Sharon Louden: Sustaining a Creative Life

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The contemporary artist is presented as financially struggling and juggling his/her time with innumerable diversified tasks. Even the most celebrated artists need to keep a keen awareness of the economy's ups and downs and be prepared for the lean times. Artists cannot entrust all their careers to the art dealers, but they must be proactive as well. How did you come up with such an interesting idea for your book?

There was no given format. I asked the artists to send me essays in any length that they wished. If they were not speaking about something that I wanted them to talk about, I would get back to them and ask to talk a little bit more about something else, or to take out something. There was a tremendous amount of correspondence going on with each of the artists. The two artists I did interviews with, Thomas Kilpper and Will Cotton, insisted that they did not feel comfortable writing an essay on their lives. Since I wanted them in the book very much, I interviewed them.

What were the most challenging issues you had to face in this project?

At the beginning of the book, some people I invited to contribute gave me essays that I could not use. This was interesting, because they were people I thought I knew better. For me it was also a lesson in growing as a person and understanding about themselves rather than their work, because they are the vehicle for their creativity. For them, to be so articulate and exposed is a tremendous challenge, and I applaud them for that. They are what make the book so special.

One of your most recent works is Community, 2013. My understanding is that you see some kind of fluidity in your many roles as artist, teacher, curator, editor. I was wondering if Community has been shaped in a way by the type of building community that you're doing with the book and the book tour, because you are really taking on an active role in building community among artists.

What "community" means for that group of works, recently on display at the Morgan Lehman Gallery in New York, is a connection between some of the flat shapes in my work— which are more about environment and architecture— with the gesture, the characters that I have been working with for many years in my language. I think there are a lot of parallels. I don't think