

Susan Firestone



Recommended by George Waterman

“To glue” in French is *coller*, the derivation of the word collage. 20th Century collage began in the cubist period (about 1910) with the work of Picasso and Braque. In the late 1940s Matisse, when confined to a wheelchair, began his cutout works by combining colors and shapes simply from cut colored papers. Susan Firestone’s collages have added to these traditions by incorporating her knowledge of ancient mythology. These works have the simplicity of a Matisse Cutout but with the complexity and juxtapositions of surrealism. The symbols mean everything. For example, the snake in older cultures symbolized healing as they entwined around the staff of Asclepius and perhaps empowerment for the Goddess of Knossos Palace in Crete who held forth snakes in her hands. Serpents were part of the initiation rituals and celebrations of Her mysteries of birth and regeneration. Susan Firestone has spent time at sites in what was ancient Crete, Malta, and Greece studying prehistorical cultures, with a focus on female votives and imagery of the Great Mother Goddess.

George Waterman, Fall 2020

Bio

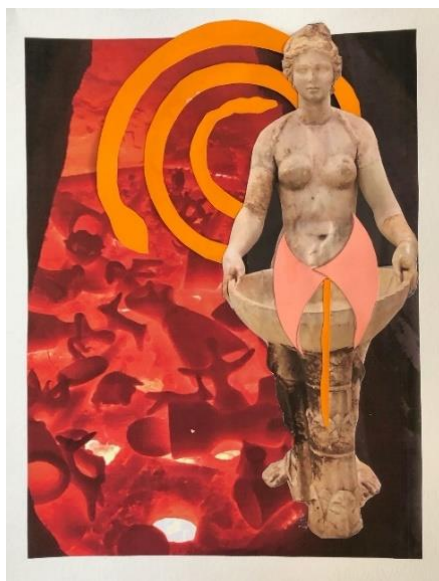
Susan Firestone grew up in Charleston, South Carolina. She attended The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine, and received a MFA from American University in Washington DC in 1972. Twenty-five years later, she relocated to New York City to pursue her interest in psychology in combination with her own art making. Firestone received an MA in Art Therapy from New York University in 2001. In 2013, she completed a PhD in Expressive Therapies at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA and is currently an adjunct professor there in the graduate school. Her dissertation, *Art as a Catalyst for Resilience: Women Artists with a Life-Threatening Illness*, explored the creative process in relation to health and ill health. She is a Board Certified Art therapist (ATR-BC), Licensed Creative Arts (LCAT) Therapist and psychotherapist in private practice in New York City. Firestone has exhibited her work for over 40 years in solo and group shows nationally and

practices as an artist, an art psychotherapist in New York and professor in Cambridge, MA. She has also participated in artist invitational projects in Croatia, Italy and India.

Artist Statement

My art is and has always been concerned with an individual's search for meaning in the present. This continuous inquiry leads to contemplation of images, forms, and stories that are age old and timeless. What is enduring of beliefs, values, discoveries, and yearning? ... Woman/kind/ Man/kind/Children/kind are words that stand for one and for many: humanity as a whole. I am interested in the human condition, its expressions, and connections, which are envisioned in forms of art that reveal emotions, intellect, needs and empathy. The creative process offers a way of communicating and recording the visual search for answers to questions... to the mysteries beyond our knowing and recorded history.

My work has taken many forms over the years as I look for the materials to express ideas, color and content. Collage gives me a chance and "by chance" a way to combine elements, which often reference art historical sources or grab from everyday images and objects to comment on larger concerns from a woman's point of view, which may not be familiar to many. Also, different cultures and their artifacts have enriched my experience and the forms I make. In my votive boxes, possible narratives are contained within a stage-like performance space. Small, assembled objects are handmade or selected from nature or my environment and juxtaposed in their own world to reveal a situation that evolves in the making. Female protagonists speak out in their own voices and reveal their dilemmas with a subtle call for social action. Large constructivist steel sculptures blare out their message and more personal bronzes look to nature for sanctity and grace. I believe that we must always encourage dreams to take form, without question; yet not allow cruelty and brutality with intention to destroy hope and resilience. Art is my language ...how could I be silent?



Susan Firestone 2020 (left to right) Heat and Hygeia. Collage with Silkscreened Papers 9"x12" (11" x 14" framed)



Susan Firestone 2020 (left to right from the top), Kore, and Panacea, Touch, Source, Luna, and Heal, Collage with Silkscreened Papers 9"x12" (11" x 14" framed).