

Jarko Zavi

Bringing Beauty from Canadian Clay



Close up of wall hanging by Nunzia Zavi



Penguin Pair

South Moravia is a long way from Cobourg, about 7,000 kilometers!

Jarko Zavi arrived in Canada as a refugee fleeing for his life. It was 1939 and the threats of invasion by Hitler were very real. By that time he was already an accomplished artist, specializing in ceramics.

Jarko was born in South Moravia, now part of the Czech Republic, and gained a love of nature and art as a young child. It was **not only the scenery, but also the fact that his uncle owned a brickyard**, that got him started on the road to sculpting. The clay provided a fine resource for the young boy and by age five he was already crafting small animals.

As his skill increased, Jarko took lessons and at sixteen began studies at an Industrial Arts College in Northern Bohemia, working with ceramics to perfect his craft. Three years after joining the fine china producers, Terra Company, he was their head of ceramics design. But at that point the threat of war interfered. Unable to speak English and without any money, **Jarko arrived in Toronto just as World War II was breaking out at home.**

The skills he brought with him were enough that he soon established himself within the artistic community. **He married fellow artist, Nunzia D'Angelo, and by 1946 they had made their home near Cobourg.** By then he was well enough known that the National Film Board created two features on his work. Here he was able to work in a larger studio and dreamed of establishing a ceramic centre to teach and carry on his art. But he was more isolated from the community which had nourished him.

Over his four-decade career, Zavi **perfected new glazes from Canadian materials, experimented with Canadian clay bodies**, championed in vain for a school for potters, and along with several others, harangued against cheap, imported souvenirs to sell to tourists. (A Fine Line by Gail Crawford)

In 1959 they moved on to Brighton where they remained for the remainder of their lives. Nunzia died in 1968 and it was another eight years before Jarko married Elizabeth Szwanc, whom he met while vacationing in Yugoslavia. He continued to follow his creative passion though on a small scale, making ceramics and painting, teaching and occasionally entering his work in local art shows. **He died in 1987, an internationally recognized Czech-Canadian artist.**

View of South Moravia



Jarko in his Cobourg studio



Jennifer Chanter, who became one of his students, wrote this about first seeing Zavi's work:

The art pieces ... took my breath away. The clean uncluttered Canadiana subject matter and the depth of the grounded glaze spoke with deep sincerity of our land Canada. I was later to learn that even the clay from which the work was made came from the Ottawa Valley.



Vase