



Sharon Loudon was born in 1964 in Philadelphia. She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1988 and her MFA from Yale University School of Art in 1991. Her work has been shown all over the United States, including the Drawing Center in New York, the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in Ridgefield, Connecticut, and the Brooklyn Museum. Solo shows of her work have been presented at the Neuberger Museum at SUNY Purchase, the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, the Islip Art Museum in East Islip, New York, and *DiverseWorks* in Houston, among many others. A solo show of paintings, sculptures, and animations is currently on view at the Birmingham Museum of Art in Birmingham, Alabama, which will travel to the Weatherspoon Art Museum in Greensboro, North Carolina, later this spring. Examples of her work are in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the National Gallery of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, and many others. Loudon's animations will be featured at film festivals in Las Vegas, San Diego, and New Orleans throughout 2009. Loudon is represented by Gallery Joe in Philadelphia, Dunn and Brown Contemporary in Dallas, Project 4 in Washington, DC, and Patrick Heide Contemporary Art in London.

Sharon Loudon: *The Bridge*

Two of the Johnson Museum's recent façade projections were analogue animation works that used largely "old-fashioned," hand-drawn animation techniques, in which hundreds of drawings transformed into a few brief moments of video. Created by artists whose primary medium is drawing, Mark Fox's *Cricket's Song* and Serge Onnen's *Mouth* emphasized the artist's hand and the act of drawing.

Sharon Loudon's projection *The Bridge* (2008) is a fitting continuation of this series as her practice is also based in drawing and painting. While the previous animations were predominantly representational in a style more reminiscent of cartoons, Loudon's work is rooted in abstraction, in issues related to line, color, volume, and composition. Like an abstract painter, she is interested in the expressiveness of these basic elements, while still "referencing the body and its postures," as the art critic Lilly Wei observed. About this kind of formalism, the artist herself has noted, "Although abstract and formal, my work has human-like aspects within its minimal state, made of simple line and gesture. I am interested in having these forms evolve into a language of their own within various mediums."

It is not surprising, then, that Loudon has been drawn to animation for years, which she considers just one of many tools in her creative arsenal. She was able to act on this interest for the first time in 2006 with a series of eight animations. It is the dynamic aspects of animation that allowed Loudon to realize movement in her work, expanding her still images into the third and fourth dimensions. Until then, motion had only been present implicitly in her spontaneous-looking marks on paper and canvas. In actuality, her lines are carefully considered and positioned, becoming like characters in a play, endowed with human traits like emotion and personality.

Stemming from her training in landscape and figurative painting, Loudon's shapes and lines in mostly primary colors or hues of gray seem to act out some kind of narrative in *The Bridge*. Geometric forms resembling sheets of paper flutter in a virtual landscape tinged in shades of blue and orange, simulating a beautiful desert sunrise. While in her digital works Loudon misses the tangibility and tactility that are such critical elements in the artist's sculptural environments, her animations invite a different kind of interaction between image and viewer. Projected onto the façade of the Museum, *The Bridge* could be understood as proposing a dynamic relationship between inside and outside, in which the viewer is represented as an active participant in the transmission of meaning, in synch with the pace of contemporary society.

Andrea Inselmann
Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art

Stills from *The Bridge*, 2008. Digital animation transferred to DVD. 3 min., 15 sec. Courtesy of the artist.