

From *TRANSFORMATIONS: The art of John Van Alstine*
The Hyde Collection, June 11, - September 18, 2022

Unit 3 wall panel

Re-Picturing the Landscape: The Easel Landscape Series

The Easel Landscape Series set out to examine and question the accepted convention of the frame as convenient container, signaling and acting as a “sanctioning” device for art.

When I arrived in Laramie, Wyoming for my new teaching post at the university in 1976 like most people I eagerly took photos of the incredible western landscape. But I would inevitably be disappointed with the result, feeling that most of the experience was left outside the frame, and the photograph was only capturing a small bit of the experience.

*In 1978, I was working on what I was calling The Gallery Drawing Series, three-dimensional steel drawings that project from the wall of a white cube gallery. I had welded together a six-foot-high flat steel easel as part of the series and, one day, on a lark, I stuck it outside in the landscape. I had an immediate association with surrealist Rene Magritte and such paintings as **The Human Condition**, in which he cleverly presented the viewer with the curious image of a painted canvas on an easel of the view through the window while also acting as a window.*



7.

The Human Condition, 1933 by Rene Magritte. image courtesy National Gallery of Art



4.
JVA with easel at Muffin Rocks Wyoming, 1978

Unit 3 Objects



JVA Steel Easel, 1978, welded steel, 74" h x 45" w x 5/8" d

All Photo: 24 x 30" (all editions of 10)



Abstract Easel Landscape, Nebraska, 1979, archival digital ink on rag paper, 24 x30" (edition of 10)



Amish Easel Landscape, Lancaster, PA, 1979, archival digital ink on rag paper, 24 x30" (edition of 10)



Arches Easel Landscape, homage to Jackson Pollock, Arches National Park, Moab, UT, 1980, archival digital ink on rag paper, 24 x30" (edition of 10)



Abstract Easel Landscape (soybeans), Iowa, 1980 archival digital ink on rag paper, 24 x30”
(edition of 10)



Dance Hall Easel Landscape, Bosler, Wyoming, 1979, archival digital ink on rag paper, 24 x30”
(edition of 10)



Untitled Easel Landscape, Beartooth Pass, Montana – approaching north entrance to Yellowstone National Park, 1980, archival digital ink on rag paper, 24 x30” (edition of 10)



Monet Easel Landscape, eastern Wyoming, 1979, archival digital ink on rag paper, 24 x30"
(edition of 10)

Audio tour text:

The Easel Landscape Series became an obsession. It prompted and, in effect, provided an excuse to travel and explore, mostly in the west. I welded a ski-like rack to the back of my van and took the easel with me everywhere. The series developed into a full-blown outdoor site-specific installation project, taking clues from many sources beyond Magritte, including contemporary abstract painting, idealized “calendar” landscapes and the plein air paintings of Claude Monet. In his Haystack and Cathedral series, he captured the same site at different times of day and under different light conditions via quick sketches. I made similar images with photographs.



Colorado Easel Landscape, near Marble, Colorado, 1979, archival digital ink on rag paper, 24 x30"
(edition of 10)



Wyoming Easel Landscape, near Gillette, Wyoming, 1979, archival digital ink on rag paper, 24 x30" (edition of 10)