

signs and symbols

Sharon Louden

Barriers to Entry







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January 27 - March 2, 2024

signs and symbols is pleased to present *Barriers to Entry*, a site-specific installation comprising raw aluminum, vinyl and works on paper by New York-based artist **Sharon Loudon**. Known for her practice that encompasses both minimalist paintings and immersive installations, Loudon has developed a distinct formal language that examines the infinite compositions and possibilities proposed by basic elements of line and color. Her installations further incorporate reflective materials which playfully expand and alter the viewer's perception of space. Continuing this line of inquiry, *Barriers to Entry* is not a static environment but one built through interaction, where reflections and vantage points create a multitude of unique experiences. Thus Loudon considers questions of physical and symbolic access within art spaces, with an emphasis on barriers faced by women.

Barriers to Entry is a series of installations that reflect on inclusion within historically exclusionary spaces, from art galleries to Masonic temples. The first iteration of *Barriers to Entry* was curated by Avery Glassman and presented at Breck Create in Colorado in 2023, followed by the second iteration at Artport Kingston in New York. This is Loudon's third iteration of the project.



"Barriers to Entry is a collaborative work that challenges the myth of the solo artist as someone who operates in isolated independence. In it, artist Sharon Loudon emphasizes the interdependence of everyone involved in the creation process. As visitors glimpse themselves reflected in the material, they become part of the sculpture. The twisting aluminum sheets create an optical illusion that distorts image and direction. As the sheets bend and crisscross each other, they fragment the space and turn it upside down, encouraging shifts in perspective. Viewers help animate the installation through their own movements, since no two viewing angles are alike.

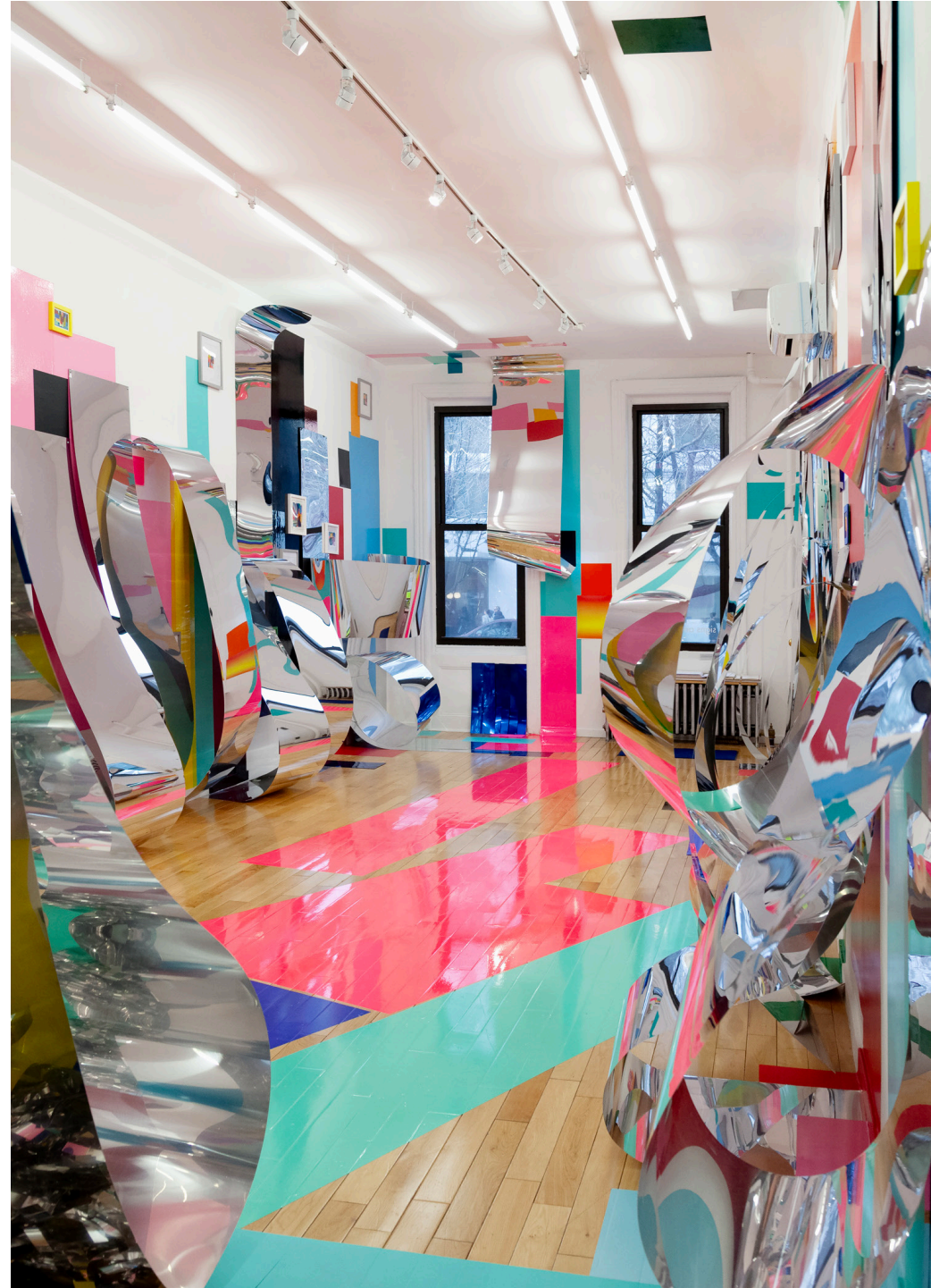
"The oil-on-paper paintings in this gallery mirror the overlapping of vinyl and aluminum throughout the exhibition. They are each a different assortment of colorful, irregular squares and rectangles that layer with varying degrees of transparency. Loudon magnifies, rather than disguises, her brushstrokes in the paintings, building up the overlapping shapes to create depth. The small sizes of the works on paper contrast with the scale of the sculptural work, yet their plentitude nonetheless contributes to an overall aesthetic of abundance. The aluminum and metallic vinyl also cast shadows and reflect highlights that give texture to the surfaces.





“Rather than limit one’s field of vision, *Barriers to Entry* creates an infinite number of focal points with which viewers can engage, making room for as many perspectives as possible in an inclusive artistic act. Here, cushions once again encourage a restful viewing at ground level. The paintings are installed at different heights, rarely at eye-level, and the picture frames fluctuate in size, shape, color and usage. In these ways, the installation does not follow certain gallery standards of display. Such variation begs the question of whose eye-level and framing preferences gallery standards serve in the first place.”

—Avery Glassman, Director of Programs + Special Projects at Breck Create

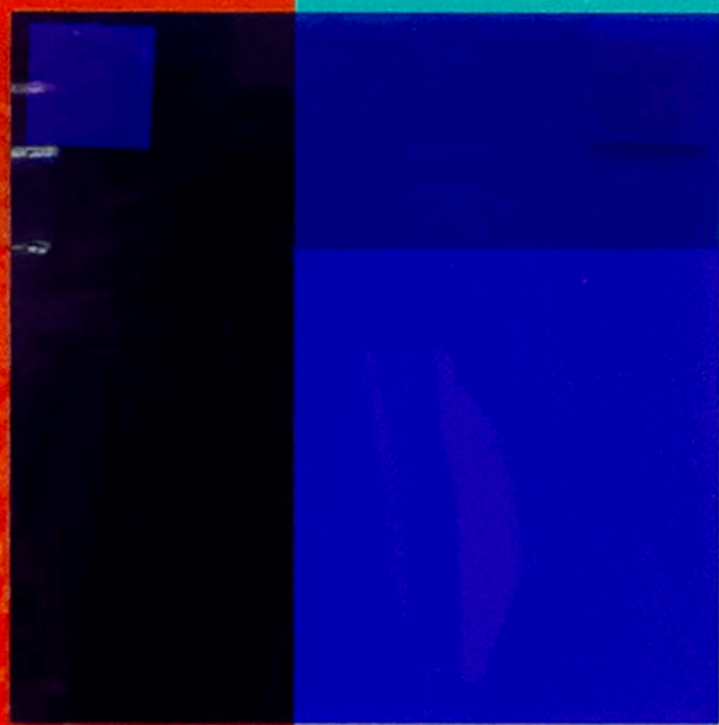


"Barriers to Entry is a body of oil paintings on paper which symbolize spaces made difficult to enter, especially to women and other under-represented individuals. Implying movement, the geometric, transparent, layered forms build walls with few spaces to enter. Just as places far reaching can be attractive, the bright, strong, forward colors may give an impression of joyfulness, and yet, they are impassable obstacles.

"These works on paper are tediously prepared and painted over time. The hand-deckled paper is then prepared with many layers of gesso and sometimes enamel paint. Over the course of 8 months, each form layered on top of one another is symbolic of the constant movement of obstacles closing off opportunities. The thin, luminous layered forms appear animated when the works are shown in a series. Follow one color to the next and you will see that the dizzying effect is meant to be constant, conveying the reality often felt in society by those voices that remain silent."

—Sharon Loudon







Barriers to Entry, 2023
Oil on paper
4 x 6 inches (10.16 x 15.24 cm) each drawing unframed
10 x 10 inches (25.4 x 25.4 cm) framed
SS-SL-23-03



Barriers to Entry, 2023
Oil on paper
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm) unframed
12.25 x 12.25 inches (31.12 x 31.12 cm) framed
SS-SL-23-04



Barriers to Entry, 2023
Oil on paper
4 x 4 inches (10.16 x 10.16 cm) unframed
9 x 9 inches (22.86 x 22.86 cm) framed
SS-SL-23-05



Barriers to Entry, 2023
Oil on paper
4 x 6 inches (10.16 x 15.24 cm) unframed
5.25 x 7.25 inches (13.34 x 18.42 cm) framed
SS-SL-23-06



Barriers to Entry, 2023
Oil on paper
3.5 x 5.5 inches (8.89 x 13.97 cm) unframed
5.25 x 7.25 inches (13.34 x 18.42 cm) framed
SS-SL-23-08



Barriers to Entry, 2023
Oil on paper
4 x 6 inches (10.16 x 15.24 cm) unframed
9.25 x 11.25 inches (23.5 x 28.58 cm) framed
SS-SL-23-09



Barriers to Entry, 2023
Oil on paper
3.5 x 5.5 inches (8.89 x 13.97 cm) unframed
SS-SL-23-10



Barriers to Entry, 2023
Oil on paper
3.5 x 5.5 inches (8.89 x 13.97 cm) unframed
SS-SL-23-11



Barriers to Entry, 2023
Oil on paper
7.5 x 7.5 inches (19.05 x 19.05 cm) unframed
11 x 11 inches (27.94 x 27.94 cm) framed
SS-SL-23-14



Barriers to Entry, 2023
Oil on paper
4.5 x 5 inches (11.43 x 12.7 cm) unframed
12.25 x 12.25 inches (31.12 x 31.12 cm) framed
SS-SL-23-15



Barriers to Entry, 2023
Oil on paper
5 x 5 inches (12.7 x 12.7 cm) unframed
12.25 x 12.25 inches (31.12 x 31.12 cm) framed
SS-SL-23-24



Barriers to Entry, 2023
Oil on paper
3.5 x 5.5 inches (8.89 x 13.97 cm) unframed
5.25 x 7.25 inches (13.34 x 18.42 cm) framed
SS-SL-23-25



Barriers to Entry, 2023
Oil on paper
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm) unframed
11 x 11 inches (27.94 x 27.94 cm) framed
SS-SL-23-31



Barriers to Entry, 2023
Oil on paper
4 x 6 inches (10.16 x 15.24 cm) unframed
9.25 x 11.25 inches (23.5 x 28.58 cm) framed
SS-SL-23-32





sharon louden is an artist, educator, advocate for artists and editor of the *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life* series of books. Louden graduated with a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA from Yale University School of Art. Her work has been exhibited in numerous venues including the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, the Drawing Center, Carnegie Mellon University, Weisman Art Museum, National Gallery of Art, Birmingham Museum of Art, Weatherspoon Art Museum and the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art. Louden's work is held in major public and private collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art, National Gallery of Art, Neuberger Museum of Art, Arkansas Arts Center, Yale University Art Gallery, Henry Art Gallery at University of Washington, Weatherspoon Art Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, among others. In addition, she continues to produce site-specific permanent public and private commissions across the country, including recent permanent installations made in New York, Oklahoma City, San Francisco and Washington, DC. She lives and works in New York.

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