



*with artists*

# INTERVIEWS

COLLECTORS' ART BOOK





**Al-Tiba9**  

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**CONTEMPORARY ART**

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**LIMITED  
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COLLECTORS'  
ART BOOK**

*Limited Edition | Volume 01*

/ 500

# Artists

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Interviews Platform



# Interviews with Artists

## COLLECTORS' ART BOOK

Al-Tiba9 Contemporary Art reflects modern society and its environment through the works of experimental contemporary artists, showcased for their innovation and vision in photography, sculpture, performance, painting, installation, design, architecture, and fashion.

Being an artist featured on Al-Tiba9's online platform means having the unique chance to present their work to museums, galleries, academics, art professionals, collectors, and art lovers worldwide. Each artist represented in this book has previously been selected among thousands of artists to gain international exposure and recognition and tell the world

about their art and life story through interviews. This exceptional Collectors' Art Book, in a limited edition of 500 copies, is designed with the most advanced curatorial and editorial skills by the curator and founder of Al-Tiba9 Contemporary Art. This collectible art book aims to create a visual language between artists and international art collectors, offering them the possibility of an artistic, visual, and emotional exchange.

The QR codes link directly to the original interview, where readers will have access to the full text and more artworks, and introduce them to the artists' production and philosophy.

## Art Curator

### MOHAMED BENHADJ

Mohamed Benhadj is the founder of Al-Tiba9 Contemporary Art, originally established in Algeria in 2013 but based in Barcelona, Spain, since 2018. Born in Algeria in 1986, Mohamed Benhadj is one of the most influential art curators in the country. He is also an icon of performance art, known for his audacious and avant-garde style. Being the booster of international cultural exchanges in Algeria's contemporary art, he strengthened the possibilities of change and growth for international artists by exchanging and promoting art on a broader level.

Driven by his vision of a common global platform to provide opportunities to emerging artists in contemporary art, his focus has been on the international exhibition of modern art, performance, and fashion design, promoting the exchange between art institutions and artists gathering in an Arab socio-cultural environment.


In 2014, Mohamed extended his philosophy to Barcelona, Spain. Since 2017, he has given

his art exhibitions a new touch by merging performance and fashion design as an alternative platform for independent designers to freely express and introduce themselves to the art world.

Mohamed Benhadj has been carrying on his journey for over ten years now, collaborating with the Ministry of Culture, Museums, Art Institutions, Embassies, and Art Centers. Over the years, he became the most active curator from Algeria, a cultural partner, and Ambassador for the Arte Laguna Prize, a famous art competition hosted in the Arsenale of Venice, Italy. He has also published art critiques for museums and art fairs and has been invited as a cultural ambassador to international art events in the Middle East, North Africa, and the United States.

His goal is to create a new pole for contemporary art in North Africa, offering the world a unique experience of creativity, possibility, and growth like no other around the globe.





**THE ONLY  
DIFFERENCE  
BETWEEN WHO  
YOU ARE AND  
WHO YOU'RE  
MEANT TO BE,  
IS THE STORY  
YOU TELL TO  
THE WORLD.**

— Mohamed Benhadj



# Susan Hensel

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Susan Hensel received her BFA from the University of Michigan in 1972 with a double major in painting and sculpture and a concentration in ceramics. Her continued studies include Haystack Mountain School of Craft, Penland, Christie's Education, and Praxis Center for Aesthetic Studies, among others. Hensel's artwork is known and collected nationwide and internationally. In recent years Hensel has been awarded multiple grants and residencies through the Jerome Foundation, Minnesota State Arts Board, Virginia

Center for Creative Arts, and Ragdale Foundation. Hensel's curatorial work began in 2000 in East Lansing, Michigan, with the Art Apartment and deepened with ownership of the Susan Hensel Gallery in Minneapolis. The Susan Hensel Gallery continues on Artsy.net as an online project promoting Midwest artists with a particular interest in materiality. Hensel has curated over eighty exhibitions of emerging and mid-career artists from all over the United States and Canada.

*Susan Hensel makes sculptural textile works from a feminist perspective to transform personal experience, private and public spaces, and notions of beauty through the alchemy of color, scale, lighting, and placement. She combines mixed-media practices with fabric and embroidery across digital and manual platforms. As a 50-year career established artist, she feels called to use her time and talents in the service of transformation — both her own as an artist and catalyst for the viewers of her work. At the center of her technical process is digital embroidery: designing on the computer and stitching out on a computer-aided machine. Her work breaks ground by engaging both sculptural and cultural space. Susan Hensel designs the work to be permanently folded, making art that can be manipulated and performed, containers that can be moved to create a sense of place, free-standing sculpture, installations, and large-scale wall works that claim space and define it. She is not imitating fashion, quilts, or hand embroidery. Rather, she uses thread and fiber techniques to shift light and perception through structures and forms in the real world. By doing so, she brings digital embroidery out of the industrial and applied art realm into the fine art space.*





### What are you trying to communicate with your art?

Currently, I am working with a concept that I call “radical beauty.” I am heavily influenced by the writings of John O’Donohue on beauty. My goal is to create works that overwhelm with color and stop people in their tracks. By stopping, looking, taking a deep breath, they can overcome quotidian cares, if only for a moment, and return to their lives refreshed. It’s not about pretty things, although they may, indeed, be pretty. It is about something more profound and hard to express with words. It is helping to provide the healing experience of awe. This is accomplished through the use of color, scale, and placement in the space.

### You have been quoted, “I make sculptural textile works from a feminist perspective to transform personal experience, private and public spaces, and notions of beauty...” Can you tell our readers what experience of your life is reflected in your works of art?

As a female artist, educated in the 1960s, a sculpture major, there were many roadblocks thrown in the road before me. Women were forbidden from using table saws, lathes, routers, planers... thus limiting our technical scope. Professors would refuse to teach women, walking away as we asked questions. Professors would say that we women would graduate, have babies and never make art again. Of course, I became a feminist! Everything I do pushes against that time period when I was in training. I think of the actually wonderful professor who told me to work small because I am a small woman. A portable mural of 8’ x 54’ (2.4 meters x 16.5 meters) is now in a permanent public collection. I think of the actually OK professor who predicted I would cease to make art. Here I am 50 years later, still vibrant and productive. And, yes, I married and had a child and still made art.

I also have always been process-oriented and thematically driven. I have spent years making installations with political content—years working with essentialist, vulvar imagery. And now, years pushing textiles into three-dimensional space.

### Why do you use this textile language?

As a sculptor, I always try to choose the “right” medium for what I am doing.

The fact is that these particular textile processes are especially suited to the study of color and light. The thread that I use is trilobal. That means that its cross-section is basically triangular. When light is reflected from this thread, it scatters in up to three directions. All color is a function of reflected light. When the angle of reflection shifts, so does our perception of color. This makes for a particularly vibrant surface with even one color. When I combine two or more colors of threads, the perception is of many more

colors than the number of threads. As you walk past one of my pieces, the colors will appear to change because the angle of reflection to your eye changes. The combination of high tech with “women’s work” provides a delicious contrast of hard/soft, nostalgic/current, objective/non-objective. It also lends itself to modular repetition and re-combinations. Themes can be played out quickly in the computer and then stitched and sampled oh so slowly on the machine, combined with and without mixed media in a wide-ranging exploration of forms in space.

### What is your creative process like?

My process is dominantly intuitive, which may seem odd since I rely so heavily on computers and computer-aided embroidery machines.

The series you see here came out of a self-designed residency several summers ago. I sequester myself in a cabin for at least two weeks every year to study and get in touch with the core of my work. I spent that residency experimenting with the movement of color and how to take the work into three dimensions. By playing with small color samples, I understood viscerally how the angle of reflection affected color. I also understood that if I could establish curves and folds in space, wondrous color effects could be more predictably controlled. My research took me back to paper folding, which I had studied around 20 years ago. I began to make small paper models that were adjusted to handle the limitations of the fabric. And one thing led to another... as it still does.

A key aspect of what I do is actually watch the stitch-outs. Sometimes I will see a form or a color combination that I did not see before, and I will stop the machine to use the fabric as is, or I will go to the computer and design a new piece based on what I see. Sometimes, in the more pictorial pieces, a stitch collage is employed. For instance, I will finish stitching out a design and realize it needs something more. So I digitize the needed “something more” and stitch it into the existing piece.

Both failed stitch-outs and successful stitch-outs suggest new directions, new ideas, and new urgencies to see more! I work modularly. I put together identical modules to make larger objects or to create environments. I also resize modules or cut and reassemble modules to create new permutations and combinations of color and form. I thoroughly enjoy tools and technology! I have been working with computers as part of my administration and art process since I was a teenager! I enjoy the design process in the computer and the ineffable, intuitive process on the computer-aided embroidery machines. Trust me, what you put into the machines may or may not be what you get in the end! There are so many variables, choices, machine glitches, and weather changes that affect the outcomes.





# COLLECTORS' ART BOOK

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**Al-Tiba9**  
CONTEMPORARY ART





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