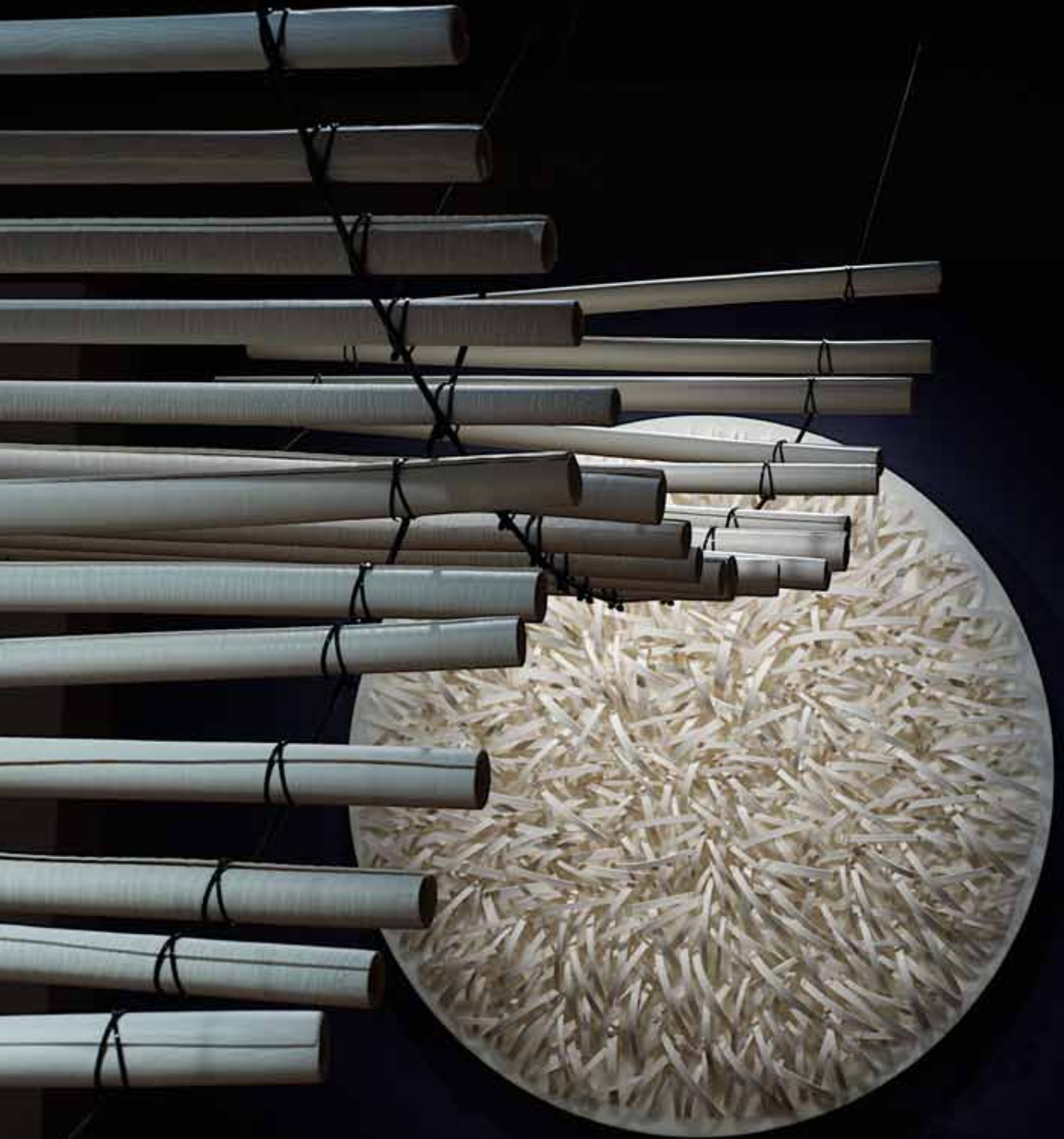


Connection X Connection

Paula Murray



A Review by Christian Bernard Singer



PAULA MURRAY'S POWERFULLY CONTEMPLATIVE exhibition *Connection X Connexion* at Art-image et espace Odyssee in Gatineau, Quebec inspires awe while inviting a relationship with the intangible self. At the heart of the exhibition of new work is an installation of 95 suspended porcelain scrolls, forming a series of swagging crisscrossing bridges that run the full length of the gallery. On the wall behind the hanging scrolls is a large white ceramic disk covered by hundreds of flat strips curling back

and overlapping each other. As the installation moves toward the foreground, progressive piles of scroll debris, like a trace of missteps, are scattered on six additional blue disks below the bridge until it finally meets the floor in a quiet explosion of unfurling scrolls. Lights shining through the bridge leave ghostly shadows like ephemeral memories that time will eventually erase. Evoking the passage of time, the scrolls are fragile and brittle, resembling birch bark or ancient parchment and yet, being ceramic,





they have the permanence of stone. Murray's expert manipulation of her material is obvious as the delicate linear cracklings within each scroll suggest intentional markings like a form of ancient writing. This notion is echoed in a complementary work from the artist's *Sanctuary* series. On a side wall, two long wooden shelves, still bearing the traces of their organic origins, hold an assortment of standing

scrolls that oscillate between an old-growth forest and a library of ancient universal knowledge.

The bridges of paper-thin scrolls conjure images of precarious crossings between two mountains where any of a number of steps might give way under the weight of the traveller. Metaphorically, the bridge spans the world of ideas, information and spiritual concerns. Thoughts and beliefs are non-physical and





weightless (it is only in their manifestation that they become burdened and heavy) but in our search for meaning, we are compelled to traverse all bridges come what may.

Through her work Murray addresses the break-neck pace of contemporary life, an ever-changing and cacophonous world that is moving like a runaway train. We are deluged with information yet have such a thirst for its acquisition that there remains little space for reflection, for the sacred. And in the process, we are losing our connection to the environment, to each other, to our inner voices and to the wisdom of the ages – all elements that define the human condition.

Throughout her career, Murray has found great inspiration in the natural world and in how nature often fosters her to trust her intuition. Moreover, while her unique approach has always stretched the physical limits of ceramics, she is equally accomplished as an installation artist as if the work had been intentionally destined for the space. In *Connection X Connexion*, not only does her work offer multiple new pathways for viewer interaction but the work itself becomes transcendent.

Christian Bernard Singer is an artist, curator and writer living in Montreal.

All images are from the exhibition *Connection X Connection*.

