

**Object list with label text – JOHN VAN ALSTINE**  
**THE VIEW 2024**

Title: ***Forging Creative Journeys - the Art of John Van Alstine***

Exhibition dates: 7/28/24 - 9/22/24

Exhibition location: View Kashiwa Eco Gallery

[Location: Entrance Atrium \(center of Lobby\)](#)



**T-18-07     \$50,000**

***Blue Ara***, 2018,

Pigmented granite and steel, 146h x 60w x 36"d

Label:

*Many of my works incorporate anvils, either real or cast. The shape of an anvil is suggestive of a boat or vessel and implies a journey, which interests me. Moreover, as a metal worker, the anvil is the place where I physically and conceptually forge things together; there is an art spirit that comes off the anvil. It's almost like an altar. I've titled many of these pieces **Ara**, which is Latin for altar. Also, to me, the anvil is the quintessential heavy object, and to get it up in the air creates a wonderful sense of tension.*

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[Location: End of lobby-in front of or near windows and entrance to hallway](#)



**T-23-08                     \$28,500**

***SISYPHEAN CIRCLE (twirl IV)***, 2023,

Granite/galvanized and powder-coated steel, 42h x46w x11"d

Label:

*I have used the **Sisyphean Myth** frequently to comment on the creative process, and it seems particularly germane in a different way in relation to our recent Covid situation particularly when viewed through the lens of French existentialist Albert Camus. As the world struggled with the Covid pandemic and political regimes that deny science, we are all confronted with the symbolic task of pushing our stone upward, a seemingly unending task as we deal with the new realities that have been thrown in our path. I am reminded of Camus' words in his essay **Myth of Sisyphus**, "we must imagine Sisyphus happy;" or maybe*

even more poignantly in **The Plague**, "the only way to fight the plague is with decency." This new **Sisyphean Circle (Lunge)** employs a similar formal vocabulary – circles, stones, arcs, incline planes- but the focus is shifted to confront, understand and give an artist's voice to our current situation.

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[Location: Gallery](#)



T-16-21 \$36,500

**SISYPHEAN CIRCLE 10-16-16**, 2016,  
Granite, galvanized and powder coated steel, 57h x52w x18"  
[JVA Ped and platform stack](#)

Label:

*In the **Sisyphean Circle** series, the formal arrangement of the stone and steel elements suggest a figure frozen in the act of prying or pushing a stone. This struggle parallels that of the mythological Sisyphus who was condemned to an eternity of pushing a stone to the top of a mountain only to have it roll back down. In many ways this series is a self-portrait as I am continually (and often literally) pushing stones to a creative peak and, once reached, compelled to start again on a new work.*



01. [\(label imbedded image\)](#)

*However, viewing the creative process simply as "endless toil" is undeniably negative, and I prefer to view the myth and metaphor through the lens of French existentialist writer Albert Camus. In his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*, he points out that the idea of reaching one's final destination is not always the most important. In fact, if one "reconsiders Sisyphus" as Camus suggests, the struggle or journey reveals itself as ultimately the most meaningful. As in life, this notion is at the core of the creative process in which the act of making triumphs over the object or final product.*

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T-10-12      \$26,500

**ICARUS (frail wings of vanity), 2010**

Slate/pigmented and sealed steel, 34h x43w x9"d

[JVA Pedestal](#)

Label:

**ICARUS (frail wings of vanity)** is a testament to the enduring power of myth and the fragility of human ambition and stands as a striking embodiment of the tragic tale of Icarus from Greek mythology.

*In general, found, natural stone is a central focus in my work and when “foraging” for material at the top of a huge pile of abandoned slate, I stumbled on this amazing stone in the shape of a feather/wing. I was ecstatic - this stone had the potential to fly!*

*In the Greek myth, **Icarus** ignores the warnings of his father **Deadalus**, who “sculpted” feather wings bound with wax for their escape from Crete. He flew too high and close to the sun, the wax melted and he fell to his death. **Icarus**' ill-fated flight is an exploration of the human condition, inviting viewers to confront their own ambitions, limitations, and the eternal dance between aspiration and consequence.*

*Like many artists I use mythology as a scaffold – to hang or support contemporary or personal ideas and communicate the universality of the collective human experience. Our myths connect us as individuals to the greater whole and see uncanny parallels in our current political world, particularly the hubris and vanity of one individual that repeatedly claims ... “I alone can fix it.”*

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T-22-17      \$4200

**CRONUS II (stone swallower), 12-2022**

Riverstone/pigmented and sealed steel, 6h x13w 6"d

[JVA shelf](#)

Label:



02. Rhea presenting Cronus with the stone wrapped in swaddling bands ([label imbedded image](#))

When Cronus, the Greek mythological figure, learns that he was destined to be overthrown by one of his children like his father was before him, he swallowed all the children Rhea bore him as soon as they were born. When Rhea had her sixth and final child, Zeus, she spirited him away and hid him in Crete, giving Cronus a rock wrapped in swaddling bands to swallow instead, thus saving her youngest son.

Zeus grew up and learned the truth about his father and siblings. He tricked **Cronus** into drinking a potion that made him vomit out his children and the stone. This stone is also known as the Omphalos Stone, which means the navel of the world.

In "**CRONUS II (stone swallower)**", the round stone is centered within the spiraling circular element suggesting it has been "ingested" by Cronus as the myth tells us. It is resting on a red, expressively torqued steel element which presents and intriguing ambiguity; is the red element the swaddling clothes, or the tail of vomit? Perhaps both?

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T-15-19

\$8200

**River Angler, 2015**

Vermont slate, pigmented and sealed steel, 14.5h x 23 w x 4.5" d

[JVA shelf – or ped?](#)

Label:

*I live on a river and I enjoy fly fishing, especially in the warm weather. I often look forward to it, along with a cold beer, as a reward after a long, hot day in the studio. And as you probably surmised, even if this is the first time you have seen my sculpture, "breathing life" into inanimate materials is a central tenant of my work.*

*In **River Angler**, the horizontal steel element, which we know is stiff and unbendable, is imbued with a visual fluidity that echoes a floating fly line as it is cast out into the flowing river. The slate and arced steel elements kick back in repose, balancing the composition and suggesting a sense of relaxation and contentment.*

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**T-20-27**                      **\$12,200**

**JUGGLER 5-20**, 2020

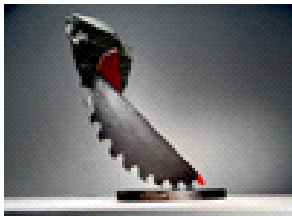
Bronze and riverstone, 25h x19w x9"d

[JVA Ped](#)

Label:

***Juggler 5-20** is in some ways a self-portrait suggesting how I work in the studio - literally juggling individual elements of each sculpture until they are in the perfect position and then are frozen in time and space by the act of welding. Juggling can also be seen more universally in that we are all jugglers of a kind, something that in the Covid year of 2020 when this piece was created, more than ever painfully confronted us as we struggled to keep our responsibilities and activities such as family, work, play etc., all up, balanced and hopefully in control.*

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**T-24-04**                      **\$4200**

**Kerf VI (red-tip)**, 2024

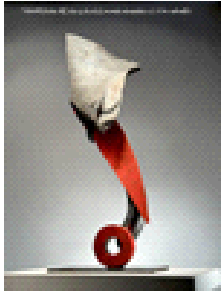
Green NY granite and pigmented and sealed steel, 15h x15w x4d

[JVA shelf](#)

*As a sculptor I've always been interested in tools, implements, and instruments. I see them as extensions of the artists' hand, important allies. Like **Blue Ara** with its flying anvil on display in the entrance lobby, I am drawn to their raw, efficient beauty of form dictated by function and how these physical characteristics can be employed in creating a compelling visual experience.*

*In **Kerf VI (red-tip)**, we sense the potential moment of the saw fragment poised to arc down and cut. The series of "teeth" provide a visual cadence that suggests it's in motion; we can almost hear the sound of sawing in our mind's eye.*

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T-23-03 \$16,500

**POINTE (kyklos II)**, 2023

Slate/pigmented and sealed steel, 46h x20w x8" d)

[https://www.johnvanalstine.com/docs/Pique\\_Kyklos\\_III\\_T-23-03.htm](https://www.johnvanalstine.com/docs/Pique_Kyklos_III_T-23-03.htm)

**JVA Pedestal**

Label:

*"**POINTE (kyklos II)**, falls in the "figurative camp" of my work and refers to **Pointe** technique of classical ballet where the dancer supports all body weight on the tips of fully extended feet with the help of **pointe** shoes.*



03. *(label imbedded image)*

*As in much of my work, I try to lift or "choreograph" the earth-bound elements of stone and steel to make them dance. It is my hope that the title and its associations, will more clearly frame this abstract work and provide better insight and understanding into my intent.*

*The subtitle "**kyklos**", is Greek for **ring or circle** and references the lower steel element in the sculpture. It gives the piece a "teetering or "perched-like" feeling that one might associate with a dancer on **pointe**. Also, like circles in my "Sisyphean Series", suggests the circular and unending nature in the act of creating... the artist must keep "rolling the stone" upward.*

*Color plays a major role in this piece and has always been a challenge for me. Having artistically "come of age" in the 1970's, during a time of "truth to materials," painting or applying color to sculpture is, for the most part, an uncomfortable proposition for me. As a result, I alternately embrace and reject the use of color. My use of red, now a very important and almost signature feature in my work, exemplifies this. I*

*push out in a new direction, extend to an uncomfortable point, and then cycle back; hopefully not to the exact same spot. I stay there for a while and then launch out again.*

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**T-23-25 \$5600**

***Auger Falls Landscape 11-17, 2023***

Vermont granite and pigmented and sealed steel, 12h x 26w x 5"d

[JVA shelf](#)

Label:

***Auger Falls*** is a series of rapids channeled through a narrow flume near Wells, NY in the southern Adirondacks where I live and work. It takes its name (misspelled as 'Auger') from its long and auguring appearance. There is a large dominate stone at its center that splits the water and starts it "spinning."



**04.** Auger Falls, Wells, NY (*label imbedded image*)

*The sculpture takes the viewer on a visual journey of the falling water. Starting the with the elevated natural stone, one's eye follows the diagonal downward movement of the piece sliding through the torqued central steel element. It finishes with a nearly horizontal, precariously positioned linear steel tine (from an old pitch folk) suggesting a settling at flat water.*

*This entire ensemble is precariously perched on red colored (indicating danger or warning), threaded machine fragment, portending that the natural splendor we enjoy is indeed precarious.*

*As in all of my "landscape works", I am hoping to convey the power and beauty of the natural world that Inspires my work. And, at the same time, explore the interaction of natural forces and the built environment, conveying the frequent tension in the American experience when wilderness and the human-built environment intersect.*

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T-21-12 \$5500

**PYXIS AWRY 2021 (plunge -blackbuck II)**, 2021,

bronze, 7.5h x 18 x 8" d

[JVA shelf](#)



T-20-75 \$5500

**PYXIS AWRY 2020 (plunge III)**, 2020,

bronze, 6h x16w x10"d

[JVA shelf](#)



T-21-22 \$4800

**PYXIS AWRY 2021 XXVI**, 2021,

patinated and pigmented bronze, 5h x14w x8"d

[JVA shelf](#)

Label for three Pyxis sculptures:

**Pyxis** is a small, faint constellation in the southern hemisphere, it is known as the **mariner's compass**.

**Awry** suggests turned, twisted, or askew - off the correct or expected course. The works feature a "vessel" form - historically understood in art and literature as a symbol or metaphor for the self, a group of people, or even all humankind.

I began the Pyxis Awry series in 1987 as a stealthy environmental statement and returned to it frequently. During 2020-21, as a reaction to the "Covid" crisis, I created over 40 new works in the series conveying my feeling that America was seriously off course in its response and political leadership.

If the vessel's compass is **awry**, it will likely end up adrift, untethered, off course. Like the "mariners" in Hieronymus Bosch's 1491 painting "Ship of Fools" who have lost their navigational bearings (their inner compass), the vessel and its occupants will likely end up ... in a bad place.

My intent is to raise awareness as to the state of our moral compasses; our decisions and actions - and to shed light on the resulting consequences, whether they are personal, political, or environmental.





05. Hieronymus Bosch, **Ship of Fools**, 1491, Panel painting, detail. Louvre Museum, Paris. *(label imbedded image)*

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T-21-37

\$4800

**FUNAMBULIST XVII**, 2021,

Sacandaga River stone/pigmented and sealed steel, 22h x13w x5"d

**JVA shelf - or narrow pedestal**

Label:

*The title, derived from two Latin words—fūnis meaning rope and ambulāre to walk— refers to a "tight rope walker," a meaning reinforced by the dynamic, horizontal "balanced baton" and the sculpture's overall poise. It suggests great physical balance, agility, and daring, suggesting for some a circus performer. But perhaps more poignantly, the term funambulist also refers to mental agility.*



06. *(label imbedded image)*

Philippe Petit is a French funambulist who gained fame for his high-wire walk between the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City on August 7, 1974. AP Photo: Alan Welner.

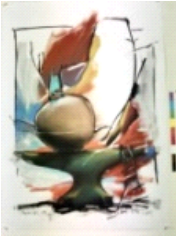
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## Drawings:

### Label:

*Like many sculptors, I have come to find drawing helpful in developing, informing and even challenging my three-dimensional ideas. My drawing process evolved into something similar to clay modeling. I add material by building up pastel and charcoal and by removing or excavating through the layers with vigorous erasures. Like a clay sculpture, the drawings were shaped or modeled rather than drawn.*

*In the end, I present my two-dimensional work like my sculpture, both evoking a spirit found in Japanese calligraphy. I communicate by way of a long arc of production. Each work is created as part of a series. I am not focused on the idea that each individual effort is complete in and of itself. The process of repetition and refinement of the drawings, reveals over time both counter point and collusion with my three-dimensional work. At times, they are stand-alone visual statements, and at others, particularly early on, supportive, and supplemental to my sculptures. Overall, they are an important and integral part of my creative efforts.*



**D-89-05      \$3900**

**STRANGE FRUIT**, 1989,

pastel and mixed media on archival paper, 41 h x 29" w



**D-89-01      \$3900**

**ARA I**, 1989,

charcoal, pastel on archival paper, 41 x 29"



**D-90-04      \$3900**

**RETOOLING (red)**, 1990,

charcoal, pastel and mixed on archival paper, 40 h x 29" w



**D-04-35 \$3900**

**CAMBRE II (red-stone), 2004,**  
pastel and mixed media on archival rag on paper, 41" h x 29" w

Label:

*In "Cambre," my primary intent was to use the title in a figurative context, to make the connection to dance. Cambre is a position in which the dancer is up on toes and bending forward. I think this sculpture successfully suggests that pose.*

*But like many of my titles, it can be interpreted in multiple ways. After all, we all have unique backgrounds and interests, and see and interpret things, especially art, through our own lens and experience. In my case, for example, I come from a background (and I know there are others like me) that when we hear the word **cambre** ... dance is not the first thing that comes to mind. My association is with skiing and how my dad used to store our old wooden boards over the summer by strapping and blocking them to keep the all-important bend or **cambre**. This interpretation, and I am sure there are others, might not be as artsy or sophisticated, but it is there, and meaningful, and connects the art to our real worlds...which is, after all, what artists are really trying to do.*

**Location: [New/added drawings:](#)**

**Outside the gallery (2 verticals 30 x 20"; 1 large vertical 43 x 40") (we can exchange with gallery drawings at install as needed)**



**D-11-19 \$3200**

**TEMPERED BY MEMORY 13, 2011,** charcoal, pastel and mixed on archival paper, 30" h x 22" w



**D-04-38 \$3200**

**SLATE QUILL, 2004,** charcoal, pastel and mixed media on archival paper, 30h x 20" w



**D-04-34 \$3900**

**PLANCHE**, 2004, charcoal, pastel and mixed media on archival paper, 29h x41"w



**D-89-03 \$3900**

**GO-ROUND**, 1989, charcoal, pastel and mixed media on archival paper, 29h x41"w