

# Sculpture inspires Baycrest resident

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

The 86-year-old resident of Baycrest's Apotex Centre, Jewish Home for the Aged, remembers the day she went outside for a walk and spotted a 15-foot, whimsical Ian Leventhal sculpture in the courtyard.

"The first time I saw it, I knew I had to make it," said Rynski, whose youthful spirit belies her age.

With a little help from Brenda Lass, who works in Baycrest's Creative Arts Studio, and volunteer Marvin Fagan, Rynski created a stunning miniature model out of pottery clay. The 20-inch sculpture is her interpretation of Leventhal's *The Sky Watchers*, and it is as colourful and fun-spirited as the original.

Asked why she felt so emotionally stirred by Leventhal's piece, Rynski said that it was "just a feeling" she had. The project took Rynski more than 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 were not artists before," said Lass. "They feel a great sense of purpose when they are able to give gifts they created to their families, 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 and her creation. He was bowled over by her beautiful design.

"The piece is so happy and whimsical, it captures the essence of my sculpture outside," said the Toronto-born artist whose artwork can be found on display in 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."

Rynski's inspired creation carries the same message. "I fell in love with it and I knew I just had to have this piece," said Leventhal.

When he learned her sculpture was entered in the silent auction at Baycrest's annual Art & Soul fundraiser in March, Leventhal 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 to be displayed in a public area for everyone to enjoy.

"Art is important for all ages," said Leventhal, who teaches art classes to young children. "Unfortunately many children



**Helen Rynski is seen here with artist Ian Leventhal and her mini sculpture of Leventhal's original work, *The Sky Watchers*, which is on display in a courtyard at Baycrest.**

give up art when they reach their early teens, so this makes me extremely happy to see someone in later life picking up art."

"For me I never had an ambition to do such a thing and all of a sudden I had to do it," said Rynski.

The *Sky Watchers* are smiling more than usual today.