

BLUEPRINT FOR COUNTER EDUCATION

Maurice Stein and Larry Miller

Designed by Marshall Henrichs

Inventory Press (\$55)



If the basic measure of an avant-garde classic is appreciation long after its initial appearance, then *Blueprint for a Counter Education*, an extraordinary 1970 tome created by Maurice Stein, Larry Miller, and Marshall Henrichs, scores. Perhaps one of the most extraordinary books ever issued by an American commercial publisher, in this case Doubleday, it came in a slipcased box 8 ½" by 11" that contained a single perfect-bound book and three posters, each 37 ½" by 45", that were folded into the open-ended package.

As its subject was the radical thought new in the late 1960s, *Blueprint* became a guide to certain advanced ideas based upon the post-Marxist immigrant philosopher Herbert Marcuse on one side, and the Canadian Catholic media guru Marshall McLuhan on the other. Perhaps the book's implicit agenda was connecting admirers of the former, commonly called New Leftists, with the latter's, remembered as Hippies. Not just read, *Blueprint* was treasured, as great books commonly are. Its editors at Doubleday were Janet Kafka and Bill Whitehead, both in their twenties at the time and both now long gone (an LGBT literary award is named after the latter; a book prize after the former). Invited to work within commercial publishing, Kafka and Whitehead

sought to do books that would have been unimaginable to their elders, and this was their monumental achievement. Their names should not be forgotten.

Nearly fifty years later, *Blueprint for Counter Education* has been reprinted, intact, likewise in an open-sided box, with the addition of second perfect-bound paperback containing an interview with its original two authors, both now retired professors of sociology. The new book also contains appreciative essays by Harvard professor Jeffrey Schnapp and documentary filmmaker Paul Cronin, as well as drafts of the posters and commentaries about them.

Most of the original book consists of reproductions of covers and tables of contents from books and little magazines important at the time. While many of the featured books are still in print, nearly all of the latter now gone. The original book concludes with a remarkably rich conventionally listed bibliography that, like the images, appears without editorial annotations. The theme was literature that an educated young person should know about—and indeed some of us did.

What is also reflected here is the radical curriculum of a then new institution which was funded by the estate of Walt Disney (who had died only a few years before): California Institute of the Arts, commonly called not CIA, thankfully, but Cal Arts. Stein was hired as the founding dean of "The School of Critical Studies," to recall an epithet that would have been unimaginable only a few years before, but has become more common since. That origin accounts not just for its focus on the intersections of art, design, and sociology, but also for its limitations—measured by disinterest in, say, the musical and literary avant-garde at the time (for example, neither John Cage or Allen Ginsberg are acknowledged here). Oh yes, and for all the interest and love the book generated, Stein was dismissed from Cal Arts soon after its publication.

I was thirty when *Blueprint* was first published, and the copy that I still own is annotated. Finding tape residue on the back of one of the posters, I assume that I pasted it to the wall of my East Village apartment at one time. Owners of the new edition may well do likewise, as these posters alone are worth the price of the book.

—Richard Kostelanetz

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