

KNOXVILLE
MUSEUM OF ART



RICHARD JOLLEY

Cycle of Life: Within the Power of Dreams and the Wonder of Infinity

INTRODUCTION

Cycle of Life: Within the Power of Dreams and the Wonder of Infinity is one of the largest figurative glass-and-steel assemblages in the world. Commissioned in 2009 especially for the Knoxville Museum of Art, it is a game-changer for the KMA in a number of important ways. First, it reveals Richard's exceptional artistic rigor and vision—an aesthetically stunning masterwork that is also an engineering marvel. *Cycle of Life* is also emblematic of the KMA's commitment to the art of the region and to collecting the work of contemporary artists of international repute. Thanks to our exceptional board of trustees, generous supporters, community leaders, and dedicated staff, we are able to present Richard's magnificent sculpture in a refurbished and expanded facility. The 25th Anniversary Campaign funded the comprehensive \$6 million renovation of the museum and its campus, added to the operating endowment, and established a dedicated art acquisition fund. We are grateful to campaign chair Stuart Worden and the hundreds of donors who have made this significant investment at this critical juncture in our history. Now the museum's landmark Edward Larrabee Barnes building glows like new and provides a fitting setting for Richard's magnum opus. We are profoundly grateful to Ann and Steve Bailey, whose extraordinary generosity inspired Richard to 'dream big' (monumentally, in this case). They have immeasurably enriched the KMA experience for our visitors, and provided a new must-see highlight amid the region's cultural offerings.

—David Butler, Executive Director

ABOUT THE KNOXVILLE MUSEUM OF ART

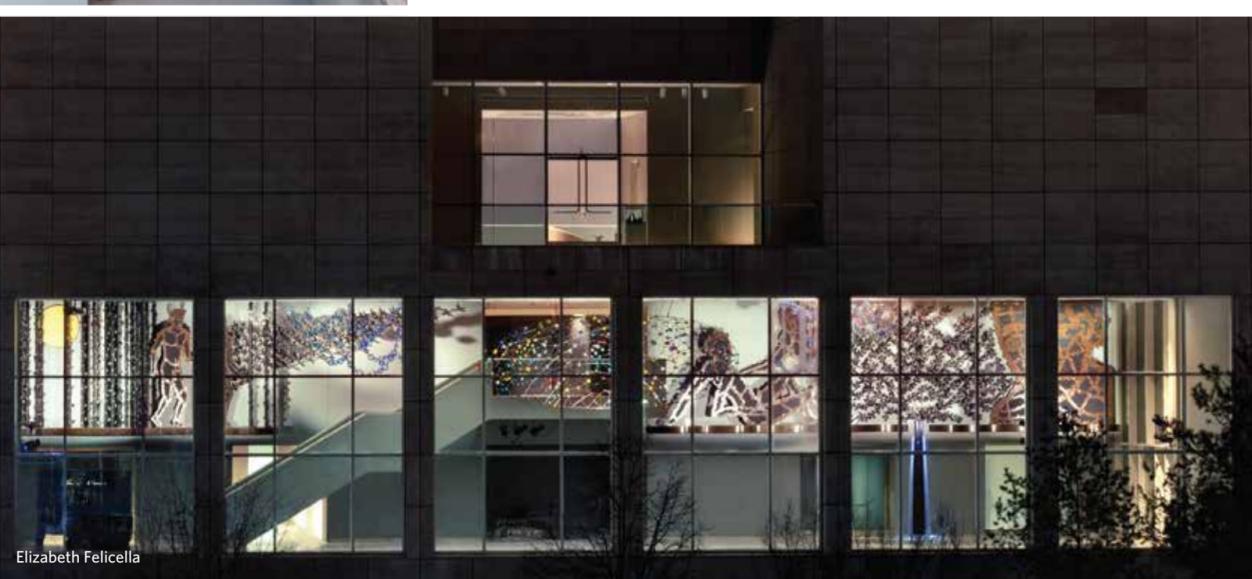
The KMA celebrates the art and artists of East Tennessee, presents new art and new ideas, serves and educates diverse audiences, and enhances Knoxville's quality of life.

KNOXVILLE
MUSEUM OF ART



FREE ADMISSION

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Richard Jolley
Cycle of Life: Within the Power of Dreams and the Wonder of Infinity, 2009-2014
 Blown, cast, and acid-etched glass, and welded steel with patina
 12 x 105 x 30 feet
 Knoxville Museum of Art, gift of Ann and Steve Bailey

Elizabeth Felicella

Cycle of Life: Within the Power of Dreams and the Wonder of Infinity

Trees, birds, a woman, a man, sky, stars, and dreams: these are essential elements of human experience. The nature of that experience, and basic questions about identity and immortality, are universal concerns.

Internationally recognized Knoxville artist Richard Jolley was commissioned by the Knoxville Museum of Art to create a monumental and enduring artwork that would fill this Ann and Steve Bailey Hall, something on the scale of what might be discovered in the buildings and palaces of the world’s capitals. Something inclusive, that might speak to everyone. No committees guided or made decisions on the subject and scope of this work: it is Jolley’s pure vision.

The Ann and Steve Bailey Hall is a defining feature of the Museum’s Clayton Building, which was designed in the mid 1980s and

completed in 1990—on the site of the 1982 World’s Fair—by the renowned American architect Edward Larrabee Barnes. Based in New York City, Barnes designed buildings for corporations and museums around the United States that have become iconic expressions of modernist architecture, and the creation of a large, site-specific artwork for this building was a complex venture.

The Knoxville Museum of Art is a forum for new art and ideas, focusing on contemporary art and highlighting artists living and working in East Tennessee. As an established, local sculptor who has built a successful national career, Jolley was a natural choice for this project. What made the choice a bold one were the artist’s nontraditional materials of glass and steel, and his distinctive Pop-inspired narrative style. For Jolley, the five-year-long project has been an opportunity—and challenge—of a lifetime.

All of my work is about the human experience in the end. What I always do is put the poetry first and let everything else fall behind it.—Richard Jolley

The title of the Ann and Steve Bailey Hall’s installation, *Cycle of Life: Within the Power of Dreams and the Wonder of Infinity*, is

descriptive. Positioned high on the wall, Jolley’s flat, dark sculptures represent a man and woman in nature, symbolic of human life on earth. The figures are everyman and everywoman—or anyone and everyone—and the story they tell is one we know well. Each scene of Jolley’s massive glass and steel frieze may be appreciated as part of the larger narrative depicting the cycle of life, or we can focus on individual images. *Cycle of Life* asks fundamental questions about identity and mortality: Who are we? What are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going?

Jolley’s life cycle begins with place: a moon-lit forest of poplars in winter, a tree commonly found in Tennessee. This is the primordial forest, a metaphor for where we come from and where we live. A man and a woman emerge, walking side by side, preceded by birds taking flight. The primordial state, emergence, and flight are the stages, Jolley explains, of youth moving toward maturity.

On the opposite side, a woman approaches a man in love and desire, next to a spreading tree of life in full foliage. The tree of life, a potent symbol for many cultures, represents growth, proliferation,

generative and regenerative processes, inexhaustible life, and immortality. Next to this leafy tree, a man’s face gazes out into the room, contemplating a starry sky that stretches across the ceiling. These stages, Jolley says, represent maturity, and the gradual progression from physical concerns to spiritual ones as we age and confront our mortality.

The universe that Jolley’s male figure contemplates is one of beauty and wonder. The three-dimensional sky structure, which hangs overhead in the Bailey Hall, should be imagined as infinite. It consists of many-colored glass orbs mounted on a Buckminster Fuller-inspired elliptical grid of interconnecting triangles. The architecture of this universe reflects the molecular structures of life on earth, and it symbolically unites our lives, as individuals, with the constellations of the heavens above.

As Jolley says, great patrons make great projects. *Cycle of Life* could not exist without the encouragement and support of Ann and Steve Bailey, who funded the installation. It is an inspiring project, and an extraordinary accomplishment.

—Tina Oldknow, curator of modern glass, Corning Museum of Glass

CYCLE OF LIFE: A SEVEN-PART NARRATIVE



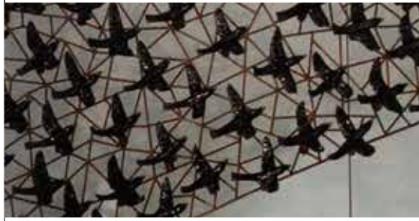
PRIMORDIAL

A moonlit forest of poplars—trees indigenous to East Tennessee—are studded with hundreds of sprouting leaves and buds.



EMERGENCE

A man and woman made of cast black glass slabs secured by a steel armature are shown walking out into the world together.



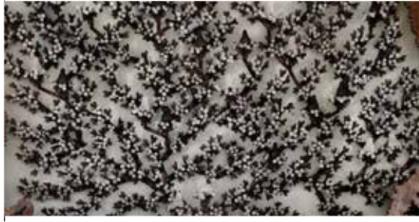
FLIGHT

A flock of more than 130 glossy, blown-glass blackbirds soar skyward, referencing the journey to adulthood.



DESIRE

A man and woman prepare to embrace, signifying the generative force of life.



TREE OF LIFE

Rising 22 feet from floor to ceiling is an ancient symbol of abundance and fertility adorned with thousands of glistening leaves, pomegranate blossoms, and doves.



CONTEMPLATION

A lone, massive head signals a time of quiet introspection during life’s final stages. The dark glass face is bisected by a beam of light made of acid-etched crystal, hinting at an impending transition from physical to spiritual states.



SKY

The heavens above are represented by “Universe”, a central constellation of multi-colored orbs of silvered glass, flanked by “Meta-Physical”, serpentine strands of pale blue spheres.

photography this page by Elizabeth Felicella



CYCLE OF LIFE: TECHNICAL INFORMATION

SIZE: 105 feet long, 12 feet high (22 feet high from the base of Tree of Life to its highest branch)

WEIGHT: 7-8 tons.

SITE PREPARATION : In order to safely accommodate the tremendous weight of the work, an array of structural interventions to the Ann and Steve Bailey Hall was necessary, including the addition of dozens of support beams. Jolley created three massive metal plinths—each weighing 1,500 pounds and anchored onto the wall approximately 11 feet above the floor—to serve as a structural foundation.

COMPONENTS : Thousands of individually blown and cast glass elements, and thousands of individually welded metal supports.

TIME: It took the artist and his team of studio assistants more than five years to create.

INSTALLATION : Delivered on flatbed trucks, the work’s largest sections were hoisted by crane riggers over the KMA’s South Garden wall.

RICHARD JOLLEY: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Richard Jolley, internationally recognized as one of today’s most accomplished and inventive glass sculptors, was born in Wichita, Kansas, in 1952. As a youth, he moved to Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and in 1970 began his art training at Tusculum College in Greenville, Tennessee, studying under noted glass artist Michael Taylor. After receiving his B.F.A. from George Peabody College in Nashville (now part of Vanderbilt University), Jolley continued graduate studies at North Carolina’s Penland School of Crafts, under the instruction of studio glass artist Richard Ritter.

Since establishing his studio in Knoxville, in 1975, Jolley has participated in over 65 solo museum and gallery exhibitions throughout the United States and in Australia, Europe, Israel, and Japan. In 1997 the Mint Museum of Art in Charlotte, North Carolina, organized the first extensive exhibition of Jolley’s mature glass sculptures; and in 2002, the Knoxville Museum of Art presented the first major retrospective of Jolley’s work, which later traveled nationally to 14 museums over five years. In 2011, the Mobile Museum of Art presented *Richard Jolley and Tommie Rush: A Life in Glass*, featuring an extensive body of work by Jolley as well as by his wife, Tommie Rush, a respected glass artist in her own right. In addition, Jolley’s works have been showcased in numerous important museum surveys of contemporary glass, including the Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art in Sapporo, Japan; the International Exhibition of Glass in Kanazawa, Japan; the Indianapolis Museum of Art; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; and the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh.

At present, Jolley’s work is represented in more than 33 public collections, including the Carnegie Museum of Art; the Corning Museum of Glass; the Frederick Weisman Art Foundation, Los Angeles, the Knoxville Museum of Art; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Jolley has also been honored with a variety of awards, commissions, and invitational workshops in the United States and abroad. In 2007, he became the youngest visual artist to receive the Tennessee Governor’s Distinguished Artist Award; in 2010 the Art Alliance for Contemporary Glass named him as that year’s Individual for Outstanding Accomplishment in the Field. In addition to his *Cycle of Life* project for the KMA, Jolley has received several other prestigious private and public commissions, including *Everything and the Cosmos* (2007), installed at 7 World Trade Center, New York City. In 2011, he was invited to create a body of new work at the Berengo Studio in Murano, Italy.

For more information on the artist, visit www.richardjolley.com.



photography this page by Hei Park