



## SHARON LOUDEN: 3 EXAMPLES OF PROACTIVE ARTISTS CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

By Creative Capital | August 7, 2017

Through the Creative Capital professional development program, artist [Sharon Louden](#) regularly offers a webinar called “Approaching the Gatekeepers of the Art World.” In her experience as a woman in the art world, she has continually shared resources about making a sustainable career out of being an artist. She has edited two books—most recently [The Artist as Culture Producer: Living and Sustaining a Creative Life](#), for which she currently on an international book tour. After finishing her last “Gatekeepers” webinar, we checked in with Sharon to see what insights she could share with us.

On the [current tour](#) for my book, [The Artist as Culture Producer](#), most of the artists I speak with who attend our conversations express needs for validation, inclusion, and opportunities to share their work, not only within our community but also out into the public realm. In my view, the lack of the first need (validation) inevitably bleeds into the other two (inclusion and opportunities), and it’s become apparent through my conversation tours that the need for this validation stems from a critical lack of value felt by artists all over the world.

Through the webinars for Creative Capital that I conduct with Matthew Deleget, though, I have discovered that artists are addressing this feeling that they lack any societal value by actually doing stuff. They are not just sitting idly by waiting for opportunities to appear, or expecting that society will suddenly wake up and realize their worth. Instead, these artists realize that in order to create value, you have to share what you’re doing; they’re not waiting for anything. These wonderful artists are creating and expanding their communities, giving to other artists and at the same time, sharing their own work. Through this expanded practice, they are quickly finding (and becoming proud of) the value they are adding to society as a whole.

GENEROSITY YIELDS GENEROSITY—WE KNOW THIS FROM THE WORK WE DO IN OUR STUDIOS. WE SHOULD NEVER ASK FOR PERMISSION, BUT INSTEAD, CREATE OUR OWN VALIDATION FROM EACH OTHER AND OUR SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES. WE CAN THRIVE WHEN WE TAKE ACTION OURSELVES.

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Through the [Creative Capital Alumni Facebook page](#), I recently surveyed attendees of my past webinars for examples of individuals who have been thriving in their work by embracing a generosity towards their fellow artists. Not surprisingly, I received a lot of responses. A few great examples include actions by Katrina Bello, Kristin Malin and Alice Pixley Young. I specifically selected these three women to talk about because they are located in different areas of the country, and not in New York. Unfortunately, most artists I encounter on the tour still feel like living in New York is central to “succeed” as an artist today.



*“Remote Viewing” by Asha Ganpat, on view in North Willow, an exhibition space in artist Katrina Bello’s attic in New Jersey*

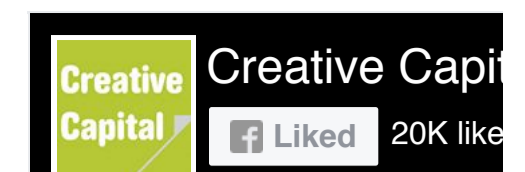
I have recently been in touch with all three artists who confirmed through our conversations that they are quickly moving past old feelings of valueless isolation, empowered by their self-started initiatives focusing on community inclusion. For instance, after taking the webinar, [Katrina Bello](#) started [an exhibition gathering space for artists](#) in her attic in New Jersey. Meeting periodically with her community and producing exhibitions in her attic, she finds this has been extremely beneficial to her life and work. Even though I have yet to visit (it’s definitely on my to-do list!), I am eager to see it in person. Just knowing that there is a place to go see art and meet my colleagues gives me a sense of comfort and validation. Discourse and idea-trading is essential to a cohesive community, and Katrina is making it happen in her neck of the woods.

[Kristin Malin](#) not only is having a great time in Maine, but she is also activating her community in a unique way. She co-organized an exhibition of 30 artists who altered vintage player piano rolls entitled the “[Piano Roll Project](#).” Kristin went on to collaborate with a museum on this show and is currently producing a publication for it.

[Alice Pixley Young](#) co-organized a monthly studio group made up of artists who come together to share opportunities and feedback on each other’s work. Located in Cincinnati, Ohio, she shared with me that this group has opened up her life as an artist. Who knows what will happen between these artists after many gatherings and discussions among them? They are just at the beginning stages, and I can’t wait to see where they go with the information they are sharing with one another.

These women are just three of many artists who are no longer just waiting for an opportunity to come to them, or are frustratingly trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. Instead, they are catalysts for the important change that is inevitable when you increase your value to your fellow artist (and society members): validation.

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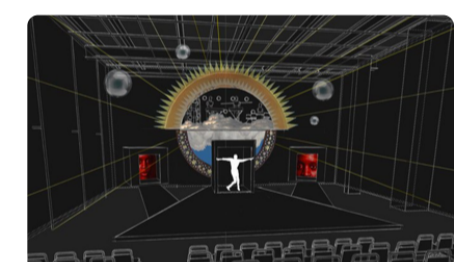


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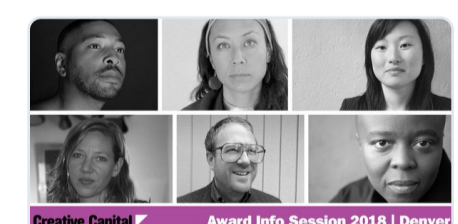
CC Awardee is raising money on [@Kickstarter](#) for a performance tribute to Bruce Haack. [ow.ly/Ldtc30fsO7W](https://ow.ly/Ldtc30fsO7W)



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Image from the “Piano Roll Project” produced by Kristin Malin.

Creating artist-run initiatives, spaces, and happenings are some of the most important ways to increase validation as it breaks away from the old gallery system mindset that seems to plague so many artists I meet on the road. Don’t get me wrong, galleries and private dealers play important roles in our ecosystem—they are essential and important. But while the value of the arts seems to be at a low point in a list priorities in this country at the moment, we need to seize this time for ourselves and step up to create and share opportunities.

Generosity yields generosity—we know this from the work we do in our studios. We should never ask for permission, but instead, create our own validation from each other and our surrounding communities. We can thrive when we take action ourselves. Thank you, Katrina, Kristin, and Alice for leading the way. You’re setting paths for many artists to follow. As art historian, critic and curator [Dr. Alpesh Kantilal Patel](#) has recently reminded me, following and replicating other people’s histories is how we create our own art history. There are many artists sharing generosity and creating opportunities. We need everyone to join them.

Go, Go, GO!

*Read more about Sharon Louden’s book of essays [on her website](#), and check out [our Eventbrite page](#) to sign up for upcoming professional development webinars. Artists, have you created similar opportunities and would like to connect with others on it? Tell us about them in the comments!*



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