

# IMAGINATIONS

REVUE D'ÉTUDES INTERCULTURELLES DE L'IMAGE • JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL IMAGE STUDIES



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## STRUCTURES OF ANTICIPATION

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

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FIONA COUILLARD



After everything you've been through, how can you not be a feminist?

- *A question to my mother*

Standing, lost but not yet hopeless, on the sidewalk of that uneasy street, it was clear I would not find what I was looking for. The orange snow fence was nowhere to be found in Windsor, Ontario on this muggy May day.

I use the snow fence as a visual metaphor in my practice. I equate it with the psychological defences we build as protection when the world tells us who to be or how to be and when that world view does not align with our own internal image of self. The fence becomes a representation of patriarchal power structures, a grid that both hides and reveals.

The situation with the security guard at the airport terminal in Detroit and men on the streets kept leading me back to the bizarre enactments of the couple in the Toronto airport. I couldn't shake off what I saw as a disturbing power play. I should have been seething with rage, yet I felt like an observer, collecting data to later stand upon.

I read the symposium's concept, *Anticipation*, to be politically charged—where the onslaught of biased news can cause one to anticipate and conjure a false reality.

The symposium began with sharing images of our work and how we were thinking about the topic—both inspiring and supportive. The brevity of the text component allowed time during the week to ponder, and to engage while forcing one to consider the value and importance of each word. Yet, five diptychs was enough to require pushing beyond my current focus in order to create a relevant body of work.

Before our individual work, several of us took a long exploratory walk through Windsor and along the Detroit River, a veritable fence between the US and Canada. I couldn't help but consider my privilege of nationality and birth during this trip. Each of us had different

research interests tied to anticipation and different images of interest that we hoped to capture.

I set out on foot in search of fences, I knew the best method to resolve my thoughts with images would be to work with those that presented themselves, rather than to try forcing a preconceived idea.

I was now looking for (any) fences in domestic settings, used to provide a sense of security rather than to define property or for aesthetic purposes. I remained open to the unknown in an unknown place, allowing myself to alter constraints in the process, while at the same time I was asked by these directives to question what I was seeing. I walked many city blocks and neighbourhood streets, north to south and east to west. The solo adventure was quiet and meditative, allowing my observations of the week to percolate with the landscape in front of me.