

Sahra Hersi Selects

My creative journey began in east London, across Newham, Hackney, Waltham Forest and Redbridge, where I spent my formative years. The vibrant diversity and multicultural high streets in these areas inspire my approach as an artist and spatial designer. I focus on transforming public spaces, like high streets, community halls and gardens, making them places of beauty, comfort and belonging. I believe in integrating art into everyday life, designing welcoming spaces that reflect the diverse cultures of the communities that use them.



Hear Sahra Hersi reflect on her journey into creative practice in east London and past makers who inspire her.

2025

Running time: 3 minutes and 30 seconds

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Tile stories

From my earliest years studying art, I was inspired by William Morris's vision for art in everyday life. Like *Trellis*, my work combines patterns, symbols and natural forms. I use these to tell stories across different artforms.

My print for the Mountford Growing Community's garden is now public art, realised as tiles on the estate. The artichoke plant honours a local Turkish Cypriot resident who grows them, reconnecting with her family's artichoke farm in Cyprus.

- 1 *Trellis*, wallpaper sample, 1862 (designed), 1864 (manufactured)
Designed by William Morris
with additions by Phillip Webb
London
Block-printed in distemper colours on paper
Given by Morris & Co.
Museum no. E.452-1919
- 2 *Tile Stories: Artichoke*, print, 2024
Sahra Hersi
London
Risograph on paper
Lent by Sahra Hersi
Museum no. PROV.650-2025



- 3 Test tiles for *Tiles for Mountford, 2024–25*
Sahra Hersi
London
Ceramic
Lent by Sahra Hersi
Museum no. PROV.651-2025

- 4 Tile in two parts, 1600s
Unrecorded maker
India
Glazed earthenware
Purchased from Richard Poyser,
Veterinary Major, Army Veterinary
Department, Meerut, NWP
Museum nos. IS.52&A-1898

- 5 Tile set, about 1950
Peggy Angus (designer), Carter,
Stabler & Adams Ltd (manufacturer)
Poole, UK
Earthenware, transfer-printed
Given by Jennifer Opie
Museum no. C.51-2007

- 6 Tile, about 1650
Unrecorded maker
Punjab, India
Earthenware with cuerda seca decoration
Museum no. IM.302-1923



7 *Community Building a Community Building*, 2024
Edited by Rose Gibbs and Sahra Hersi,
Mountford Growing Community (producer),
Plan B (publication design)
London
Printed and bound book
Lent by Sahra Hersi
Museum no. PROV.654-2025



The personal is political

Always Keep Your Integrity is a personal manifesto, reminding me to align my work with my political and personal beliefs. I display it in every studio space I work in.

I am inspired by how See Red Women's Workshop used printing to challenge the status quo. Like See Red, I believe in urging critical reflection on the work we do, who we work with and the values we uphold.

- 8 *Old Manor Park Library: Always Keep Your Integrity* print, 2019
Sahra Hersi
London
Risograph on paper
Lent by Sahra Hersi
Museum no. PROV.652-2025

- 9 *Bite the Hand* poster, 1978
See Red Women's Workshop
London
Screenprint
Given by Suzy Mackie, Pru Stevenson and Bronwen Rice in memory of Julia Franco, founder member of See Red Women's Workshop
Museum no. E.89-2011



10 *Green Street Culture Trail* print,
2020 (designed), 2025 (made)
Sahra Hersi for Newham Council
London
Risograph on paper
Lent by Sahra Hersi
Museum no. PROV.656-2025



Learning through play

Creating my own dollhouses was my first step into the world of architecture and spatial design, before I even realised it. I often return to this kind of playful exploration in my work. I designed this *Garden Activity Pack* to encourage children to think about space and design through intuitive, hands-on play. Like a dollhouse designed by a toy maker, my pack provides a starting point for children to make their own creations.

- 11 *The Garden Activity Pack: Growing Futures*, 2023
Sahra Hersi with Tommy Brentnall
(pack design), Kate Ducker/F.A.T Studio
(illustrations) for Studio Voltaire
London
Print on paper
Lent by Sahra Hersi
V&A: PROV.653-2025

- 12 Dollhouse, 1962
Toy Design Partners, Paul & Marjorie
Abbatt Ltd (maker)
England
Jointed and painted wood
Given by Paul and Marjorie Abbatt
Museum no. MISC.15-1962



- 13 Test tile and photograph for
Wayfinding To Our Memories, 2024
Sahra Hersi with Red Collective
(fabricator) and Alice Ward (structural
engineer) for Cement Fields
Kent, UK
Aluminium, print from digital file
Lent by Sahra Hersi
Museum no. PROV.655-2025

- 14 Soup cup and casserole dish, 1969–71
Clement Kofi Athey, Jos Museum Pottery
Jos, Nigeria
Glazed stoneware
Given by Anna Craven
Museum nos. C.102, 107-2014

- 15 Collection of Ancient Greek building
material fragments, unrecorded date
Unrecorded maker
Athens
Various stones, cement, marble,
earthenware and shell
Given by Mrs Middleton
Museum no. 920-1896



- 16 Photograph of *Civic Carpet – Ilford Forever*, 2022–24
Sahra Hersi with Abdul Muktadir (photographer),
BBS Natural Stone Specialists, Scribble Stone
(fabricator) for Redbridge Council
Ilford, UK
Display print from digital file
Photograph courtesy of Sahra Hersi

