

**Prospect 18:**  
Christiane Poulin



Echo 4: Growth 2018



Echo 3: Access 2018

## Introduction

Like Poulin's award-winning woven installation *Winds of Change: a Landscape*, 2017, the four woven works in this exhibition respond to or "echo" nearby buildings, prompting viewers to perceive analogies between weaving and architecture. Poulin's works made especially for this exhibition emulate architectural features of the following MSVU campus buildings: the Margaret Norrie McCain Centre with its pink reflective windows, the massive concrete steps leading to the E. Margaret Fulton Communications Centre, the textured concrete stair towers of Seton Academic Centre and the coffered ceiling of MSVU Art Gallery.

Poulin's thoughtful approach to this site-oriented installation includes research into the history of Mount Saint Vincent University, which was founded in 1873 as a girls' school by the Congregation of Sisters of Charity. Thus *Echo 2: Deconstruction* does not simply echo the physical appearance of the Art Gallery's concrete ceiling. The old-fashioned log cabin quilt pattern is intended to inspire thought about the intellectual and practical evolution of Home Economics as a field of research and education in a woman-centred institution such as the Mount.

Similarly, *Echo 1: Reflection* depicts the landscape-mirroring capabilities of the McCain Centre curtain wall. Yet reflection, or thinking, is an activity associated with academe. I might add that the deliberation involved in weaving a translucent panel representing a reflective surface is not inconsiderable.

Light and shadow play an important role in the *Echoes* installation. Three of the works incorporate loom-controlled leno lace, a weave in which the warp ends wrap around each other to produce a twisted-lace effect. The loosely woven fabric allows light to penetrate from both sides and casts complex, dappled shadows.

—Ingrid Jenkner, curator



*Echo 1: Reflection 2018*

## Works in the Exhibition

### **Echo 1: Reflection** 2018

4 panels of pearl cotton woven in loom-controlled leno lace  
 264 × 96 cm (each panel)  
 Courtesy of the artist

The four panels are suspended in a row above the mezzanine rail to allow the maximum transmission of light. Their colours and landscape forms are inspired by the pink, mirrored glass curtain wall of the recently built Margaret Norrie McCain Centre on the MSVU campus. Because the variable angles and intensities of sunlight cause the reflected scene to shift constantly, rectilinear basket-woven shapes interrupt the lacy areas at intervals.

Leno is a lace weave in which the warp ends wrap around each other to produce a twisted-lace effect. The loose weave allows light to penetrate from either side, muting the colours of the yarns. For this reason the artist has chosen saturated hues of peachy-pink, purple, red-brown and orange.

### **Echo 2: Deconstruction** 2018

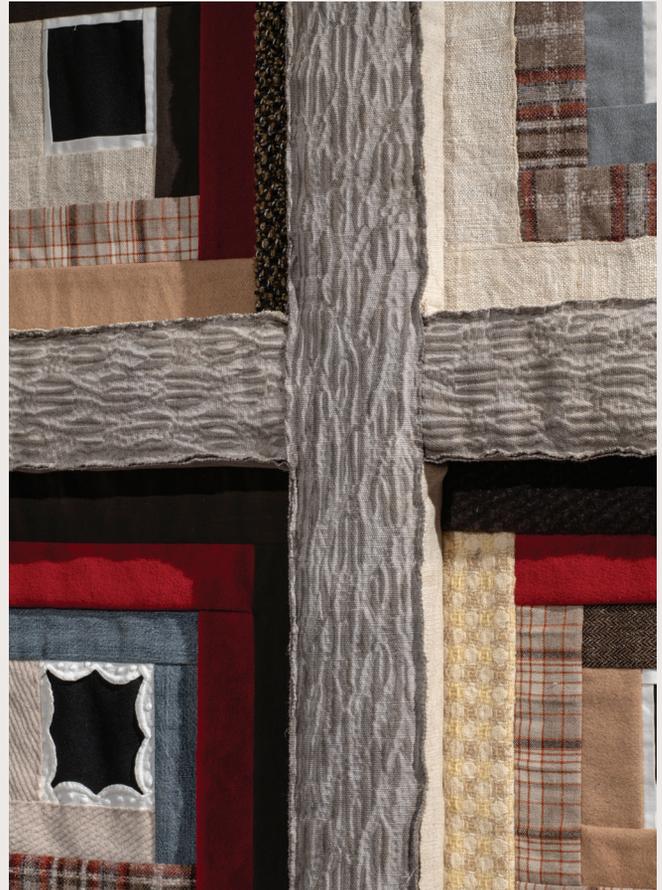
6 log cabin patchwork squares composed of used clothing, joined by hand-woven, shibori-dyed cotton-linen strips, the latter raised and stuffed for a coffered effect  
 183 × 122 × 7 cm  
 Courtesy of the artist

In academic discourse “deconstruction” defines a method of close analysis that exposes contradictions within a text. In the case of *Echo 2* “deconstruction” signifies taking apart articles of clothing to make something new. The patchwork is composed of winter clothing and other textiles passed down through the families of the artist and her husband, including 1920s embroidery by Poulin’s husband’s grandmother Gertrude Crysler and linen handwoven in the 1940s by Poulin’s aunt, Jeanne d’Arc Rodrigue. The recycling of used clothing, as in a quilt, reflects principles of home economics as once taught at the Mount.

Like other works in the exhibition, this one responds to campus architecture. The concrete coffers of the Art Gallery ceiling are evoked in the patchwork squares, whose dimensionality is accentuated by raking light. The raised walls between the squares are dyed with ferrous sulfate in shibori, a resist technique producing a textured surface that feels similar to concrete when touched.



*Echo 2: Deconstruction* 2018



*Echo 2: Deconstruction (detail)* 2018

### **Echo 3: Access** 2018

Pearl cotton panel woven in loom-controlled leno lace, draped on a suspended wooden structure composed of two staircase stringers with dowels

117 × 71 cm (panel), 142 × 76 × 183 cm (staircase)

Cotton-linen panel woven in loom-controlled leno lace, suspended from the ceiling, with upper edge defined by a wooden gable shape 97 × 95 cm (panel), 35 × 95 cm (gable)

Wooden structure designed and made by David C. Elliott  
Courtesy of the artist

Monumental concrete steps lead up to the campus' Royal Bank Link where it joins the E. Margaret Fulton Communications Centre. As a former physician, Poulin was struck by the contradiction between the invitation to enter and the physical barrier posed to persons with disabilities. Hence the ironic title, *Access*, points to the ongoing challenges of ensuring accessibility, physical and otherwise, of a university education for all.

The textile version of this architectural feature, complete with the glass pyramid topping the building above the steps, emphasizes the barrier-like aspect. The wooden structure over which the concrete-coloured panel is draped floats between floor and ceiling. The dowels, standing in for treads, tilt to the right and left. The translucency of the structure, which casts complicated shadows, underscores its impassability.

### **Echo 4: Growth** 2018

Linen warp and weft of recycled fabrics and fibres woven alternately in rag rug (catalogne) and loom-controlled leno lace 335 × 122 cm

Courtesy of the artist

The concrete towers at either end of the Seton Academic Centre display striking vertical corrugations slashed by strong horizontal string courses. Softening this stark, brutalist design, vines of Virginia creeper and climbing hydrangea change the colour and texture of the massive structures through the various seasons.

To celebrate this melding of nature and architecture, Poulin used a combination of catalogne (a technique from her native Quebec with knotted rag strips in the wefts) and leno lace weaving. Clinging on the woven grid of autumnal crimson on a taupe ground is a sweeping purple-black diagonal line emulating a thriving vine. *Growth* is meant to be a metaphor of the university experience.



### About the artist

Christiane Poulin made Nova Scotia her home in the 1970s. After retiring as a medical doctor, she enrolled at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. She graduated in 2017 with a BFA (Interdisciplinary) and won the Starfish Student Art Award for her woven installation *Winds of Change: a Lace-scape*.

Poulin lives in Halifax and has exhibited her work at the Chase Gallery.

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Prospect 18: Christiane Poulin. *Echoes*  
Catalogue of an exhibition held at  
MSVU Art Gallery, 13 October 2018 through 27 January 2019

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**msvu art gallery**

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Photography: Steve Farmer;  
Design: Co. & Co.  
Printing: Halcraft

Front cover: *Echo 1: Reflection* (detail), 2018  
Back cover: *Echo 4: Growth* (detail), 2018

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Exhibitions in the *Prospect* series are intended to give critical consideration to the work of selected artists during the early stages of their careers. The modest scale of these exhibitions encourages artists to develop their ideas and professional knowledge under minimal pressure. MSVU Art Gallery's aim of securing wider recognition for Nova Scotian artists is supported by Mount Saint Vincent University and the Canada Council for the Arts.