**Artist Statement**

**Susan Paul Firestone**

I describe my artwork as mixed media assemblage. Although I began as a painter, combining ideas, objects, and various materials has been my consistent practice. Most recently I have been working on small pieces that tell a story, often unintentional, as in my process I juxtapose and incorporate elements of drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, and collage in the work. When they reach a culminating moment for me, I contain them in three-dimensional Plexiglas boxes.  Prior to these works and with a larger workspace, certain ideas called for sculptural manifestation in bronze, metal, and neon. For me, finding the materials, which suited the ideas as well as the emotional content was a research challenge and rewarding learning experience.

I have always collected and arranged objects from my encounters that resonate with inner as well as outer experience. I keep sketchbooks, take pictures, and write in journals to capture personal autobiographical material or record events in the immediate moment, as I want the chance for reflection on seminal experiences. At times these drawings, words, or images take form in prints, paintings, books or videos. In a retrospective show, Psychic Stages, a writer described my work as a “metaphoric vision” with “psychic spaces…which are not places of mere personal interiority but are, instead, emblematic of the human condition from the individual to the collective”.

I have spoken of my work as investigating “universal concerns which translate across cultural boundaries and affirm the possibility of the primal sense of wonder. The search continues for a way to make order out of chaos, courage out of fear, hope out of despair, light out of darkness, and as always, dreams out of reality.” As we are confronted with brutality and inhumanity to man and woman as well as wonder, I address my socio-political concerns with domestic violence, rape, child abuse in recent works.