

Preface

Number of the Least

Marlene N. Lehner

Yes, we are testing fate. For the first time ever the original fifty-six drawings that compose the Blotsplotch Suite are on view in a single, albeit exceedingly fortified, room. This exhibition has been for me what we Germans would call one's *aufgabe*, a person's life-affirming pursuit, the very task Marlene Lehner was put on this planet to perform, and this accomplishment—by analogy, my life's fulfillment—would not have been possible without the determination of my fellow curators, the bravery of the drawings' donors, sheer luck, and the willingness of our board of sponsors, whose no-expense-be-spared approach has resulted in the uncompromising and comprehensive treatment of our subject: Blotsplotch.

I realize this will be the first time many have heard of Blotsplotch, and for that reason I have taken measures to organize both the exhibition and this catalog as objectively as I believe possible. My goal is to introduce attendees and readers alike to the suite of drawings, the eponymous pen, and the maelstrom of secondary texts that comprise the Blotsplotch phenomenon in a manner that conveys the subject's cultural pertinence without coloring the experience with an interpretative slant or aligning myself with any of the many critical factions, variously preoccupied with Blotsplotch's theoretical ramifications, arcane iconography, or ontological/cult status.

To begin, it is imperative to mention certain curatorial constraints imposed by the drawings' individual owners as a precondition to their loan. For those who are interested, the reasons for these constraints are elaborated upon at length in

many of the aforementioned secondary texts, but, for the sake of this exhibition, such restrictions are simply matters of fact, about which I must maintain a disinterested distance, given my position as chief curator. The constraints are as follows:

- No sketching or photography (including but not limited to video and digital photography). This prohibition extends to the curatorial staff, which is why there are no in situ illustrations of the exhibition in this catalog.
- The exhibition is to be by invitation and appointment only; limited to 3,136 guests; and, as such, is expressly not open to the public.
- The exhibition must not be advertised, save for 3,136 hand-delivered invitations. This prohibition extends to all print and digital media, as well as word-of-mouth advertising.
- No attendee may be permitted the vantage of more than one Blotsplotch drawing at once. To this end, my fellow curators and I devised a monopticon layout (essentially the inversion of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon design), whereby all the drawings are displayed around a central column, measuring 20.5m in diameter and partitioned with thickly stellated radii that extend between the displayed drawings.
- No reflective surfaces (e.g., mirrors) are permitted into the exhibition.

- No more than fifty-five individuals, including guards and exhibition staff, are allowed in the exhibition space at any one time.
- The exhibition catalog may be released only after the exhibition has concluded.

While some may find these restrictions draconian, be assured that the only alternative would have been to abort the exhibit altogether. More importantly, without the exhibition the catalog before you would not have been possible, and while I hope those selected few who attend the exhibition will find the experience enlightening, the fundamental motivation for my involvement has always been to publish and disseminate a catalog, containing for the first time reproductions of all fifty-six drawings in the Blotsplotch suite.

In addition to the drawings and a thoughtful introduction by Sylvanus, the reader will find two representative secondary texts on Blotsplotch, the first of which is Guy Deblot's *Society of Splotch*. Deblot's essay is a fitting introduction to many of the salient issues within Blotsplotch scholarship, and its fifty-six sections adequately distance the individual drawings so that they are not illustrated side by side on opposing pages (a precondition to the rights of their reproduction). The other secondary text is the highly annotated galley proof for Anatoly K. Yezhov's essay *The Blotsplotch Drawings: Again for the First Time*. This essay was specially commissioned by our Board of Directors for inclusion in this catalog and was intended to survey the current state of Blotsplotch criticism. At the time of writing, however,

Anatoly Konstantinovitch Yezhov's well-being and whereabouts are unknown. This galley proof represents the author's last known correspondence, and despite its unfinished state and manic annotations that spill over in pages of presumed psychosis, I have included Yezhov's annotated draft, unabridged, not only to bring attention to his disappearance but because it serves—in its own way—as an insightful albeit unconventional example of Blotsplotch scholarship.

It is my sincere hope that any reader encountering this book will be compelled by the Blotsplotch drawings, the essays of Deblot and Yezhov, and the related content contained herein to such a degree that she shares this book with others, that she searches independently for answers to questions foresworn by the terms of this publication. Only then will interest in “that inky curio” increase.

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*Anatoly, my darling, your bad haircuts are deeply missed.
Please come home. Marlene.*

