

Richard La Londe's *Enchanted Journey*



Richard La Londe, *Enchanted Journey* wall mural, 40" x 25", 2012. Spanaway Elementary, Washington State Arts Commission, Spanaway, Washington, fused glass.

by Shawn Waggoner

In 2012, Richard La Londe unveiled his latest Washington State Arts Commission Percent for Arts Project, *Enchanted Journey*, for the Spanaway Elementary School, Spanaway, Washington. This fused glass wall mural measures 40 inches high by 25 feet long and required the breadth of his technical prowess to create and install.

Since the early 1980s, this pioneer of the Northwest fusing movement has been discovering, fine-tuning, and introducing groundbreaking aesthetic and technical developments in kiln working. La Londe taught fusing classes for Bullseye in glass facilities around the United States and in Canada from 1983 to 1988, and has authored two books, *Richard La Londe: Fused Glass Art and Technique*, and *Richard La Londe and Friends: Fused Glass, Vitreous Enamels and Other Techniques*.

Over the years, La Londe has completed a total of 15 public works including *Enchanted Journey*. "Spiritual, 'touch the earth' kind of art is appealing to kids, one of the reasons I've gotten so many jobs in junior highs and elementary schools."

Enchanted Design

La Londe's aesthetic approach to *Enchanted Journey* includes realistic images mixed with fantasy. "My intention is that this might lead the viewer to see new things and develop ideas that emerge over time."

Ascending from the lower level landing and climbing the staircase, viewers move through the mural where La Londe's stream links themes of past to present to future through the seasons—winter, spring, summer, and autumn. Salmon eggs represent children waiting to emerge into the community, and returning salmon illustrate the cycle of life.

As viewers climb the stairs, the trees and children grow. Big trees and the path merging into the unknown forest represent the future. The children who have grown into adults now plant trees with their children. "This embraces the idea of family, generations, and continuity. This can be families, friends, growth, and learning supported by the school." As the staircase is descended, viewers move from future through present to past, representing ancestors and history. The stream ties La Londe's story together.

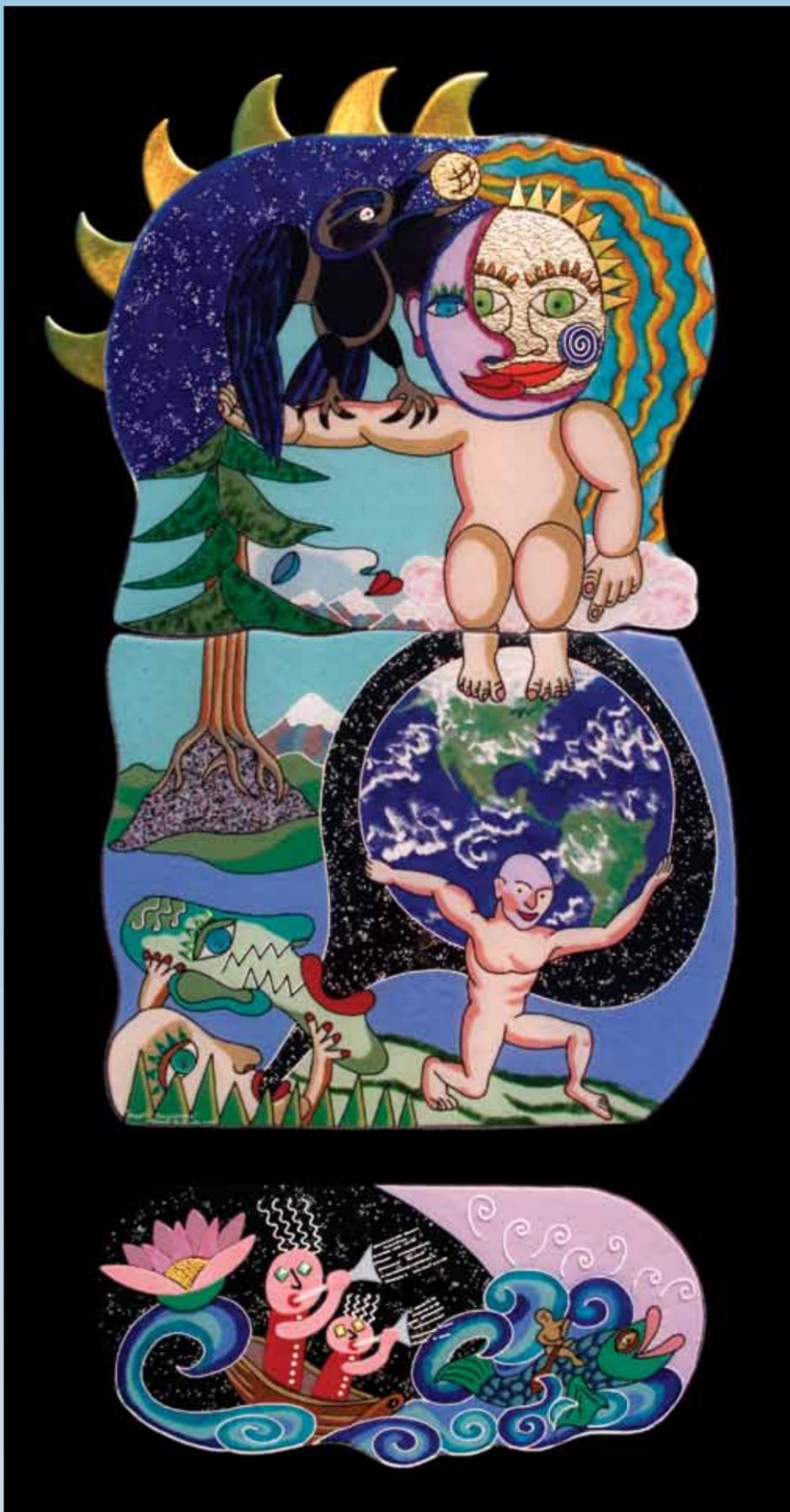


Richard La Londe, *Look Too See*, 52" x 76", 1992. Fused Bullseye glass and dichroic.

Technical Journey

Using a technique similar to sandpainting, La Londe sprinkled crushed colored glass that is ground to the size of granulated sugar onto a sheet of clear Bullseye glass. The piece is fused in an electric kiln at 1550°F. Once fired and annealed, the panel is flipped over and fired a second time to create visual depth. "I use no paint, pens, or pencils—just glass with a few embellishments of gold or silver leaf and dichroic metallic-coated glass."

Six sections consist of four panels, each measuring 20 inches high by 23 inches wide. These are attached to a 1/16-inch aluminum sheet with silicone adhesive, which is screwed to a 3/4-inch-thick piece of plywood that has been anchored to the wall.



Richard La Londe, *Mystic Messenger*, 56" x 28", 1994. Liquid glass line technique with fused crushed glass, dichroic glass, and gold leaf.



Richard La Londe, *Birds*, a group of which the largest is 13" x 8", 2012. Recycled float glass, metal, and enamels dimensionally fused and displayed on a steel stand.



Richard La Londe, *Dragon Rattle Shaker*, 20" x 13" x 3", 2004. Bronze, fused and sagged Bullseye glass with a curly maple handle.

The Viewers' Interpretation

La Londe's art is a window into a world that straddles dreams and reality. His challenge is to blend exquisite craftsmanship with artistic vision, but it is up to the viewer to provide the final interpretation.

Honored by their response to the mural, La Londe knows that his audience can grow and be inspired by new ideas each time they revisit his artwork. "I never liked to write up explanations of what the work means. I like people to put their own ideas with the work. The pieces are idea generators for people. They cause viewers to reflect on their own lives and provide points of reference to ponder."

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See the March/April 2014 issue of *Glass Art* for more information about the evolution of La Londe's aesthetic and technical approach to fused glass.