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One Artist's Perspective on How Covid Affected the Art Industry

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Chromatic Wave 1 by [Susan Hensel](#). Digital embroidery, 12 x 25 x 1 in (30.48 x 63.5 x 2.54 cm).



Artist Susan Hensel was one of many artists who were impacted by COVID-19

Susan Hensel is a multidisciplinary artist,



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with a 50+ year career, who combines a mixed media practice with embroidery across digital and manual platforms. Susan Hensel's artwork is collected nationwide, and represented in libraries and museums such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York and The Getty Research Institute. In recent years Hensel has been awarded multiple grants and residencies through the Jerome Foundation, Minnesota State Arts Board, and the Ragdale Foundation.

2020 had an impact on the world – both on a local scale in American cities all the way up to a global scale. It disrupted many ways of life—from public health, communities, schools, and businesses. Minneapolis-based gallery owner [Susan Hensel](#) felt as if she was caught in the middle of it all.

The pandemic disrupted many industries in 2020, most of which

are still recovering. These changes impacted Americans on a local scale, and they felt the tremors of COVID-19 changes on a global scale.

"Last year was full of turbulence," said Hensel. "There were a lot of changes that I felt, both as an artist and an American. I continued to push forward, even with the weight of the world around me."

However, this year has been full of abundance for me – artwork sales have increased, and Susan Hensel Gallery is showcasing many exhibitions.

Here are a few of the trends that have surfaced in her art practice.

As a result of the pandemic, the arts and culture sector took a hit.

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Many businesses were closed down – from galleries, creative spaces, music venues, festival spaces, and theaters. According to [Americans for the Arts](#), an estimated \$15.5 billion was lost to local businesses. However, there was a silver lining – many artists and creators moved to online spaces. This led to an increase in online art exhibitions, digital art galleries, online art fairs which converted to online art sales. New art buyers accounted for 26% of online sales for the first half of 2020. ([Art Basel](#)).



[Twilight Wave](#) by [Susan Hensel](#). Digital embroidery, 63 x 70 x 1.5 in (160.02 x 177.8 x 3.81 cm)

There is a focus on the revitalization of industries after the impact of COVID-19.

The focus is on healing—both on a global scale all the way down to a local scale. Art communities are coming together to revitalize their local culture. Since there is a reduced demand

for large, cultural events as a result of social distancing, this has produced new opportunities.

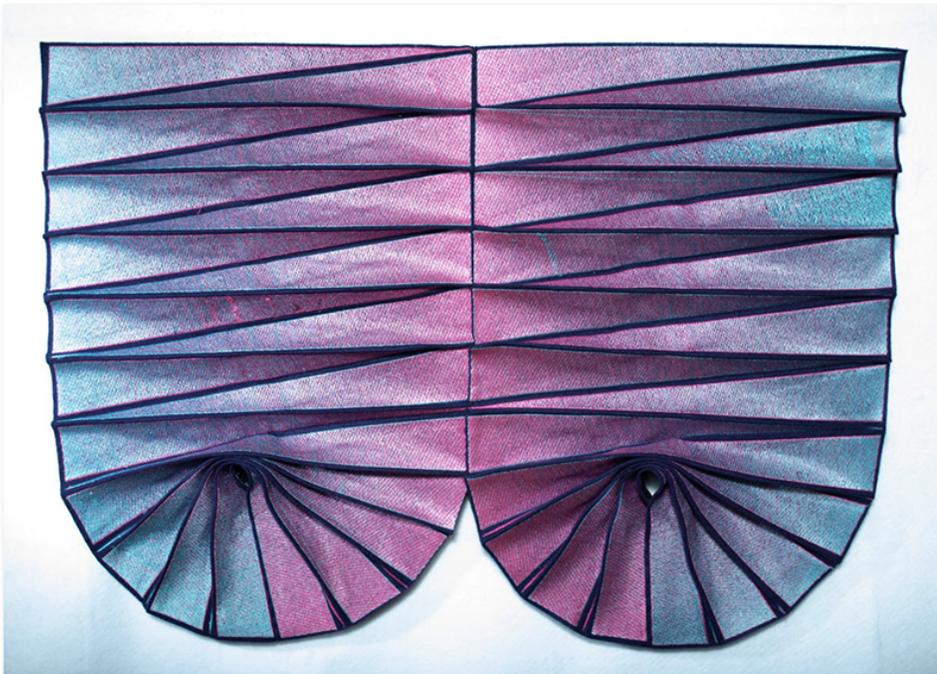
Communities are developing strategies to organize local creatives together and create online portals and platforms for events, exhibitions, and art shows.

For freelancers, businesses, and artists, there has been economic relief. Earlier this year, the president signed a Coronavirus relief package and spending bill that allowed the SBA to award \$15 billion in grants to live artists and entertainment venues in economic distress. (www.arts.gov).

Artists are evolving in the face of challenges

Artists changed the way that they create, interact, and do business and there is no turning back.

Technological advancements will lead to more digital channels and tools for art. The art industry will continue to host virtual galleries and online exhibitions. Art will become more of a financial product than a collector's piece. Fine art has become an asset class, along with gold, stocks, and real estate. There has been more of a demand than ever for blue-chip artists.



Chromatic Curve by [Susan Hensel](#). Digital embroidery, 20 x 28 x 1 in (50.8 x 71.12 x 2.54 cm)

My friends and I nicknamed that pandemic the “time-no-time”

The introduction of COVID-19 canceled my exhibition schedule in one fell swoop. After 50 years of making and exhibiting artwork at almost all times ... the work had nowhere to go.

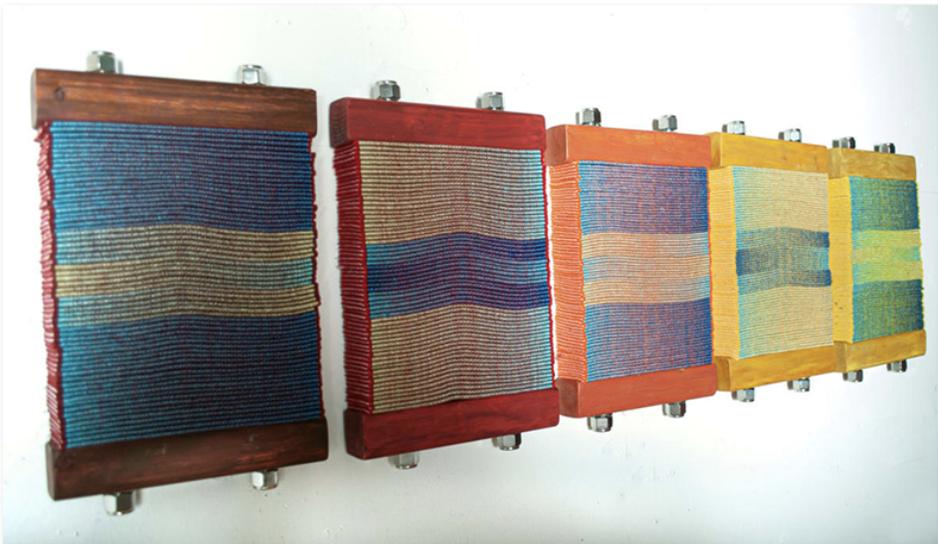
Of course, the first response was panic.

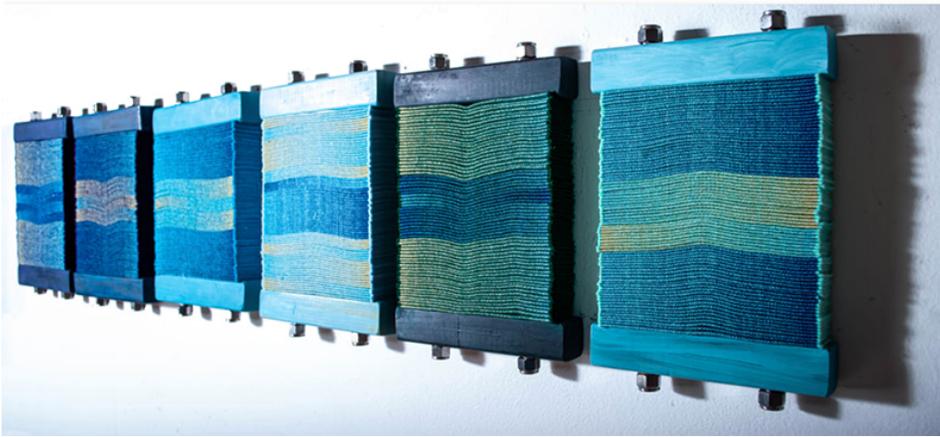
In order to assert a little control over the “time-no-time,” I decided to study and learn more about the trends in the global art market. I enrolled in an intensive class on artwork economics with [Christie's Auction House](#), studying under [Georgina Adam](#), a world-renowned analyst of global art business.

I had been observing the changes happening with online sales. All indications were that this segment would grow during the pandemic, reduce somewhat as it died down, but remain at 15-25% of sales going forward.

Subsequently, several things intersected as I looked to take a more online approach to my sales. I had hired Faceless Marketing, a full-service marketing agency prior to covid, to re-brand my business, polish up my personal website as well as my gallery website, and create a real presence on the internet. I was looking for more ways to exhibit, even though galleries and museums were shut down.

The first thing I did was begin to create, small, thematic, [pop-up exhibitions](#) on my own much-improved website—much like many artists and arts organizations have taken to.





(Top) **Chromatic Book Blocks-Warm** by Susan Hensel. Digital embroidery and mixed media, 11.5 x 40 x 2 in (29.21 x 101.6 x 5.08 cm) (Bottom) **Chromatic Book Blocks- Blue** by Susan Hensel. Digital embroidery and mixed media, 11.5 x 50 x 2 in (29.21 x 127.0 x 5.08 cm)

I started looking for ways to get the work seen in other online venues.

I got my work featured in St. Petersburg, Russia, Barcelona, Spain, and France. Then an opportunity arose through a gallerist I had been in negotiation with before the shut-down: ODETTA Gallery. Like many galleries, ODETTA had been forced to close and vacate the building.

From 2004 to 2013 I had a gallery in Minneapolis, exhibiting artwork from all over the United States. In 2013, the interior space reverted to a working studio where I continue to work on small and largescale artwork that engages both sculptural and cultural space.

As the pandemic continued, I saw an opportunity to re-open Susan Hensel Gallery as an online gallery, representing a small stable of Midwest artists. The need for Midwest artists to be seen by the broader market is large, and I wanted to do my part.

There are so many marvelous artists toiling away all over the world, but very few get their work seen broadly. I want to do my part.

Sometimes people wonder how huge changes like this affect an artist's output.

Many artists I know suffered a protracted time of stasis. I, too, was frozen in place for a while.

But then I began to work with an absolute fury on work that combined my concerns with the active role of beauty to foment change, especially climate change.

In the end, this awful pandemic time, "time-no-time", has been a fruitful time of development.



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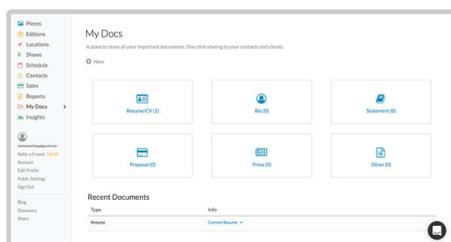
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