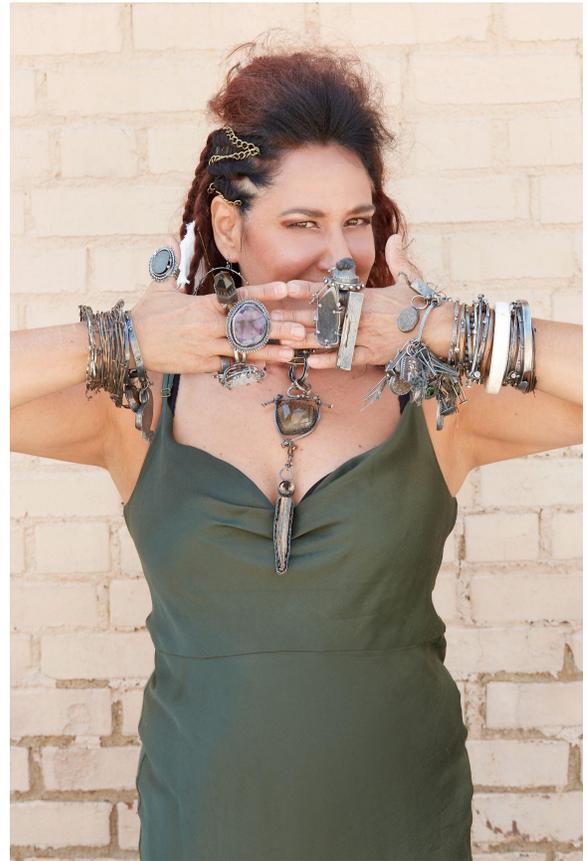


Susan Lenart Biography

susanlenart.com

Susan Lenart is an artist, silversmith and designer of 30 years. She studied at the Art institute of Chicago and graduated from Southern Illinois University.

During art school she frequented the Field Museum in Chicago and became inspired by artifacts and relics. She worked as an ethnographic repair artisan in the Chicago area on West African beadwork and adornment, as well as East Indian Naga and Thailand components and jewelry. Here she would repair / rebuild historical pieces of jewelry and fibers, learning through examination how historical pieces were built. Here she began to learn what connection techniques would last through time, and witnessed innovative use of materials with their significant meanings.



While repairing and studying these artifacts she became aware of the symbolism that was involved in the stitching and building and noticed how the use of imagery and shapes represented certain qualities. Animals represented their strengths or powers such as the Japanese fish as abundance and the bear as ferocious strength. The circular spiral as a symbol for endless life, and the arrow for protection. This symbolism was shared with European historical objects she found, and she saw that all these forms related to spirituality in the end. At the base of all of her studies Susan found her own spirituality.



During this time Susan had the opportunity to travel and explore Thailand, Burma, Vietnam, East Africa, Mexico, Guatemala and South America. Staying in small villages in Southeast Asia where there were no hotels, she slept in barns and out-buildings of local farmers. She met people from Karen, Hmong and Akha communities and experienced minimalist life in small villages without internet, electricity or TV, just a pure way of living. She witnessed people who were genuinely happy, people who believed in magic, and simplicity at its best. “Suddenly, I realized

how small that all of my problems were back home. I began to realize a truth to simplicity. I realized that the truth is [found in] simplicity and Peace. What more could a person need. With this I have been struggling all of my American life. I am still undoing from this complexity.“



Newly inspired to Talismans and symbolism, she began buying artifacts, beads and hand woven fabrics. With each piece that passed through her hands she felt the object's power, love and strength learning that these very qualities were embedded into the objects themselves by use of emotions, desires and repetition. This is what creates a Talisman.

Also during this time Susan was one of the original organizers of the Greater Chicago Bead Society. Here she further studied the history of adornments, how glass beads were made in Moreno, Italy and traded throughout the world. Historical concepts like how early metal pieces created in Thailand were made from melting down European coins opened her eyes to far reaching ideas and resourcefulness within jewelry. Observing how different cultures used colors, shapes and particular

beads to represent a variety of ideas and concepts opened a new way of thinking for Susan.

In combination with these studies she studied historical folk art and began to piece together the threads of how we are all similar in this universe. Love, happiness and peace as a unifier remain Susan's core belief system.



As an American artist, Susan realized that she had to come up with her own Talisman technique that would represent her contemporary style. Searching for this style included taking long walks on the beach and through city streets searching for power pieces that resonated. This technique involved paying close attention to the emotions associated with a particular object. What objects made her feel excited? Protected? Loved? Much of her early work was created by reworking discarded objects through cold joins, including her first body of Talisman.

These early pieces received international attention, museum exhibits and tours. Susan began

exhibiting at AMERICAN CRAFT COUNCIL and SOFA Chicago which both feature the museum quality of fine craft. During this time she built pieces that bridged the world between art and craft such as her knee-length Talisman necklaces that were designed to be hung on the wall within a frame, when not worn.

Susan began selling her work all over the country. She built a jewelry company within the fashion industry in Chicago called LEN-ART COLLECTION. From large Talismans smaller pieces were off to create an easy to wear commercial line of jewelry. By working with jewelry sales reps she soon had business from stores such as BANANA REPUBLIC, ANN TAYLOR, NORDSTROM, HENRY BENDELL and PERUVIAN CONNECTION.

Once becoming a mother Susan decided take a pause from the fashion world to be present with and raise her two beautiful children.

Education and teaching her technique came as a surprise during this time, but was a better fit with her new lifestyle. There was a whole new field of artist training opening up which brought her to teach metal workshops throughout the US, Europe, Central America, Mexico, Australia and Asia.

In education Susan focuses on teaching creativity within metalworking, building a classroom for self expression and exploration. Here students are encouraged to challenge the ideas of how jewelry should be defined, and to build from within their heart and soul. This liberating environment helps students experience creative freedom and motivates them to create their own esthetic within their own work.

Connecting metal without a soldered or glued join is called cold joining. Susan wrote her first book *Making Connections – a Hand book for Jewelers* about her vast experience with cold joins.



Making Connections was at first self published out of necessity to prevent Susan's creative vision from being compromised. To research the book Susan took a 3 year sabbatical away from soldering joins and walked around in the world with her eyes open looking at architecture, clothing seams, furniture, playground equipment and airplanes (whose rivets are discussed in chapter 5). She compiled a list of 8 major cold join techniques such as hinging, riveting, tabs, metal filer

techniques etc. Each chapter features an inside look at a particular cold join technique.

The book was unique because of the unusual intros at the beginning of each chapter, featuring a collection of talented and unique artists using cold join technique in relation to the chapter. Also included are Susan's hand drawn sketches of her work and techniques, making it not only a educational tool but also a beautiful coffee table book. It went on to sell over 20,000 copies, and was endorsed by Bob Eberdorf, President of the Goldsmith Society as well as designer, teacher, author, and goldsmith Tim McCreight.

Taking a break from cold joining, Susan went on to write her second book *Resin Alchemy*, which went on to be an Amazon best seller for 2013. She wrote about the techniques she discovered and invented as a pioneer of resin in jewelry in a very sophisticated style over an exploratory period of 10 years. She developed ICE RESIN, a line of jewelers resin which was sold in art supply stores throughout the country and then acquired by Ranger Industries Inc. As one of the editors of Art Journal Magazine stated "Susan is the person that brought resin into the jewelry world." She included her own innovative techniques on transparent resin paper using layers with prayers and words embedded into a stack. She also created techniques for casting small objects, pouring resin, sgraffito techniques, color theories and layers, foils and more.



**INDUSTRIAL CHIC by SUSAN LENART
KAZMER 2010-2015**

Susan designed a commercial line of jewelry titled INDUSTRIAL CHIC which was produced by Horizon Corporation (toy manufacturer for Disney Corp.) and shipped to Michaels Corp. for retail sale throughout their stores. The line consecutively pulled 4-6 million in sales volume per year for 5 years. In 2011 Industrial Chic won a

Golden Award for the MOST ORIGINAL WORK and selling the highest quality and volume of merchandise for Michaels Corp.



FASHION INDUSTRY

Susan's latest work has been featured in ELLE Magazine and New York & Milan Fashion Week. Collaborations with modeling agencies such as Vaiva Style have brought her work onto the runways and upcoming collaborations with contemporary Fashion Designers is her current focus.



Selected Museum and Gallery Exhibits

2022 Milan Fashion Week, Italy

2019 Milan Fashion Week, Italy

2018 Milan Fashion Week, Italy

2008 Anchorage Museum of History and Art, Anchorage AK

2006/07 American Craft Council- Baltimore, MD

2007 Hansen Museum- Logan, Kansas

2007 Troy Hayner House Cultural Museum- Troy, OH

2007 Robert Hillstead Textile Museum- Lincoln, NE

2006 Ellen Noel Museum- Odessa, TX

2005 Post Picasso Gallery- Highlights of 2004

2005 Ohio Craft Museum,-Cleveland, Ohio

2005 Mansfield Art Center- Mansfield, Ohio

2004 Huntington Museum of Art- Huntington, West Virginia

2004 Dairy Barn Cultural Art Center- Athens, Ohio

2004 Jewelry with a Purpose- Post Picasso Gallery- International Online Gallery

2003 Talismans Jewelry- Culturefest, Renwick Gallery- Washington DC

2003 Material Explorations- Munson Williams Proctor Art Institute, Utica New York

2003 Yellow- Sandusky Cultural Art Center

1996 Works of Susan Lenart- Origins Gallery, Chicago, IL.

1995 Museum of American Folk Art- New York, NY

1995 Works of Susan Lenart – Gimcracks Gallery, Chicago

1995 Museum Collections- Boston, MA

1994 Works of Susan Lenart – Ramscale Gallery, Manhattan, NY

1994 Katie Gingrass Gallery- Milwaukee, WI

1994 SOFA Chicago- Jackie Lippitz Gallery, Chicago, IL.

1994 Chicago Architectural Foundation- Chicago, IL

1991 Emerging Chicago Artists, Illinois Artisan Shop- Chicago, IL.

1991 Folk Art International of San Francisco- San Francisco, CA

1991 San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, New Mexico

Selected Teaching Venue

2021 & 2022- Michelle Fletcher Atelier, Morocco

2019- Art & Soul, Portland, OR

2006- International Fiber Convergence-Ann Arbor, MI

2006- University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, MI

2006- Baum school of Art,-Allentown, PA

2007- Gwen Gibson- Dufort, France

2007 through 2022- Hacienda De Mosaica- Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

2006- Brookfield Craft Center- Brookfield, CT

2008 & 2007 Bead and Button Show-Milwaukee, WI

2006- Cultural Art Center- Sandusky, Ohio

2006 FAVA Gallery, Oberlin Ohio

Selected Juried Invitational Events

1991 to 2007 American Craft Council -ACC Shows-Baltimore, MD, Columbus, OH, West Springfield, IL. St. Paul, MN. Tampa Bay, FL. Atlanta, GA

1992 to 1994 Original Ann Arbor Art Fair, Ann Arbor, MI

1991 to 1994 Oak Brook Center Invitational, Oakbrook, IL.

1991 to 1995 Fountain on the Square, Evanston, IL.

1992 to 1993 Washington Fine Arts, Washington DC

1993 to 1996 Two Rivers Art Exposition, Minnesota and Iowa

PUBLICATIONS

2022- New edition of Making Connections- Susan Lenart

2021- Intentional Metalsmithing- Susan Lenart

2013- Resin Alchemy-Innovative Techniques for Mixed-Media and Jewelry Artists

2007- Making Connections- A Handbook of Attachments for the Jeweler and Mixed Media Artist- Author – Susan Lenart Kazmer with Nina Graci

AWARDS

2006- Most Innovative Use of the Medium-Dairy Barn Cultural Arts Center- Athens Ohio

2006- Telly Award-KS Inc. productions – Public Television

2006- Finalist- Bead and Button Show- Milwaukee, WI

2005- Jury's Choice- Embellishment 2005- Portland, OR.

2004- Second Place- Bead and Button Show, Milwaukee, WI

2004- Best of 2004- Post Picasso Gallery-online gallery

