

Sisyphus' Aviary 1984

Dan Yarbrough (American, b. 1958)

welded and painted steel rebar, painted stones

Loan courtesy of the artist

Dan Yarbrough earned a BFA in sculpture from the Kansas City Art Institute in Kansas City, Missouri.

Sisyphus' Aviary was included in the **Chicago Sculpture International Mile 3** exhibition at Navy Pier in 1984. The title refers to the Greek myth of Sisyphus, who was the son of Aeolus, the King of Thessaly, and Enarete, the founder of Corinth. Crafty and deceitful, he would lure, then murder unsuspecting travelers. His primary offense against the gods was chaining Thanatos, the god of death, to a rock so the deceased could not find their way to the underworld.

Hades, lord of that realm, stepped in and sentenced Sisyphus to push a mammoth stone up a hill. Just as he nearly reached the summit, Sisyphus slipped. The huge stone chased him to the bottom, where he began his task again. Sisyphus continues in his labor to this day.

Albert Camus, the French Existentialist writer and philosopher saw Sisyphus' predicament in modern society and published **The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays**. He commented that, at least for contemporary men and women the task is varied, and if they tired of one stone, there was always another whose color or shape may seem more attractive.

In **Sisyphus' Aviary**, the viewer encounters a group of rocks from which they might choose their burden. The sculpture disappears and reappears from view, depending on what time of day, year, or from which angle it is encountered. Its delicate and open steel tracery functions as a formal counterpoint to the many sculptures in the collection which use flat steel as their primary medium.