

IMAGINATIONS

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STRUCTURES OF ANTICIPATION

Guest Editors: Yoke-Sum Wong, Karen Engle, Craig Campbell

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KATE SCHNEIDER



Have you ever found yourself in the throes of a project and wondered, “What the hell am I doing?” That was me at hour five of what would be eight hours of scraping and peeling thirty feet of 24” x 36” posters off a brick wall in downtown Windsor, Ontario.

The posters are part of my project, *Trumpgrabs or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love My Existential Fear*, which is an evolving archive and public-artwork cataloguing the overwhelming news alerts I receive on my phone’s lock-screen since Donald Trump’s inauguration in 2017. For *Structures of Anticipation*, I installed the archive of 1,100 screenshots in three locations in Windsor and De-

troit. And, in a move that some questioned—which in my naivete I claimed was ethical—I promised the landowners I would remove the works at the end of the symposium.

Fast forward to the de-install: nearly in tears with hands ripped raw, I was peeling small bits of paper with my hotel keycard from Comfort Suites Windsor and deflecting drunks who were asking, “Why are you sanding a brick wall?” That morning, I thought this process would only take an hour. I brought a bucket of warm water and a spray bottle, and launched myself into a process of wetting the posters and gently peeling them from the wall. But with each round of saturating, the posters wouldn’t budge, with only small fragments peeling away.

Anticipation is a hoax. There are many things we can anticipate; I knew that it was going to be a humid day. I brought water and snacks in case the de-install took more than an hour. YouTube told me that I needed to soak the posters in soapy warm water. I brought a bucket of warm water. We can guess what will happen to our future selves. We can make plans to mitigate future issues, but the majority of daily life is beyond the reach of anticipation. And, if we could actually anticipate all the facets of our lives, we would likely fall into some anticipatory existential hole.

Donald Rumsfeld, the architect of the second Iraq war, said this about anticipation (or the Bush Administration’s inability to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in 2002): “[...] as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don’t know we don’t know.”¹ I, my friends, while in the purgatory of peeling, was deeply in the unanticipated territory of unknown unknowns.

Possibly I could have anticipated this. But this anticipatory void is part of the messiness of the artistic process. I also don’t have any beautifully packaged wisdom or grand ideas on art for you. All I know is that I am deeply in the known unknown territory with *Trumpgrabs*. And, I’m ok with this. I think.

NOTES

1. Quoted in David A. Graham, "Rumsfeld's Knowns and Unknowns: The Intellectual History of a Quip." <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/03/rumsfelds-knowns-and-unknowns-the-intellectual-history-of-a-quip/359719/> (accessed 31/1/2021).¹