



***Shoah*, made with handmade sheaves of cotton pulp coated in shellac and bound in leather**

## Zoom In: Susan Hensel

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I'm greeted at Susan Hensel Design Gallery by the gallery's namesake, a small, ebullient woman who is a nationally recognized book artist and recent Minnesota transplant. "I've had friends here for years, my son was away at college—it was time," she explains. As for her gallery, "I wanted the opportunity, not only to show my own work, but to find new work by emerging artists with guts, who have a story to tell—a story that might not be commercial, but that needs to be seen."

Pick up any of Hensel's own artwork, and it's apparent that she's an inveterate reader and an avid (perhaps even obsessive) journal keeper. Her smaller pieces are clever plays on paper and form, rich in wordplay and visual wit; larger works, whether "narrative sculptures" or installations, are endeavors for which her extensive reading on a subject serves as fodder. Hensel's talent lies in what she calls "taking the personal and turning it into gestalt."

As we browse through her intriguing "literary sculptures," the artist observes: "We are a story-making species, no matter what. When we see artwork, we need to assign it meaning, a narrative. My installations include sound, scent, light, image, and words to help get you into the arena. But once you're there, the experience of the story is all yours."

—Susannah Schouweiler