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Women's Studio Workshop Welcomes New Executive Director

News By Robyn Hager



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ROSENDALE - The Women's Studio Workshop, an arts hub nestled right on the outskirts of Rosendale, is welcoming a new Executive Director to their team – the third in their history – to coincide with yet another celebration in the coming weeks: their 50th Anniversary.

The *Journal* wrote about their upcoming 50th Anniversary recently, which is when we were notified that the Workshop will be welcoming a new Executive Director, Sharon Louden, whose role officially began on September 1st.

Louden's work spans being an editor, community advocate, working artist, speaker, educator and more. She has been working towards, according to her, "creating and making spaces for artists, particularly those who are underserved and underrecognized, to freely express themselves in many different ways."

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She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA from Yale University School of Art, and has had her art exhibited all across the country in venues including, but not limited to, the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, the Drawing Center, Carnegie Mellon University, Weisman Art Museum, National Gallery of Art and Birmingham Museum of Art. Her art is also currently held in major public and private collections, most notably, the Whitney Museum of American Art, National Gallery of Art, Neuberger Museum of Art, Yale University Art Gallery, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and more.

What might be her most prestigious role is her position as editor of *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life: Essays by 40 Working Artists*, published by Intellect Books and distributed by the University of Chicago Press, which was published in 2013 and is already in its 7th printing. It is the publisher's #1 seller and has been sold in over 24 countries.

Louden's career has focused on advocacy in many forms, which informed her decision to apply to the position as Executive Director of the WSW.

"I've known about WSW for many years and admired it from afar. In my life right now, I wanted to pull all my advocacy for artists in one place. I'm extremely humbled and grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this 50-year-old organization that advocates for artists," Loudon said. "I am really amazed at the organization and how it has thrived all these years. I wanted to be a part of it."

Women's Studio Workshop President Rachel Weiss said the

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Women’s Studio Workshop President Rachel Weiss said the organization was “thrilled to welcome Sharon to WSW.” She touted Louden’s “legendary dedication to nurturing artists” and said she “leads with authenticity and follows through with conviction.”

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Part of Louden’s position as Executive Director is to continue fighting for artist’s rights and helping educate people about the value of artists to a society’s growth and sustainability.

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“We are so undervalued it’s outrageous. We have so many assets that yield and contribute to many different sectors such as corporate business, non-profits, education, and we’ve always done that. Part of being here and part of what WSW has been doing is living in those values and living by example by creating space for artists to thrive and to also give professional opportunities to them,” she said.

“Artists,” she continued, “don’t have any retirement, healthcare, and yet people who retire find tremendous benefit to their lives through these skills and talents that we have. Artists are much more than makers; we have ideas – our ideas – and whether we make something or not, we are extremely beneficial to society.”

Louden says she doesn’t intend on making any immediate changes to WSW, instead she wants to “listen and learn” to the staff and artists at the Workshop and hope that their building renovations are finished in due time.

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She says that so far her experience at the WSW has been working with “the nicest people I’ve met”, and she excitedly awaits their upcoming 50th Anniversary celebration, which is promoting their “50 for 50” fundraising campaign, where the Workshop is trying to raise 50K for their 50 years as a running organization.

“The energy right now all over the world is in supporting people whose voices I would like to hear amplified and see amplified through their work and ideas. We feel that an investment in WSW is an investment in that,” Loudon said.

If you are interested in attending the WSW’s 50th Anniversary celebration and being a part of their 50 for 50 campaign, visit <https://wsworkshop.org/birthdaybash>. More about Loudon can be seen here <https://www.sharonloudon.com/>.

Rosendale • 738 words • 1 photo



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