sky Watchers”. Asked why she felt so emotionally stirred by Leventhal’s piece, Rynski explains that it was “just a feeling” she had.

The project took her over a year to complete and involved building the sculpture from the base upward, and painting and firing each of the different parts in the kiln. “Here in the creative arts room we make people into artists, even when they weren’t artists before,” says Lass. “They feel a great sense of purpose when they are able to give their families gifts they created, or produce works of art and hand-painted cards to be sold in our store or displayed in silent auctions.”

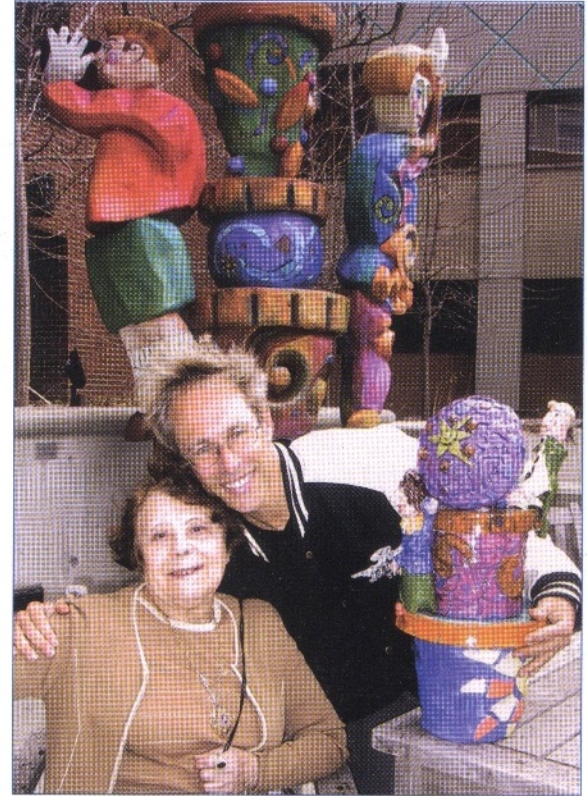
Leventhal learned of Rynski’s project and

dropped by to meet the budding artist. “The piece is so happy and whimsical and it captures the essence of my sculpture,” says the Toronto-born artist who is known for his murals that adorn restaurants, hotels, libraries, malls, banks and hospitals from Toronto to Tel Aviv. Colour, fantasy and humour are hallmarks of Leventhal’s style – and he has said that all his pieces have one simple message: “joy and happiness”.

When Leventhal learned that Rynski’s sculpture was being auctioned at Baycrest’s annual Art & Soul fundraiser last March, he made sure to put in the highest bid for it. Then in a move that is characteristic of his philanthropic nature, he promptly donated it back to Baycrest for everyone to enjoy. The sculpture is now on the wall of the WA Café between the doors leading to the outdoor courtyard.

“Art is important for all ages,” says Leventhal, who teaches art classes to young children. “Unfortunately, many children give up art when they reach their early teens, so it makes me extremely happy to see someone in later life picking it up.”

“For me, I never had an ambition to do such a thing and all of a sudden I had to do it!” says Rynski.



The admiration was mutual when artist Ian Leventhal met resident Helen Rynski who created her own version of his sculpture, “The Sky Watchers”.