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Artists Leaping Over Barriers

story & photo
by Renee Hughes

Sharon Louden's book *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life* is a compilation of 40 artists' essays describing their day to day lives. "Every essay is straight forward. There is no romanticism." Sharon told the sold out crowd, who attended her February 6 presentation at the **Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts, Old Lyme**.

According to Sharon, a noted artist who graduated from both the **School of the Art Institute of Chicago** and **Yale University, School of Art**, the book deals with many traditionally taboo topics. One of them is finances. "Artists don't talk to each other about money." Sharon said.

The barrier crumbled because of the recession, said **Patricia Miranda**, Lyme Academy assistant professor, who assisted Sharon with the presentation. Suddenly artists wanted to know how their colleagues paid the bills. The definition of an artist changed to more than simply working in a studio.

Tony Ingrisano, an artist who wrote one of the book's essays and



(l-r) Patricia Miranda, Assistant Professor, Lyme Academy of Art; David Pease, Sharon Louden's former professor from Yale University and Sharon Louden, author "Living and Sustaining a Creative Life" in the gallery prior to Sharon's presentation.

attended the event, told the audience when he left graduate school he put artists into two categories. "I always thought there were artists making it and those that don't." To him making it meant spending all his time working in a studio. Although Tony's work is widely exhibited, he still holds four other jobs. He said the extra employment, however, helps him to be well rounded as a person and as an artist.

Patricia added that artists often serve as part time teachers, independent museum curators and create programs for schools and museums. "All that is part of their artistic practice,"

she said. "Each artist is creating a unique life suitable to their needs."

The book helps people inside and outside of the profession to understand what it means to be an artist in today's society. "The public doesn't realize an artist is a normal person," Sharon said. Artists help out in their communities and contribute economically to society. "We share our truth. We put ourselves out there in the most intimate ways," she said.

Go to www.sharonlouden.com to purchase *Sustaining and Living a Creative Life*.