



"COMMUNITY" INSTALLATION WITH SHARON LOUDEN: HOW SHOULD WE USE THIS PIECE?

© JULY 19, 2014 SHANNONHWALDMAN LEAVE A COMMENT



Tonya, Sharon, Sarah, and Crystal making the final touches to the walls of "Community."

The opportunity to intern with New York based artist Sharon Louden came about because I have made the right connections.

As in:

One of my favorite professors at Warren Wilson is married to a curator at the Asheville Art Museum. Said professor knew I loved art and art history in the lens of the public realm. I've interned at AAM before. I'd gone to the opening of this curator's first exhibition at AAM. And a few weeks after the initial invite from my professor there I was drilling into thin sheets of aluminum creating a piece titled "Community".

I want to harp on this point of making connections, because it is Sharon's most lasting lesson to my fellow interns and I. "Your mailing list is your currency.", "Sign off your notes like you mean it.", "Never be afraid to ask about an opportunity.", and many other tidbits that led me to this point: put yourself in a position to know the people who will get you places; keep in touch with these people. And never underestimate a connection.

So why call this piece "Community?" In part, my own explanation for the piece's title stems from my belief that I am truly starting to make lasting connections within my arts community. I've built a community starting with my fellow interns:

Crystal Moore is working on her BFA at UNCA and makes innovative works in ceramics and fabric (she crochets nets around her sculptures). She's hardworking and sweet to boot. It is a treasure to work alongside her.

The opportunity to work with others who are as passionate about visual art as I am is invigorating and I hope that "Community" speaks to the connection between my fellow interns and I.

And what an honor it was to work with Sharon Louden herself!

With a BFA from the School of the Art Institute at Chicago and an MFA from Yale she knows her way in academia. Even more impressive, she has been able to take her art from the Yale University Art Gallery to the Whitney Museum of American Art, Sharon Louden is a force of contemporary art in America. Occupying many roles from commencement speaker (School of the Fine Arts of the University of Connecticut, 2014) to installation artist, Sharon demonstrates what it takes to be successful in the contemporary art world.

Sharon attributes a great amount of her success to never lessening her inquiries. According to her, asking questions has gotten her to where she is today (I'm willing to follow that advice if I can get into the Whitney). She challenged us each day to utilize her presence and knowledge to our advantage. Sharon started us off with the goal of asking her ten questions for the two weeks. We all quickly found much more to ask from her rich answers.

Now that "Community" is finished, I am still left questioning what this work will do for the local community. Though my fellow interns and I were chosen because of our involvement with the arts community of Asheville and the surrounding area I am still confused about how the piece will reach the greater community of Western North Carolina.

I would love to see more than the standard community outreach from AAM. There are so many individuals in Asheville alone who have never stopped into the quiet galleries. I want this piece to attract more than the standard visitor who already knew about the silver exhibit across the way because they were on the emailing list. I think AAM has great potential to use "Community" to expand its demography of visitors.

I keep thinking, "What would bring me to this museum if I did not feel represented here, or did not see this as a part of my own community?"

I grew up coming to this museum, so it's hard for me to imagine.

I grew up coming to this museum, so it's hard for me to imagine.

I want to know what would get you to come see this piece called "Community". How do we extend the conversation to anyone to see their reflection in this work?

I interpret the goal of the work to be a demonstration in the values of art as a means to instill community through glittering images that reflect the group of onlookers. Whatever this piece comes to mean, it has certainly thrills me to gaze through the tendrils of aluminum.

I am excited to see what public programming the AAM does with this piece, and I hope that new visitors come to the museum to interact with "Community".

If you have any ideas of how this piece can be used to benefit the Asheville community post it here and let me, Sharon, and the Asheville Art Museum know!

More information about Sharon and her projects can be found at:

<http://www.sharonlouden.com/>

And check out the Asheville Art Museum while you're at it:

<http://www.ashevilleart.org/>

Keep thinking,

Shannon

Sarah Weaver is a fellow art historian who graduated from UNC Asheville in 2014 and is going to study at the Courtauld Institute in London England. You can check out her insights here (she also has a great reflection on our time with Sharon):

<http://sarah-weaver.com/>



Crystal, Sharon, and Sarah work on "Community".

Tonya Anderson is an established print maker working on her MFA at Western Carolina University. Her work is astounding in its raw content (she reflects on alcoholism, drug addiction, and numerous other social issues) and simultaneous subtle beauty. Here is a link to her work:

<http://www.ovicote.com/>



Tonya working on one of the hardest parts of the installation, making "Community" shine.