

# It's in the book

*Haslett artist displays exhibit; reminisces on past, current successes*

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Staff Writer

An East Lansing resident's unique, award-winning "book art" currently is featured at the 34th Annual Christian Art Show at Ascension Lutheran Church in Haslett.

Susan Hensel started 15 years ago making handmade paper as a hobby, aside from her pottery. Now, she's taken it on as a full-time art, creating books.

"I've always written and my drawings often had text," Hensel said. "Six years ago the words just started flowing out — I couldn't even keep up."

This year marks Hensel's third year winning purchase awards at the Christian Art Show. The show is a collection of contemporary Christian art starting Saturday, March 30 and continuing through April 14.

Her award-winning piece is a photo-montage of an anticipated book she plans to release within the next year.

A graduate of the University of Michigan, Hensel majored in painting and sculpting. Twenty years of her career were spent creating pottery and showing her work at Michigan art fairs.

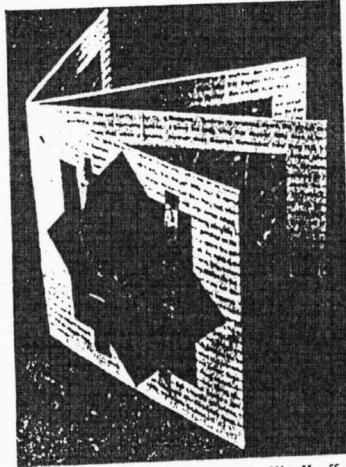
Once she got into making paper, the clay left the studio. She has been concentrating heavily on book art for the past six years.

The books are a combination of drawings, paintings, embossed prints, computer-generated images, sculpture and collage.

Hensel breaks away from the traditional methods of binding the books. Stacks of unbound work and pages that fold in and out are some of the unique ways the books come together.

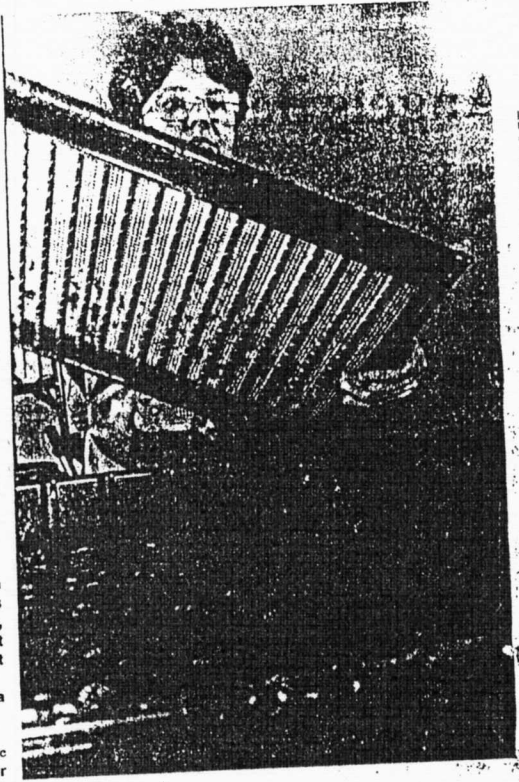
"When you write for artist books, you have to consider how the words work with the imagery," Hensel said. "As an artist I combine all of my forms of art."

In addition to her local showings, Hensel is represented by three galleries out of state. Galleries in Birmingham, Alabama; Santa Monica, California and Santa Fe, New Mexico exhibit the artist's work.



Above photo by Kim Kauffman  
ABOVE: "George's Banana" by Susan Hensel is an original text on Rives and handmade paper, utilizing computer and copier technology, past papers and a belief that one can write about anything.

Hensel describes it as "a tad provocative, a tad optimistic."



Right photo by Stephanie Rose  
RIGHT: Susan Hensel makes paper for another piece of art.

The Edith Lambert Gallery in New Mexico features two pieces from her poet series. These are literary sculptures which display the meaning of a poet's work.

"Letters of Obsession" is a sold-out book with one of five pieces in the Newberry Collection at the Newberry Library in Chicago.

Additional pieces also can be found at the Ruben Collection in New York City and at the University of Washington in

Seattle.

"My book art is made into one-of-a-kind editions and printed by hand," Hensel said. "The books are also entirely my writing, with unique binding."

Hensel's passion for her art also involves mentoring students with an interest in paper-making, teaching book binding at Toomuchfun Rubberstamps in East Lansing, and teaching paper-making during the summer.