

Art Without Frames

The resurrection of mural art

By Sherri Telenko

Photography by Carole Timm



Mosaic artist Tibor Nyilasi with Hamilton's St. Stephen's Hungarian Church mural *Ecclesia* (detail), his first mosaic commission.

Tibor Nyilasi **Mosaic Artist**

Tibor Nyilasi is fascinated with rocks—rocks, stones, glass—any fragmented pieces in which he can see colour, texture and beauty. A high school art teacher for 30 years, Nyilasi loved

teaching, but little could distract him from his true calling as an artist.

Nyilasi is best known for his large-scale mosaics, original wall and floor murals created by piecing together small stones and shards of glass (most from Italy) to create patterns, tones and sometimes even pictorial images. Mosaic tiling is an incredibly labour-intensive process, but one that has a long and rich tradition in Europe. In fact, most of Nyilasi's work ends up in Europe, particularly his ecclesiastical designs destined for the walls and windows of churches. "In Europe, they pay for patience and quality," states Nyilasi. "Permanency is the name of the game there, probably because they've lived through all sorts of wars."

However, it was a Hamilton church, St. Stephen's on Barton Street, that gave the Hungarian-born artist his start in mosaics. In 1976, Reverend Eordug, the minister of the church at the time, approached Nyilasi to design a wall-size mosaic tiling in the entranceway of the new banquet hall addition to the church. The effort took months, with Nyilasi often spending the night lying on the hall floor. But he was hooked; he subsequently honed his skills by studying mosaic art in Germany.

Nyilasi has also done residential work and private commissions but again primarily in Europe, where he completed an expansive atrium floor in a home in Germany. The owners then added a fountain sculpture that continuously sprayed water over the natural stone mosaic. Nyilasi was thrilled with the sparkling results because, as he explains, natural stream stones are meant to be wet.

Swimming pool enclosures are also popular mosaic tiling places; in addition, he's done some commercial bar work for Yabu Pushleberg Interiors in Toronto. Residential walls are possible, but Nyilasi likes to consult the architect of the home first to determine if the earmarked wall is concrete and hard enough to hold the tiling. Only then does he begin to select a design and style suitable for the location, lighting and environment of the mural. For him, mosaic is an art form, and never does he simply imitate or reproduce a pre-selected image.

Being prepared for inspiration is part of Nyilasi's daily routine as he's

now able to dedicate himself to his art full time. Still, he collects rocks continually, as he has for the past 30 years. "Even when I was teaching," he states, "I'd tell a colleague of mine, 'if you are travelling somewhere, bring me a stone, any kind of stone.' If it comes from anywhere in Europe, it has its own character."

Tibor Nyilasi can be reached at (905) 544-3470.