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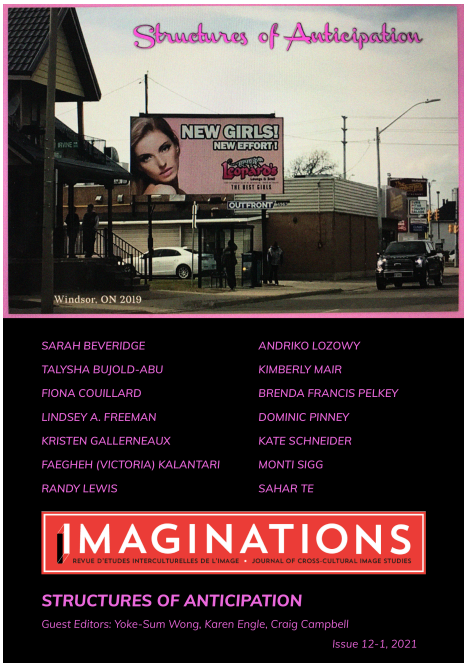

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Structures of Anticipation

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TALYSHA BUJOLD-ABU

No game to play here, in the pushed back sleeves and wet hands of washing walls. Squares of black space, they appear, only the shapeless happenings of repetitive labour. Cameras record with a knowing assumption. They see hands and a wall.

The washing continues, up and down. Breathing with pressure flared nostrils, up and down. How loud it is to be watched. I backed up, with a photo. Backed up again, with a flash.

A dark wet square drying slowly, slower still was the water dripping off my elbow. Packing up: zipper, soap bottle, rag. Quick actions. Damp cement disappeared. The wall left with a phantasmal stain, a puddle of grime resting at the nearest corner. The water kept moving, finding hidden slopes that lead down, pooling and expanding—chanting the same against the ground as I had with the wall: faster and faster still.

* * *

ANTICIPATING is a nervous and exciting threshold. An action, a feeling, a space to occupy that withholds patience while asking for time. *Structures of Anticipation* became this transient space. A workshop built for reinterpretation; asking participants to embody research and interrogation, to marry process with constructing quickly.

My process was in washing, wiping down walls to create a square threshold, a marking (also unmarked) in its anonymous presence. Hoping to mimic the narrative language of graffiti, the way walls learned to scream profanity, mirror peeing youths and embrace symbols or images of othering. The mean graffiti, the cruel stuff. I found the work (the act of anticipation) in the process of interacting with the wall, in the washed shapes. Doing the math but showing the work, the work being that satisfying surprise.

Was this the actual strength of graffiti? There must've been something more to turning sentiment into a public billboard or sign. The act of "putting it up" and "putting it there," a note to be seen or read, a stranger in the background of the everyday. Alike to the cameras that watched me washing—the action of it feeling odd was enough. To sneak down a back alley (or parking garage) and wipe the walls clean

… the only material coming loose was dirt and city smog. Standing there, scrubbing, othering myself while changing the wall (if only temporarily) as the water dried.

Perhaps the distorted narratives of graffiti (on graffiti, overlapping graffiti) is the relationship between what can and cannot be seen; another space of anticipation that threads itself between what was left and who left it there. My shapes faded, the photographs only a lasting impression. I felt glad that some marks can disappear.