For several years Sharon Louden, who studied painting when she got her MFA at Yale, has been making large-scale, site-specific installations using flexible sheets of shiny aluminum. Her 2013 exhibition at Morgan Lehman featured a few traditional paintings, a projected animation, sculpture made of altered chairs, and an installation fabricated from thin aluminum strips, seemingly teased into a giant knot suspended midway down two walls and connecting in midair. On the floor, delicate pool-like mirrors reflected the suspended knot above them, as did the rectangular mirrors mounted behind the reflective mass. In her installation at the Tweed Museum, Louden continues her exploration of aluminum and its properties, but the shapes, larger and less connected, hang from the ceiling accompanied by other actors—transparent acetate, frosted Mylar, and monofilament string.
By hanging the piece from the ceiling, Louden departs from her previous installation strategy of surrounding the viewer with small bits of metal that coalesce into larger forms. The mirror-like surfaces, rather than breaking the reflections into shard-like fragments, distill larger and more easily decipherable segments of the space below.

Sharon Louden, Community, 2013, aluminum, screws, 122h x 274w x 261d inches. Installed at Morgan Lehman in NYC.

Sharon Louden, Windows, 2015, installation at the Tweed Museum (detail).
By hanging the piece from the ceiling, Louden departs from her previous installation strategy of surrounding the viewer with small bits of metal that coalesce into larger forms. The mirror-like surfaces, rather than breaking the reflections into shard-like fragments, distill larger and more easily decipherable segments of the space below. Viewers now gaze up at the woven and twisted installation, which is tantalizingly out of reach. Louden worked with Arden Weaver, a theatrical lighting designer, who used light to create a dynamic atmosphere, and with contemporary classical composer Andrew Simpson who wrote a score, which was performed live at the reception.


Louden recently relocated to Minneapolis from New York, and while I was out visiting the energetic artist earlier this month, she told me that her pieces were like huge drawings, or ephemeral sculptures in space. At one point during my stay, as she was about to leave for Duluth, she received word that the supplier had delivered a less reflective material than she had ordered. This would not do. Agitated, she and her partner Vinson Valega immediately swung into action to get the correct mirror-like material delivered before installation was scheduled to begin. For Louden, who is also widely known as the driving force behind (and editor of) the 2013 book *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life: Essays by 40 Working Artists*, reflectivity is vital. Without it, the piece would be isolated, unable to interact with its surroundings. For Louden, art and life are about an exchange of energy--her installation comes to life when movement takes place around it.