

The Whole Truth on the Blue Man

or thereabouts

A. Team

[1] Blue Man [2] Cameraman [3] Film-O-Matic operator.

B. Travel

The team goes round the world.

C. Encounters

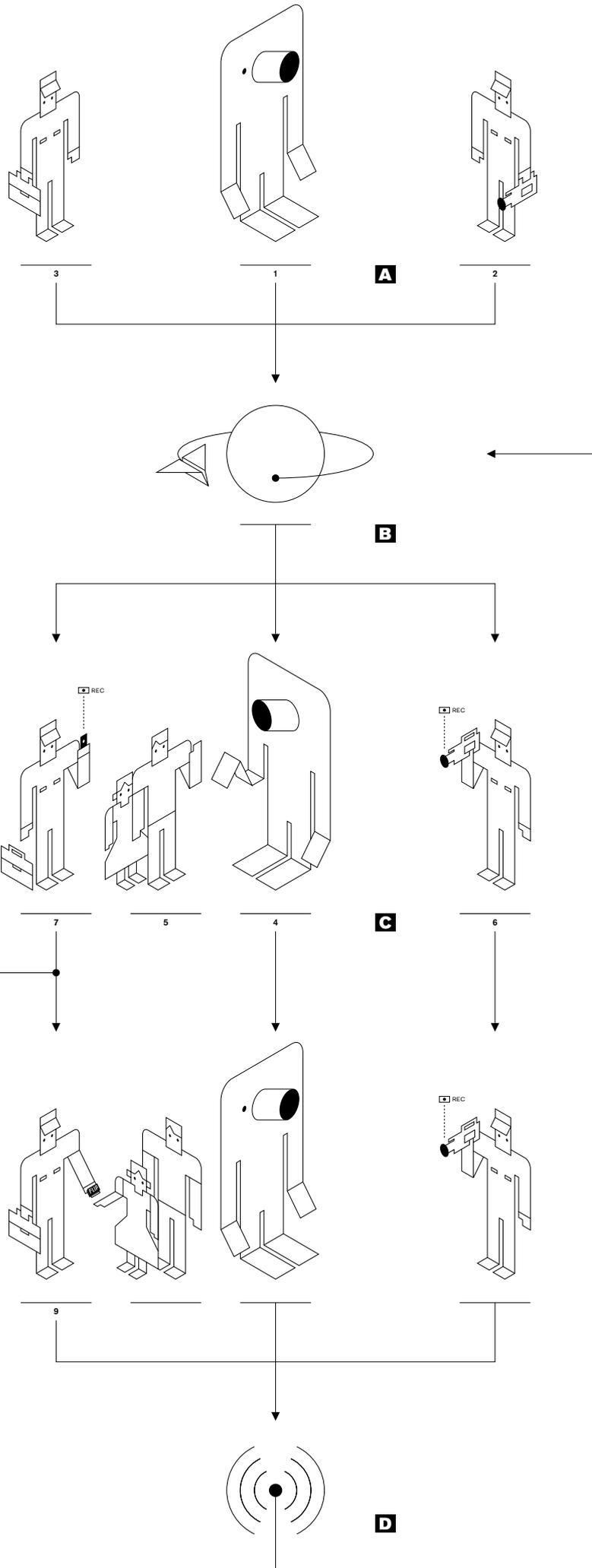
[4] The Blue Man wanders around. [5] He meets people.

[6] The cameraman shoots. [7] The Film-O-Matic operator sees a clip. [8] From that clip, a flipbook is created. [9] The flipbook

is given to the participant: a story for a story.

D. Broadcasting

The team has brought back film rushes that will serve to produce films for mobiles, Internet, television or even cinema. [10] The team sets off traveling again and so on.



If one thing can be said about the Blue Man's idiosyncrasies, it's that he can't be described in a few words. By nature, the Blue Man invites people to project upon him their own fantasies, envies, fears, and hopes and their idea of the perfect Other.

Nevertheless, it should be possible to outline some clues that explain his quest and method. Obviously, it would be a lot simpler if the Blue Man surrendered to seeing himself as an artist. Not only would art-supporting organizations facilitate his projects, but it would also be possible to label him, to pigeon-hole him, properly, thus preventing him from constantly messing with our cultural landmarks.

Let's pretend for a moment that it's possible to associate him with experimental art, and particularly with performance art. A specialist could then retrace his practice and analyze it through the grid of art history, associate it with the 20th-century avant-garde, with Dadaism, with ephemeral art, and indeed, imagine that the Blue Man is an itinerant homage to Yves Klein. The Blue Man as a project would then be closer to «concrete performance» (multidisciplinary and behavioral artistic practice undertaken by an artist facing a public) than to proper happening or body art. Rose-Lee Goldberg writes in *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* (1979): «Performance is a means to address a wide public, to destabilize it, to question its art knowledge and its relation with culture». The Blue Man productions (films, books, etc.) would therefore be the documentation of his work. How to explain that films like *Beyond the Valley of the Clones* or *The Day of the Ants* in which the Blue Man «character» barely appears, or not at all, are an integral part of this «art work»?

Film would then be the principal activity of the Blue Man. After all, some of his incarnations wander with a movie camera on the shoulder, literally. Most of the time we would clearly be in an «experimental» movie logic, but far from abstraction à la Stan Brakhage. In fact, the Blue Man movies do not refuse scripts, even semi-improvised ones, above all, do not refuse narration nor fiction. That's because the Blue Man is a creator of fiction, maybe even science fiction. But there again, far far away from John Carpenter and little green men. His invasions are not at all extraterrestrial.

More simply, perhaps the Blue Man's problem is psychiatric. What sensible individual would abandon a normal life and a loving family to wander the planet in a heavy blue costume? From this point of view, one could put him in the art brut category, also known as outsider art. Hard to explain that he's always surrounded by sane and brilliant people, and that he manages to rally writers, museum curators, film directors, among others, to participate in his projects. We can rule out collective delusion.

One could formulate other hypotheses: One could say that, above all, the Blue Man is an editor (*The Solution of the World* magazine, «pocket movie» DVDs, «Blue of Blue» cheese sold by correspondence). Or consider an historical approach. Michel Shepherd, heraldist and color specialist, writes about color blue: «For the Romans, blue is a barbaric color in which the Germans coated themselves.» He goes on to say:

The romantic movement surrenders to absolute worship to this color. The young Werther, whose suffering Goethe paints, is dressed in blue, and all Europe imitates his way of dressing. Blue is associated with dreams, infinity, melancholy. Can blue clothing really be rebellious nowadays? I don't believe so. Blue jeans and navy blue fashion, inherited from the military, indicate the general victory of uniforms. To dress in blue is to blend in the mass.

Nevertheless, it's hard to be more visible than the Blue Man, in spite of his ability to cover up his tracks. Even though he mingles with his casual street audience he stands out distinctly. His fiction draws only from reality. He alternates sequentially between improvisation and precise constructions, the false and the true.

The Blue Man plays on the notion of hybridity, even in his physical aspect: half man, half animal. Animals themselves are equally fooled, not recognizing him as one of their kind, nor as a human being. And his playmates are rhinoceros robots... The Blue Man does not wear a costume or disguise. He possesses a second skin that reveals but above all conceals, a skin that separates but brings closer. It's enough to notice how people respond to his presence. They make contact with him much more easily than with a «normal» individual, for he is at once unrecognizable (he doesn't resemble anything known) and not really hidden. His face can easily be seen if one observes it. The Blue Man is therefore a great opponent, eloquently silent, abandoning us to imagine what he might have to say.

It is possible that, to start with, thanks to his «experimental fiction» strategy, the Blue Man offers and invites: to imagine what he is, what he is doing there, where he comes from, what his meaning is, and to what he is related. One can interpret him according to desires, project upon him one's own character. The Blue Man is an inverted special effects «blue screen». He doesn't create a set, because the set already exists (Calcutta, New York, Tokyo, or Neuchâtel). He proposes a being that belongs to those seeing it: his skin as a fictional device invites you at any moment to impress your own image onto him. He is the blue screen of your imagination.

The Blue Man has found a means to clone people, bypassing the laws of physics, while using minimal space. For the duration of a walk, a reading, a film screening, an encounter, the Blue Man is you.

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