Structures of Anticipation

NEW GIRLS! NEW EFFORT!

Windsor, ON 2019

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

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Image Credit:
Karen Engle (photography) and
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STRUCTURES OF ANTICIPATION: AN INTRODUCTION

STRUCTURES D'ANTICIPATION: L'INTRODUCTION

(In Memory of Lesley Stern)

From the Trumpgrabs series, Kate Schneider, 2019, Windsor, Ontario.[1]

THE PROJECT

Structures of Anticipation,[2] a four-day multi-disciplinary symposium and exhibition held in Windsor, Ontario on 21-24 May 2019, drew many of its core ideas from engagement with academics, arts/media theoreticians and practitioners, and cultural communities. It was part of a series of international workshops/events held since 2014 in the

US, UK, Germany, and Greece—the series is committed to finding collaborative practices between art and media practitioners, academics, and research students from different backgrounds. The Windsor-based symposium and exhibition was focused on the image-text relationship and the crisis of representation generated by the rapid intensity of breaking news in critical times.

The event mobilized camera-led research creation wherein critique is understood to emerge in the encounter in which the photograph is put into conversation with writing. Shuttling between image and text is a process of rectification, embodied learning, and experiment. We were interested in addressing the relationship of words and images, and how these texts (framed within an economy of words) might be deployed as a reflexive pause that can help us withstand the emotional instantaneity of the digital realm.

Participants in the symposium were asked to respond to the theme within the built environment of Windsor, Ontario—a border city to Detroit that is also the busiest crossing in North America as well as the material and symbolic site of daily and tense anticipations. Each participant was asked to produce five images and generate texts of no more than one hundred words to accompany each image within a span of 48 hours. The economy of the 100 words challenged participants to be careful with writing, and to select words that matter in relationship to the image. Our method engaged with the terse genre of writing found on social media sites like Twitter, but encouraged reflexivity rather than reactivity. What was left unsaid, visualized as the spaces between the words, contributed to the structure of anticipation that we endeavored to engage. The research creation process and the symposium event challenged conventional modes of methodology to highlight the idea of responsive productions and conceptualization in the process of word-image creations. Such minimalist practices, however, also elide and invoke silences, and what is left unsaid, or the spaces between the words, is possibly where the images might compensate—or vice versa. These diptychs[3] were then displayed in a public exhibition on the final day of the symposium (24 May, 2019) at the SB Contemporary Art Gallery in Windsor.[4] The

photo-compositions published here are part of the overall project and represent another stage of the process.

INTENSITIES

On the day of the installation and just before the exhibition was due to open, a heated discussion broke out over one particular image. It is one of five images captured around the theme of surveillance, and part of a sequence of photographs capturing the material environment of securitization and the normalization of surveillance.

The photographer had captured a seemingly innocuous image: a figure of a woman crosses the street and from an angle, as if she is being watched from behind a store window or from the moving car—or rather as if we—not just the photographer, but the viewer as well—are watching her. We cannot see her clearly. The reflections enhance the photograph's multi-layered ambiguity in a perfectly framed image. On the right are "no parking" and "stop" signs in a rather unassuming neighbourhood. It is all grey, green, and lush but it is the figure's clothing which stands out, draws our eye towards her—her bright red and blue fabric attracts our immediate attention as she walks across the street.

An objection arises—she is clearly not white; she wears a hijab—she is identified (by the objector) as a Muslim—is the photographer coding her into a trope of racial anxiety in their work on surveillance? The objector—who is not a participant—continues arguing: should this photograph be included? Does this figure know she is being stereotyped, unethically used, and appropriated in an exhibition organized by academics and the cultural class? This figure is without voice or representation—she is once again Gayatri Spivak's subaltern who cannot speak. There are no objections made of other photographs with non-visible minority people in them.

We the curators let the photograph stand. The text which accompanied the photograph had addressed an aspect of uneasy surveillance anxieties in a broader environment—which was the general subject of the series. More in order to affect this critique, the image in ques-

tion was extracted from its context. The photographer and writer had produced a series of five diptychs, and viewing/reading them together produces an altogether different effect than the isolation of this single woman. In this series, windows, reflections and distortions repeat, underscoring that we are looking at framed scenes (implying exclusions) and that these scenes highlight their mediation, as opposed to making a claim for any easy sense of documentary realness. The photograph most "in focus" (from another of the diptychs) depicts a statue of the Virgin Mary, the brilliant reds and blues from her garb resonating with the reds and blues from the contested image. The Virgin Mary image's accompanying text tells of her replacement by newer gods of surveillance. The image that follows Mary in this sequence is, in fact, the image of the anonymous woman. What difference might it make to consider these images and texts in conversation with each other?

What of the woman in the photograph? We do not even know if she is Muslim or South Asian or African. She becomes an abstract figure re-coded into the anxieties of our time, "the dismal future" that writes the "anxious present" (Lewis and Sigg)[5]—reduced to a political representation inserted into white saviourism—taken beyond the image into the echo chambers of white guilt and feelings of moral certainty. The last thing the figure is accorded is the privilege of being given the same consideration (or non-consideration) as others captured in such instances, as part of a visual lexicon that allows us to read beyond existing categories. Her abstraction as victim is also an abstraction by those who inhabit privilege—speaking-for is also a problematic rendering of the Other as voiceless and therefore commits a similar act of stereotyping and contemporary orientalism. The figure here is wrenched beyond the image and inserted into the discourses of our fractious world—she becomes hyper-otherized beyond and against her knowledge—enmeshed into our contemporary moral universe that resonates with the emotional temperatures of these political times. The contemporary semiotic field is an anxious one, pulsating with anticipatory intensities that dissolve and simultaneously ossify rights and wrongs. Our seeing no longer distantiates us from

the image or its textual composition here but is enfolded into our affective being.

We accept that we simply cannot dismiss the concerns of the ethics of photographing the other – and the objecting party had every right to voice their concerns. However, the situation and the ensuing discussion also raised many interesting questions for us and we felt that this particular situation also highlighted what we were trying to do in setting up the four-day research creation process. Could we sit in this space of unease, what Donna Haraway calls 'staying with the trouble'?[6]

If we were to find some conceptual framing to the research creation exercise, it would be in the Provoke photography movement and Japanese image theory of the 1960s. Japanese image theory, its ideas and practices, emerged in a time of heightened student protests, charged political circumstances and Cold War anxieties in Japan. Influenced by performance art, film-makers such as Oshima Nagisa and Matsumoto Toshio, as well as European philosophy, the Provoke collective sought to find and cultivate a new photographic consciousness in those turbulent conditions.

THE CAMERA AS A GATHERING APPARATUS

In 1958, the avant-garde film-maker Matsumoto Toshio – moved by Robert Hessens' and Alain Resnais' 1950 documentary, *Guernica* – wrote his influential essay, "A Theory of Avant Garde Documentary," to critique what he saw as the formalist-populist realism method of documentary films.[7] In his essay, Matsumoto addressed the changing social and political circumstances in post-war Japan and argued for a new realism in which the documentary genre should embrace a more avant-garde sensibility that questioned the relationship between the unconscious and exterior reality in documenting the possibility of the "as-yet-undeveloped world."

The essay had a significant impact on the Japanese arts and media community—especially in photography. Published nine years before Roland Barthes' 1967 essay, "Death of the Author," Matsumoto had

explored the role of the artist-creator's subjective consciousness in dialectical relation to the material world.[8] He felt that documentary realism was dominated by the all-consuming ego of the cultural creator. His argument for the "materialist self-dissolution" of the human subject or the "the author him- or herself" as social phenomenon in the theoretical and methodological framing of documentary work influenced one of the most significant post-war photography movements, Provoke (1968-1970).[9]

Often associated with the photography of Moriyama Daido, the Provoke collective of photographers and writers appeared most active from 1968 to 1970, having published only three journals. The exchange among those involved, often influenced by anti-war politics and Marxism—including artists and academics—span over a decade from 1966 to the mid 1970s. Influenced by the site-specific protest-inspired performance collectives of the 1960s in Japan, such as Zero Jigen and Hi-Red Center, Provoke emerged in a time of social and political unrest with a photography manifesto that challenged the hegemonic structures of the times.[10] Their off-kilter, grainy, blurry—or *are*, *bure*, *boke*—images[11] aimed to confront and disturb the pre-existing conceptual expectations of photographic and documentary realism in an urbanscape of erupting social chaos.[12] From university campuses and student barricades to the streets of Shinjuku, there were outbreaks of protests and social rebellion that were impossible to capture with conventional photographic methods. How did you document the dynamism of such tumultuous energy during a time of rapid social changes? The Provoke Manifesto, written by founding members Takanashi Yutaka, Nakahira Takuma, Taki Kōji, and Okada Takahiko declares:

> The image by itself is not a thought. It cannot possess a wholeness like that of a concept. Neither is it an interchangeable code like a language. Yet its irreversible materiality—the reality that is cut out by the camera—constitutes the opposite side of language, and for this reason at times it stimulates the world of language and concepts. When this happens, language transcends its fixed and conceptualized self, transforming into a new language, and therefore a new thought.

> At this singular moment—now—language loses its material basis—in short its reality—and drifts in space, we photographers must go on grasping with our own eyes those fragments of reality that cannot possibly be captured with existing language, actively putting forth materials against language and against thought. Despite some reservations, this is why we have given Provoke the subtitle *provocative materials for thought*. (Takanashi, Nakahira, Taki and Okada, 1968)[13]

Matsumoto Toshio had also written an essay on the "hidden photograph" in the magazine *Kamera Jidai*, where he expands on Henri Cartier-Bresson's compositional concept of the "decisive moment" as an instance in which the "real" appears.[14] In such instances—in the moment when the image is taken—there are revelatory crevices or "passages" (*tsūro*) which emerge out of entrenched stereotypes and structures. For Matsumoto such moments require "the alignment of three factors: an unexpected and revelatory 'accident' (*gūzen*) happening in the external world; a fortuitous photographic capture of the accident; and a 'sharp imagination'."[15] These ideas fed into Provoke's founding members, and its main theoreticians, Taki Kōji and Nakahira Takuma.

Taki Kōji published a series of essays on the Barthesean codeless image in the late 60s and early 70s where he argued for the dismantling of the "semantic environment" by surrendering the photographer's ego and turning creative action to the camera, thus dispelling the illusions of an elite-manipulated society. Key to Taki's theorizing was the concept of *kankyō*–the environment—where conventional photography played a role in maintaining the status quo. *Kankyō* normally referred to 'the area surrounding a place or thing' or 'the circumstances in which a discrete part of something interacts with the larger whole.' For Taki, *kankyō* was a relational concept that fed into the production of meaning, a process or 'relationship' (*kankei*) "that entwines 'subjective individuals' and 'images' in a totalising nexus."[16] By experimenting with different photographic techniques—ones that produced the plain and accidental image—the photographer's camera, by "infinitely repeating the act of photography,"

would challenge the hegemonic environment and transmit the realities of the world sub-linguistically.[17] As Philippe Charrier writes, "More than a mere repository of useful stylistic techniques, Taki regarded pioneering photography forms as weapons that lay outside the framework of 'the system'. Their technological crudeness constituted a kind of primitivistic power that resisted the compromising semiotic structures of language and narrative."[18]

The camera for fellow Provoke colleague, Nakahira Takuma served as more than an instrument to uncover the hegemonic ideology of the material environment, in this case, the landscape.[19] The camera was also a mnemonic device to capture what the photographer could have missed, laying bare the world and all beyond that had previously not been "disclosed." Regarding Nakahira Takuma's photobook "For a Language to Come," Kohara Masashi writes that Nakahira's camera is an anti-interpretative device that captures everything in front of it without understanding it, as a remedy for memory loss that accepts every detail without difference."[20] The camera, Kohara writes, is Nakahira's third eye, and an instrument "to re-establish his sundered link to the world – without language as a filtering device, but with the camera as a gathering apparatus." Nakahira Takuma writes, "My photography is an absolute necessity for me, having forgotten everything." Like his compatriot Taki Kōji, Nakahira was also concerned about capturing that which is not immediate to the eye or framed by the photographer. Influenced by Roland Barthes and Walter Benjamin, Nakahira found inspiration in Eugène Atget whom he credited as a photographer who discarded his ego and gave significance to the unconscious elements in his photographs, "[b]ecause he lacked any a priori images, Atget laid bare the world as the world. But for us, who already fully 'know' the world, can we still nakedly manifest reality like this or not? If we suppose it is possible, then is there no other way than to start out by first discarding one's self?"[21]

Like many who read semiotics and philosophy during that dynamic period, Nakahira was also preoccupied with the relationship of language and the image—and Provoke, Nakahira argued, had revived language. "Images haunt language like a shadow", he writes; "they line language, and give it substance, and in some cases, they bring

about the expansion of language."[22] Provoke had fulfilled its mission in that the photographs had thwarted the "fixed meanings of verisimilitude"—a tree is not a tree—the image is not self-evident. In the unintentionally focused style of the Provoke photographers, inspired by the rapid urbanization of Japan, and a landscape engulfed in social and political dissent, the totality of the urban authority-controlled "landscape" was challenged. The unstructured photographs revealed the fissures or "cracks" of possible languages or possible worlds—of a language to come. Resonant of Nakahira's essays, Moriyama Daido – perhaps Provoke's most celebrated photographer—in later years would argue that giving meaning to his photograph was pointless,

> to shoot images is to receive shocks from the outside world ... imposing a theme drains photography of its spark [...] the outside world is extremely fluid and mixed up. Wrestling it into a "theme" is an impossibility. The mix in its totality cannot be photographed. Within a thin sliver of this world, only the thinnest of segments can be recorded with the photograph – but I keep photographing. There is nothing else." (Moriyama)[23]

The exploration of image and text had also permeated the world of manga in the late 1960s – especially the avant-garde manga (*zen'ei manga)* of Hayashi Seiichi and Maki Sasaki, who broke with conventional Japanese manga illustration and the use of language. In *eizō manga* (image manga), the image and text relationship is non-oppositional—it is comprehended through an aesthetic appreciation of individual images and the poetic correspondences between one image and the next—a form of narrative illustration.[24] By rethinking the nature of the image (and panelling in manga), the role of the text is also re-considered and re-inscribed beyond the role of the Barthesean "relay" function—and just as the Provoke photographers intended, for the avant-garde mangakas, the text is no more dependent on or connected to the image but drifts in space, unanchored from its conceptual moorings and works as a composite, a montage of messages that undermine the certainty of meaning in a condition of flux.

BACK TO WINDSOR

We never intended to bring coherence to the theme of *Structures of Anticipation* or plan a neat completion to the project. It seems even more surreal now, in these pandemic times, when the Windsor-Detroit border has become a zone of infection. Although the border remains closed to tourists, essential workers and truck drivers continue to cross daily and, as of this writing, Windsor-Essex has the highest rate of COVID-19 in the province.[25] Particularly since 9/11, this border has always been a site of anticipation and insecurity; now it's taken on an altogether different quality, almost like a phantom limb. The geographic spaces now called Windsor and Detroit have been linked since before colonization. To see the other shore, but be cut off from it, generates feelings of loss, surreality, worry, and anticipation for some kind of better future. Mostly, we wait.

We had envisioned a process of stages and prolonged time-gaps for post-event reflection—particularly after the intensiveness of the four days of activity in which printing and equipment issues added to the last-minute scramble. The 100-word composition was never meant to "explain" the image but acted as companion text, although in some cases it could stand perfectly independent of the image. These juxtapositions of compositions and images, we hope, act to disturb, illuminate, mystify, and provoke—teasing out what lies beyond the writer-photographer's eye or even the reader's perceptions, and invite us to generate different constellations of knowing and re-assessing the word-image relation in an age of digital instantaneities—and of meaning perpetually deferred. This was our particular way of pushing the semiotic disruption of the text-image relationship—by restricted image selection and limiting the word count within a time constraint.

Certainly, the most tense and anticipatory moments were felt during the installation, and just before the exhibition went live. The sequence of the photographs was the participant's decision, while the installation location and placement were the curators' decision with the input of the contributor, if present. The restricted time period of the four days from opening workshop to exhibition certainly created

a sense of urgency on the part of those involved, and yet this duration was considered a pause against the flood of constant news and overwhelming information where participants had to focus on creating the five text-image compositions. We recognize the contradictions here of producing work that calls a halt to the speed of information in less than four days, but in the spirit of Provoke's manifesto, we too had hope to generate fissures or cracks in the discourse in the image-text exercise that took place in Windsor, the space of Taki Kōji's *kankyō*—and to bring forth, in Nakahira Takuma's words, a language to come. If we did not leave the exhibition with a sense of lingering dissatisfaction or disquietude—and wanting to write a little more, reorganize the symposium structure, or change the selection and number of photographs or their sequence – we believe we would have failed. As such, we decided to give our contributors another opportunity to put down their thoughts, to select perhaps an image that they wished they had included or to expand their writing – this time by about another 500 words but to a single image. These thirteen photo-compositions (arranged alphabetically) presented as a dossier in this *Imaginations* issue, are not postscripts to the project. However, we do see them as adding to the different parts of the project; as exhibition, as webpage, and as publication, presenting yet another iteration of the theme that would serve as a springboard to future workshops, exhibitions, and encounters.

—*The Curators,*[26] August 5, 2020

NOTES

1. Photographed by Czarina Mendoza for the *Structures of Anticipation* symposium and exhibition. Kate Schneider's *Trumpgrabs* series can be found here: https://www.kateschneider.net/trumpgrabs↲

2. *Structures of Anticipation*, May 21-24, 2019, Windsor, Ont. Canada. This was a SSHRC Connection Grant funded event organized and curated by Karen Engle (Project Lead), Yoke-Sum Wong, and Craig Campbell. The research creation event included a workshop, and an exhibition – the research creation process was mostly completed within 48 hours. Readers of the photo-compositions here should also cross reference with the project's website, https://www.structuresofanticipation.com.↲

3. There is something bold in calling them diptychs, which typically refers to two images. In our case we use this language to raise the level of the writing in an explicit effort to avoid the diminishing language of a "caption."↲

4. SB Contemporary Gallery is now closed as the owners have relocated to Thornbury, Ontario.↲

5.   Randy Lewis and Monti Sigg, exhibition text, in *Structures of Anticipation*, May 24, 2019.↵

6.   Donna Haraway (2016), *Staying with the Trouble*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.↵

7.   Matsumoto Toshio and Michael Raine (Trans.), "A Theory of Avant Garde Documentary," Cinema Journal, 51.4 (Summer 2012), pp. 148–154.
      Also see Mark Nones' (2007*) *Forest of Pressure: Ogawa Shinsuke and Postwar Japanese Documentary*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.↵

8.   Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image, Music, Text.* Translated by Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, pp. 142–147.↵

9.   Matsumoto and Raine, pp. 152–153.↵

10.   See the catalogue of the exhibition, *Provoke: between Protest and Performance: Photography in Japan, 1960 – 1975* (2016), Steidl.↵

11.   *Are, Bure, Boke* is normally translated as grainy, blurry, out of focus.↵

12.   One of the most famous images that encapsulates the spirit of Provoke aesthetics is probably Tomatsu Shomei's "Protest 1" from the *Oh! Shinjuku* series (1969). The image can be seen here featured in the review of the exhibition, *For a New World to Come* (2015), https://asianartnewspaper.com/experiments-in-japanese-art-and-photography-1968-1979/. Tomatsu was not part of Provoke but like other photographers at that time, shared Provoke's philosophy. Tomatsu, interestingly though had always challenged the idea of photographic documentary realism associated with the photography of Domon Ken – though they did work together.↵

13.   Takanashi Yutaka, Nakahira Takuma, Taki Kōji, Okada Takahiko, *Provoke* 1.1 (November 1968), 2.↵

14.   Matsumoto Toshio, 'Gūzen no mon-dai', *Kamera jidai*, 1 (January 1966), pp. 46–47. The title here can be translated as the Problem of the Accidental.↵

15.   Philip Charrier (2017) Taki Kōji, "Provoke, and the Structuralist Turn in Japanese Image Theory", 1967–70, *History of Photography*, 41:1, pp. 25–43.↵

16.   Charrier, pp. 26.↵

17. Taki Kōji, "First discard the world of pseudocertainty: The thinking beyond photography and language," Hirayama Mikako (Trans.) Tokyo: Tabata Shoten (1970), pp. 6–11. The short essay is found in a book that served as Provoke's fourth and final publication. This same translated essay is reprinted as "What is Possible for Photography" in *From Postwar to Postmodern, Art in Japan 1945-1989, Primary Documents*, 2012, p. 218.↵

18. Charrier, pp. 31.↵

19. The reprinting of Nakahira Takuma's photobook, *For a Language to Come* is also accompanied by the translation of his three essays between 1968–1973. They are: *Has Photography been able to Provoke Language* (1968); *Rebellion against the Landscape: Fire at the Limits of Perpetual Gazing* (1970); *Looking at the City or, The Look from the City* (1973). All three essays are listed as Nakahira Takuma, "Three Essays by Nakahira Takuma," Franz K Pritchard (Trans.) in *For a Language to Come* (2010), Tokyo, Osiris.↵

20. Kohari Masashi (2010), "A Portrait of Nakahira Takuma (2005)" in https://americansuburbx.com/2010/06/takuma-nakahira-portrait-of-takuma.html↵

21. Nakahira, 2010.↵

22. Ibid.↵

23. Moriyama Daido with Ivan Vartanian, "Daido Moriyama: The Shock from Outside, Interview with Ivan Vartanian," *Aperture*, No. 203 (Summer 2011), pp. 22–31.↵

24. Ryan Holmberg, "A Vogue for I Don't Get It: Hayashi Seiichi vs. Sasaki Maki, 1967–69," *The Comic Journal* http://www.tcj.com/a-vogue-for-i-dont-get-it-hayashi-seiichi-vs-sasaki-maki-1967-69/↵

25. CBC July 26, 2020.↵

26. Yoke-Sum Wong (Calgary, Ab), Karen Engle (Windsor, Ont), Craig Campbell (Austin, Tx)↵