

LAROUCHE

LAROUCHE, QUEBEC, CANADA

Claude Simard

From 2000

Everything is possible. You can do something great even in the smallest of contexts. CLAUDE SIMARD

An extraordinary and fascinating, not to mention ambitious, artwork is taking shape in rural Quebec under the watchful eye of Canadian artist Claude Simard (b. 1956). The site, and to a certain extent, the subject, of the installation is Larouche, a village of around one thousand inhabitants. It is Simard's hometown, and although he left in 1976, his ties to the village where his family still lives remain strong. His bold vision for Larouche is nothing short of turning the village into a living, breathing work of art. This involves reshaping the visual landscape through the insertion of built elements

integrated into the existing environment. The project is conceived as a single, evolving work, in which the new elements are not randomly imposed, but carefully situated to guide the viewer on a voyage of discovery throughout the village. This journey facilitates contact between a variety of cultures, exposure to different art tendencies and forms of expression, and highlights the surrounding natural beauty of the area.

The project was conceived in 2000, and Simard anticipates spending a decade on it. To date, this work-in-progress has involved the purchase of eighteen buildings and their transportation to Larouche. The majority of these are from Quebec and include the village's first outpost (1890 – Larouche was founded in 1895), a Quebec house and two presbyteries (priests' houses) – one from 1895 and the other from the 1920s, an old cabinet-making warehouse and a number of houses from the 1930s and 1940s. Many of these have been saved from destruction and moved to the centre of Larouche, creating a walk through the traditional architecture of the region. A stroll down main street immediately makes clear the all-pervasive influence of the Catholic Church in the formation of the identity of the region.

The most astonishing elements in the transformation of Larouche are the buildings transplanted from southern India, which Simard



Top The Canadian village of Larouche lies nestled in the hills of rural Quebec. Above Several Quebec buildings have been transported to Larouche. The right-hand building will be an exhibition space for video art, while the building on the left will house a permanent exhibition of work by Canadian artist Arthur Villeneuve (1910–90).