

DAVE LAMURE

# Turning Chaos Into Order

*By Robyne Robinson*



When Evelyn Tennyson, owner of Two Old Crows Gallery in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, asked Dave LaMure to create a monumental sculpture in honor of her late husband's passion—trout fishing—he hesitated before giving her a definite answer. "I said, 'Let me research it,'" he recalls.

LaMure was so focused on the unique vessels he was making that he wasn't sure he wanted to take time away from those creations to take on a trout commission. That changed as he began his research and became hooked on the story of the Native Cutthroat Trout, which was thought to be extinct for 70 years. He contacted Jim White, a friend and fish biologist in Durango, Colorado, who was a member of a team that had rediscovered that fish in the San Juan River basin. When compared with samples collected in 1874 by Charles Aiken and given to the Smithsonian Institution, they were found to be a genetic match. "I was excited to bring this story to light," LaMure says.

The result is a sculpture LaMure titled *Native* that will soon be installed in Pagosa Springs, near the San Juan River. The piece, which is 7.5-feet wide, features three fish and "feeds the imagination of what fish might look like under water," LaMure says. That sculpture has also been juried into the 62nd Annual Exhibition of the Society of Animal Artists, which opens September 24 in Redding, California, and will run through January 1, 2023.



*Becoming the Moose*, bronze, 32" by 14" by 14"

*"Many religious practices and indigenous cultures speak of oneness. Is my oneness at birth, conception, death, ego, my body, my family, my community, my universe, my world? The moose is oneness in this."*

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*(Left) Sonoran Serenade*, bronze, 17" by 14" by 14"

*"Finding a roadrunner skull in the desert made me chuckle, as I pondered the desert ecology and how many lives were spared when this efficient predator turned to bones. This work won the Davy Crockett Artist Choice Award at the Briscoe Museum's Night of the Artist in March 2022."*

No matter what LaMure is creating, he stays open to the moment, something he became aware of 23 years ago while he was working on a



*Buffalo Whispers, 7' by 5'*

*"Are the things we've experienced gone, or do they still whisper to us in a iconic way?"*

raku bowl for an art festival. "It was called the *Blue Buffalo Dance*," he says. "The story involved the plight of the iconic buffalo and its cultural significance throughout history."

Suddenly, a buffalo antler that LaMure had tacked to the studio wall fell directly into 30-inch clay

pot. Most sculptors would have been devastated. LaMure, however, was inspired and left the antler where it had landed. "The horns of the buffalo are protruding out, as if there were buffalo pushing their way out from the inside of the clay vessel," he says. "The antler indentation

created a cliff-like edge that I had painted with a blue glaze. It looked like buffalo were being driven off a buffalo jump."

LaMure took the pot to Albuquerque, New Mexico, for the Weems Art Festival, where he and more than 300 other artists competed for the Best in Show award. That damaged piece of clay, which most other artists would have scrapped, won the coveted award—and was accompanied by a kiss from actress Sophia Loren, one of the festival's celebrity judges.

Mindfulness has provided LaMure with incredible opportunities while working in clay. "When I throw on the wheel, something may occur I didn't foresee," he says. "This clay is nature I'm putting energy into—the positive and negative attractions of the clay, throwing it, turning chaos into order. The smell of the clay, the feel, how I respond to it—it is a conversation, the force of nature in its rawest form."

It took years for LaMure to develop this philosophical way of thinking about his artwork. As a gifted, but shy, 12-year-old, he found that pottery classes helped him to relax his mind and stay meditative. "I did not fit into a conventional education system," he says. "I had a high IQ but didn't do well in school. I have dyslexia. It was a struggle for me. I would read a sentence backward; numbers were transposed. It moved me to be imaginative, creative, and quiet."

Growing up investigating the high desert sands of Roswell, New Mexico, LaMure visited the Roswell Museum and Art Center, where he studied decorated pots and vases made by the Anasazi, ancestors of Pueblo Indians who were known for their brilliant creations in clay. "The light shining on the vessels made them a touchstone to history, to an intriguing past we could never know," he says.

LaMure went on to earn a degree in business management but spent much of his time painting and sculpting in his art classes. Following his graduation, he got a few job offers in his field but opted to con-



*Native, 17 ½" by 26" by 15 ½"*

*"This is the story of native trout rediscovered after they were determined extinct. This work is to envision a symphony in the river of time that we deserve to preserve."*

tinue working as a whitewater guide, something he had done during summers while he was in college on the Salmon River. "Rivers and streams are the lifeblood of the Northwest," he says, adding that they also are invigorating, inspiring, and challenging.

When it comes to art forms, LaMure says, bas-relief is the most challenging. "It's making something look 3D in a limited depth or foreshortened depth. The interesting thing about my work is that it is created on a round clay vessel, 360



*Vigilance, bronze, 62" by 72" by 13"*

*"A male and female red tailed hawk protect a nest egg. That egg has all the continents of the earth on it. We are vigilant to our home."*



*Nine Muses, 25" by 15 ¼" by 15 ¼"*

*"This is for my sister, Beth, one of my muses of life's potential. That intangible gift resides in each one of us in the center of our being—too discover our potential and know we belong."*

degrees, that looks malleable and flexible. When the form of an animal is integrated into this work, the spirit of the piece is altered with life."

LaMure uses his vessels as a metaphor for carrying his life experiences. "That includes my internal conversations," he says. "What do I choose to store in my vessel? There is an intangible space that makes up

who I am and gives me the inspiration to achieve what I do."

One of LaMure's most recognizable bronzes, *Serengeti's Crown*, speaks to wilderness and wild places. "My experience traveling through the Serengeti was impressionable," he says. "It is a vast ecosystem in east-central Africa that is famous for its annual great migra-



tions of millions of animals. The secrets and lessons of the natural world will carry us through. There is a peace in wild things, in the wilderness, that will continue to be our greatest resource, the preservation of the wild."

LaMure and his wife Jamie live on 25 acres of land in Kimberly, Idaho, close to the cliffs of the Snake River. "If it weren't for Jamie, I wouldn't be where I am today," he says, adding that they have been together for 38 years. He works in a 30'-by-40' studio that includes a fishing net that hangs from the ceiling and is filled with old bones and antlers from elk and deer that he has collected. Rocks and found objects are displayed throughout the studio, like ancient treasures, while quotes such as "Art is Prayer" are posted on the walls.

LaMure's grandchildren also love to explore nature. "I love my kids [a son and a daughter]," he says. "They're collecting bones now with their kids, showing that fascination and curiosity. I feel we're shielded in our modern world from seeing the cycles of life and how we participate in that cycle.

"When I tap into my experience, the rhythm of all I know and see, I feel the composition; I feel the silhouette. There's emotion from seeing, from being conscious, being



*A Vision of Tomorrow, bronze, 104" by 64" by 64"*

*"Past, present, and future are always happening, and everyone can play a part in a vision of tomorrow."*


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aware. It's everywhere around us. It can manifest from a bird singing. If I pay attention to it, it's there. I want people to feel that with my art, to be pulled toward it."

There's a harmony to LaMure's home and work life that allows him to tap into mindfulness. The result is a myriad of awards and accolades. He participated in the Night of the Artist show at the Briscoe Museum this year, where his piece, *Sonoran Serenade*, won the Artist Choice

Award. He also received the Susan & Robert Polack Prize at the National Sculpture Society's 87th Annual Awards Exhibition for his piece, *Nine Muses* in 2020.

Another of LaMure's sculptures, titled *Golden Brothers*, is featured in the Art in the West exhibition at the High Desert Museum in Bend, Oregon, which runs through September 22, and he has been invited to show his work at the Masters of the American West Exhibition at the Au-

try Museum next February. Staying open to the moment—and to new challenges—has served LaMure well and will continue to do so. 

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*Robyne Robinson lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.*