

# Susan McCaslin

Artist Statement

## **About Paper: Eight Sculptural Forms**

November 17 – December 15, 2012

The Institute Library, 847 Chapel Street, New Haven CT

### *Boulder Cluster*

Newspaper, Cardboard, Ink, Paint and Wheat Paste

### *Trap Rock and Boulder*

Newspaper, Cardboard, Ink, Paint and Wheat Paste

My work happens in clusters -- objects and drawings displayed in contextual and spatial relationships.

*Boulder Cluster* is a collection of eight paper mache boulders relating to each other in space and context. Their conversation is a familiar one if you have ever walked through the winter woods. They refer the viewer to past experiences with nature. *Trap Rock and Boulder* is inspired by my view of West Rock from my studio window.

My inspiration is four-fold. As a child, I played at Ringing Rocks, a two-acre field of boulders that were deposited by melting ice floes. If you hit them with a hammer, they rang a clear tone. Twenty years later, I bought *Overlay*, a book by art critic Lucy Lippard based on her visit to the English countryside and the effect it had on her views of the contemporary artists who use the earth as their medium. As I read about ancient rock formations and various contemporary earth works, I was surprised that I was drawn to the ancient more than the contemporary. I was intrigued that these stones and boulders each held long-forgotten histories. Then in 1998, I was introduced to the nineteenth century itinerant, the Old Leather Man who spent each night under the protection of rocks and boulders as he wandered the CT countryside. Parts of my installations about him were drawings of his shelters and caves. And for the past two years, I have lived under the spell of West Rock -- with a direct view of the ridge from my studio windows.

My rocks and boulders are lightweight, created from balled up newspaper attached to cardboard armatures, covered with wheat paste and then painted. The building process is meditative, filled with repetitive movements that allow me time to slow down. Sometimes I get distracted by the newspaper on my worktable. I might lose 15 minutes of working to an article I missed months ago — and reading about summer fashions as the cold winter wind whistles outside offers a bit of momentary warmth. Each boulder is filled with these articles and photos and information. Like the ancients, these rocks hold history and information through the words written on the paper that forms them.

It has taken me many years to come around to this work. I had always thought of myself as a painter, interested in color and the two-dimensional plane. Now that I am working in three-dimensions, it no

longer feels like work and the painting I do on the sculpture is so much more rewarding than on a canvas or on paper.

---

**About Susan McCaslin:**

Susan McCaslin is a 2012 recipient of an artist fellowship grant from Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development. McCaslin is a graduate of Pratt Institute and is currently enrolled in the Graduate Liberal Studies program at Wesleyan University. A former long-time member of the Loft Artists in Stamford CT, McCaslin now lives and works in New Haven CT.



Department of Economic and  
Community Development  
Office of the Arts