

Local artist finds peace in pottery

By BRADLEY FEHR
The Chronicle

Lilach Lotan moved to Ladysmith from her native Jerusalem to find people who could appreciate her art.

"You can't make a living as an artist in Israel. The people are so tense. They are just worried about getting the necessities," says Lotan, who moved to Canada 10 months ago with her husband Ron to start a pottery business.

She specializes in unique wheel-thrown pottery and one-off gallery pieces, and Ron takes care of the marketing. Together they have created Lotanite Creations in Clay and Metal from their home in Ladysmith.

Lotan works 10 or 11 hours a day in the studio behind their home. Her creations range from production teapots to unique statues and gallery pieces. While she said she doesn't mind making production pieces, it's the one-offs that truly inspire her.

She loves to mix mediums and many pottery pieces are laced with leather or fused with metal to give them a unique look and feel.

However, the road to the little studio on Vancouver Island wasn't easy.

They both served compulsory military duty, but she said it's just a normal part of life in Israel.

"It was just like having a job where you wear a uniform, but you carry an M-16," she said.

Despite the acceptance of her military career, she

didn't want the same for her children.

"I did not want my kids to grow up and join the army," she said.

Lotan met and fell in love with Ron shortly after serving her country. She wanted to further her education and took a tour of the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem, where she made a discovery that would change her life.

"It was amazing. They put dirt on the wheel and it became something else, something wonderful," she said, adding from that point on she knew that she wanted to create pottery.

Lotan excelled in the ceramic program and found the creative outlet she had been looking for. Ron enrolled in the same school and they soon got married.

The school, however, sits in the middle of a country torn by civil strife.

The young couple was strolling down a street in downtown Jerusalem when an explosion rocked a busy restaurant not 100 metres from where they were walking. A suicide bomber had attacked the busy restaurant and killed several patrons.

"You have to think every time you go out, even for a coffee," she said.

Not a year later, another bomb levelled the school's cafeteria. Luckily, the young couple were absent that day.

Lotan said it was those two events, combined with high tuition and a tough economic situation, that convinced the couple to move to Canada. She said they made brief stops in Toronto and



Photo contributed

Ladysmith artist Lilach Lotan with two of her unique clay and leather creations.

Vancouver before moving to the Island.

They bounced between Victoria and Nanaimo before they met Jo and Vic Duffhues from Joe Vic Pottery.

The Ladysmith couple took them into their home, offering support, advice and a place to stay until they could find a place of their own.

"They are potters, so they understood what we were going through," she said.

The couple has adjusted well to their new surroundings and it is that natural beauty that has contributed to the creative process.

"We consider ourselves very fortunate to be living and working on beautiful

Vancouver Island. The surrounding ocean and countryside provide much of the inspiration for our work," she said.

The business is growing and Lotan and her husband are finding markets for her creations. She has pieces in Gallery 223 in Nanaimo and the Out of Hand Gallery in

Victoria. The couple attends numerous festivals and sales, and she will be participating in Arts on the Avenue in Ladysmith in August.

Olivia's on 1st Avenue carries a few of Lotan's products, and an extensive collection is available at their showroom. For more info email lotanite@shaw.ca.