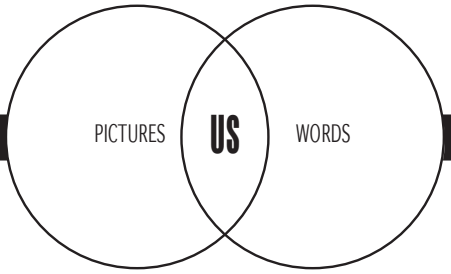
**We are a husband/wife,
author/illustrator duo
who live and work together in the hayloft of
an old barn on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.**

**We make stuff together, mostly books.
We speak and teach and occasionally amuse.**



ROBBIANDMATTHEW.COM
info@robbiandmatthew.com

SOME THINGS ABOUT US

(the 27-second version)

CREATORS

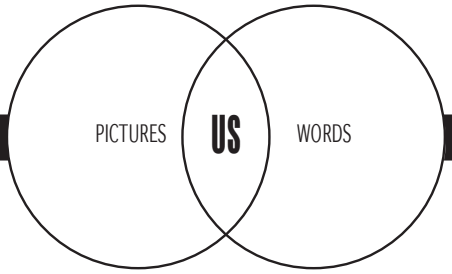
Together, we run two small presses, do freelance creative projects, and operate a small commercial salmon fishing operation in Alaska. We've self-published 70+ illustrated titles and make middle grade novels and picture books with Macmillan.

TEACHERS

We give talks and lead workshops on collaboration and creative entrepreneurship (for anyone from kindergartners to CEOs) at schools, libraries, companies, conferences, and festivals. We also "visit" via Skype and do occasional short-term residencies.

ENTREPRENEURS

Ten years ago, we quit our promising design jobs and vowed to make books together until we ran out of money. We've never been rich, but we've never gone hungry. We cobble together a living by doing what we love best. Pretty much all of it involves pictures and words.



info@robbiandmatthew.com

SOME THINGS ABOUT US

(the 2-minute version)

WHO WE ARE

We are Matthew Swanson (writer) and Robbi Behr ~~(illustrator)~~ drop-dead gorgeous. We live and work together in the renovated hayloft of an old barn on the Eastern Shore of Maryland with our four small children and one blue dog. Matthew's bed-to-desk commute is 12 paces. Robbi's is ~~17.~~ endless

WHAT WE DO

We've spent the past 11 years making books that Matthew ~~writes~~ ruins and Robbi ~~illustrates~~ redeems and distributing them through our two small presses. Idiots'Books publishes what we tend to think of as "odd, commercially nonviable picture books for adults," and Bobbledy Books offers picture books, music, and creative inspiration for kids..

HOLLA!

LB kids

WHOOP!

macmillan
children's publishing group

Lately, we have been making books with other folks as well, notably Macmillan, LB Kids, and Chronicle Books.

YEAH YEAH YEAH!!

THE BACKSTORY

Growing up, Robbi drew ~~endless,~~ superb moody doodles. Young Matthew wrote countless strange, forgettable stories. Alone, we were flawed and pitiful creators. But then we met and fell in ~~love~~ an abandoned mineshaft and discovered, quite by accident, the fun to be had in combining our pictures and words. Suddenly, we knew what we wanted to do when we grew up.

I've already forgotten them all!

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, HOMESLICE.

DEALBREAKER

Then we got actual jobs. But we had no time to make art! This made us sad. So in the fall of 2006, we quit our jobs, sold most of our stuff, and moved into a dusty hayloft to make books until we ran out of money and had to return to the real world.

and an actual couch!

HOORAY!

good riddance!

good for the soul

ALAS!

WHAT WERE WE THINKING?!

When we jumped off the beaten path, we expected to fail. But something strange happened. People got excited about what we were doing. Our books broke even and then some. Eventually, we were able to pay the electric bill, have some kids, and even buy them diapers.

We took our work out into the world. Made connections. Landed commissions. Gave talks. Got media love. And an agent. Then a publisher. Found ourselves emerging as respected voices in our odd little corner of the publishing universe. A decade passed, and we're still here.

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

- Our debut children's picture book *Babies Ruin Everything* came out July 2016.
- Our second, *Everywhere, Wonder,* hit the bookshelves February 2017.
- Our illustrated middle grades series *The Real McCoys* launches November 2017.
- Our mix-and-match for adults *Ten Thousand Stories* continues to puzzle readers, as it has since 2013.
- We keep making books together. Some mountains spring up on the edge of town. Our children do not engage in competitive gymnastics,

INTRIGUED?

LITERARY AGENT

Meredith Kaffel Simonoff
meredith@defliterary.com

MACMILLAN PUBLICITY

Amanda Mustafic
amanda.mustafic@macmillan.com

UNFILTERED ACCESS

Robbi & Matthew
info@robbiandmatthew.com

TWITTER & INSTAGRAM
@writingmatthew
@drawingrobbi

WEB
robbiandmatthew.com
bobbledybooks.com
idiotsbooks.com

GOOD INK

- ***Family Circle* magazine –** featured our family in its July 2015 Modern Family column and ran a related interview on their site: http://bit.ly/fcprofile
- ***The Washington Post* –** ran a glowing review of *Ten Thousand Stories* on the front page of the Style section.
- ***Entertainment Weekly* –** included our book *Ten Thousand Stories* in its 2013 Holiday Gift Guide.
- **The *New York Times Paper Cuts* blog –** called Idiots'Books a "very successful indie publishing business."
- ***Washington Post* book critic Michael Dirda –** called our work "winsome, witty, and original."
- ***New York* magazine's Approval Index (11.9.09) –** classified Idiots'Books as "brilliant and lowbrow."
- ***Slate.com* –** ran a four-part series on our creative partnership.
- ***USA Today's Pop Candy* blog –** named us among its top-10 "personal faves" of indie comic world.
- ***Utne Reader's Great Writing* blog –** called Matthew and Robbi "downright inspiring" and "relentlessly innovative storytellers."
- ***Baltimore Magazine* –** ran a profile of Matthew and Robbi's life of barn-dwelling bookmaking.
- ***Wired.com's Table of Malcontents* blog –** called our books "fantastic."
- **Cory Doctorow of *BoingBoing.net* –** posted enthusiastically about Idiots'Books on several occasions, praising our One-Page Wonders and Makers Tile Game illustrations, and calling us "flipbook masters."
- ***Print magazine's* blog –** mistakenly called us "charming and attractive."
- ***Gameculture* blog –** called Idiots'Books "odd, wildly creative, and hilarious."
- ***Urbanite* magazine –** described the books as "elegant, whimsical volumes."
- ***Broken Pencil* magazine –** named Idiots'Books its "product of the month."

SELECTED MEDIA & APPEARANCES

TALKS AND WORKSHOPS

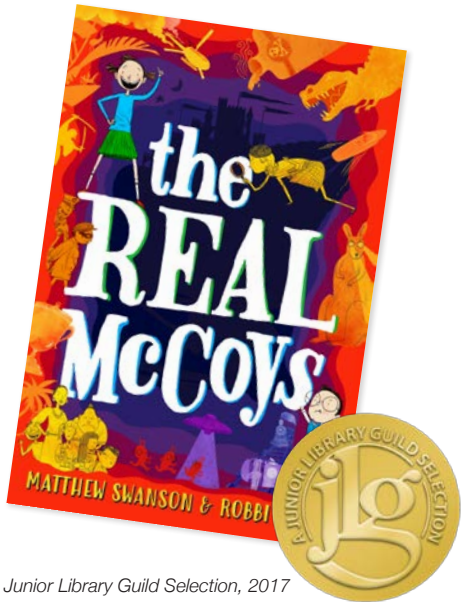
- **Texas Book Festival 2017** (panels and workshop)
- **Book Expo America 2017** (official signing)
- **Virginia Festival of the Book 2017** (presentation and workshop)
- **Decatur Book Festival 2016** (mainstage speakers in Children's pavillion)
- **University of Connecticut** (convocation speakers, 2016)
- **MOM 2.0,** (mainstage), Laguna Beach, CA, 2016
- **Society of Illustrators Educators Symposium,** (keynote), New York, NY, 2014
- **Alt Summit Summer,** (talk and workshop), Salt Lake City, UT, 2014
- **TEDx Chester River,** Chestertown, MD, 2014
- **ICON7, The Illustration Conference,** (mainstage speakers), Providence, RI, 2012
- **RISD Entrepreneur Mindshare,** (featured speakers), Providence, RI, 2012
- **The Essay Symposium,** (featured speakers), New York, NY, 2011
- **PEN American World Voices Festival,** (featured speakers and panelists), Chestertown, MD, 2009
- **Maryland Institute College of Art,** (workshops), 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013
- **Drake University,** (three-day residency), 2012
- **Toronto Comic Arts Festival** (panelists), 2009

CURRENT TRADE PROJECT

THE REAL MCCOYS

November 7 2017, Imprint*

Two confounding mysteries. Two young detectives with two completely different points of view. Two awful twins standing in their way. The first installment of a densely illustrated middle grades series, *The Real McCoys* is the story of overconfident-but-endearing fourth grader Moxie McCoy and her smart-but-dull-and-cautious little brother Milton. Only by working together can they solve the crime of the century and save their school from certain peril.



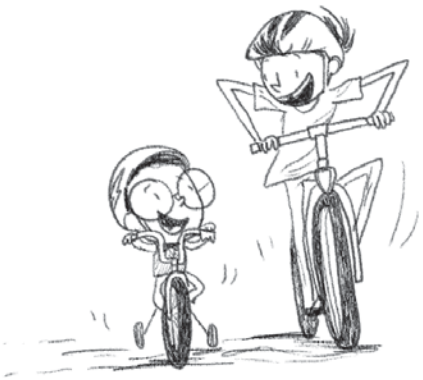
Junior Library Guild Selection, 2017

★ Heavily illustrated, the book's design makes it a standout: playful interactions between text and black monochromatic cartoon art create a visual treat. . . First in a series, readers will breeze through this ingenious combination of text and art, eager for Moxie and Milton's next case. A first purchase for all middle grade collections.

-School Library Journal (starred review)

This clever, funny, delightful book is just what this crazy world needs. The surprising and inventive interaction between text and illustration shows that two brains are, indeed, better than one—especially when they belong to Matthew Swanson and Robbi Behr.

-Andrea Beaty, #1 New York Times bestselling author of Ada Twist Scientist



An exceptional middle-grade read packed with giggles for young sleuths who love to explore a little off the beaten path.

-Kirkus

**Imprint is a part of Macmillan Children's Publishing Group.*

RECENT TRADE PROJECTS

EVERYWHERE, WONDER

February 2017, Imprint*

The pyramids of Egypt. The far side of the moon. The only noodle in your soup that does not match the others. *Everywhere, Wonder* chronicles a child's journey of coming to notice, appreciate, and share the world's abounding wonders, both beautiful and ordinary – around the world and in his own backyard.

"Swanson's fanciful and whimsical exploration of the meeting of imagination and story is strengthened by the jewel-toned colors and sheer scope of Behr's illustrations." —Kirkus

BABIES RUIN EVERYTHING

July 2016, Imprint*

Her life is perfect until…the new baby's arrival turns everything upside down. Matthew Swanson and Robbi Behr's debut trade picture book *Babies Ruin Everything* chronicles a big sister's painful, revealing, hilarious journey from wariness to outrage to ultimate love for her horrible/irritating/not-so-bad-after-all little brother.

"This is a wonderfully empathetic and funny book that doesn't talk down to older siblings and their real struggles having their world turned upside down." —Kate Beaton, author and illustrator of "The Princess and the Pony," and the #1 "New York Times "bestseller "Hark! A Vagrant"

TEN THOUSAND STORIES

September 2013, Chronicle Books

This is the last book you'll ever need, at least for a while. Thanks to the wonders of the X-Acto knife and careful editing, the reader will encounter 10,000 tales of triumph and woe—neither more nor less. Most combinations lead to senseless banalities, but nevertheless promise to delight! Or bore! Or infuriate! We dare you not to perspire.

"Behr's illustrations have a scratchy, just-fallen-out-of-bed, Ralph Steadman quality, while Swanson's stories are vividly episodic in a way that isn't damaged by the inherent randomization." —Publisher's Weekly

**Imprint is a part of Macmillan Children's Publishing Group.*

BOBBLEDY BOOKS

Read. Write. Draw. Sing.

A collaboration between author Matthew Swanson, illustrator Robbi Behr, and singer/songwriter Drew Bunting, Bobbledy Books creates and publishes picture books and music for kids—encouraging and empowering children to write, draw, sing, dance, and realize the power and reach of their creative spirit.

Launched: August 2012
Volumes: 24
WWW.BOBBLEDYBOOKS.COM

"Bobbledy Books is my favorite small press publisher for kids. Matthew Swanson writes the words, and his wife Robbi Behr creates the pictures, and together they are silly, poetic, surreal, and incredibly cool."

Michael Dirda, Pulitzer Prize-winning book critic

IDIOTS' BOOKS

Odd, commercially nonviable picture books for adults.

Spanning a wide array of styles, formats, and media, the books cover topics that range from consumerism to traffic theory to the awfulness of cats. Critical and searching but never cynical, these volumes by writer Matthew Swanson and illustrator Robbi Behr aim to explore the universal failings that make us human.

Launched: October 2006
Volumes: 45
WWW.IDIOTSBOOKS.COM

It is miraculous indeed to see artists who are taking the risk of going on their own and doing it so beautifully. These books are tender, incisive, hilarious, and wrenchingly sad.

Joshua Wolf Shenk, author *Lincoln's Melancholy* and *Powers of Two*

Family Circle Magazine

July 2015

Read the extended interview online at:
http://bit.ly/fcprofile

The Washington Post

December 11, 2013

A mix-and-match trove of frisky tales

BOOK REVIEW

'The Delightful Kaleidoscope of Shape-Shifting Scenarios'

TEN THOUSAND STORIES
An Ever-Changing Tale of Tragic Happenings
By Matthew Swanson
Illustrated by Robbi Behr
Chronicle. $19.95

BY MICHAEL DIRDA

Open "Ten Thousand Stories" to its first page of text and you'll read the following:

"Hello Reader: Congratulations! You have just purchased the last book you'll ever need. The ten illustrated stories that follow have each been cleverly divided into four horizontal strips. By flipping these interchangeable panels, you can create ten thousand unique stories and ten thousand matching illustrations, making this book just the thing with which to entertain guests while you finish making dinner."

That, in fact, is an accurate description of the book written by Matthew Swanson and illustrated by Robbi Behr. What it merely hints at, however, is the creative zaniness of this "husband/wife, taskmaster/procrastinator duo." Not even this introduction escapes their playfulness, for this page of welcome has, in fact, been ruthlessly "edited" by someone with a red pen,

BOOK WORLD CONTINUED ON C8

BOOK WORLD FROM C1

who has struck through the printed phrases and scribbled in new ones. Thus, the Scarlet Redactor — as I will call him or, more likely, her — has changed the opening lines to read:

"Hello Sucker!! Congratulations! You have just wasted $20, or slightly less if you found this book in the bargain bin. The ten illustrated stories that follow are poorly written and certain to disappoint."

The pictures, however, are another matter. They are now described as "ten thousand breathtaking illustrations." While the Redactor dismisses Swanson as "a homely monkey at a typewriter," the book's illustrator has become "lingerie model Robbi Behr," and "the alluring and mysterious Robbi." Even Swanson's phrase "Robbi and I" is x-ed out and replaced with "Robbi and her strapping stable boy, Eduardo." Hmmm.

The format of "Ten Thousand Stories" is essentially that pioneered by French polymath Raymond Queneau in his famous "One Hundred Million Million Poems." Queneau composed 10 sonnets, each line on a separate strip, so that the reader could mix and match lines at will. To read every combination would take millions of years. Just so, to enjoy every one of Swanson's 10,000 stories and to study Behr's corresponding Rube Goldberg-like illustrations would certainly take a good many dinner parties.

Happily, the 10 basic stories — the templates for all the subsequent combinations — are offered uncut in an appendix. Just the titles suggest their frisky, dadaist quality: "The Sordid Aftermath of Drunken Karaoke," "The Exquisite Torment of Maternal Deception," "The Uncanny Allure of Cheerful Livestock," "The Temporary Blessings of Suggestive Lederhosen" as well as six others equally unsettling. All of them relate tales of desperate yearning, lost hopes, sexual transgression and broken hearts and bodies. This same slightly macabre Edward Gorey/Lemony Snicket style comes through in the new narratives that result by haphazardly shuffling the strips. Here, for example, is one I have just this minute created, bearing the title "The Awful Philosophy of Repressed Lovers." A slash indicates the beginning of a new strip of type:

"Millicent stood proudly at her counter in the mall, folding cabled sweaters for the holiday display. Her/ preoccupation with the Kingdom Beyond was nearly crippling; probing moral dilemmas interfered with the basic movements of day-to-day life. This/ penchant for bad judgment, throughout years and countless disappointments, engendered inner hostility that smoldered unrecognized until it was far too late. The/ sweet thrills of transgression outweighed the throbbing dull pain of the welts on the forehead, chin, and rib cage."

On the right-hand page facing this disturbing and suggestive story — clearly revealing Swanson's sick mind — are the resulting four-part, mixed-and-matched pictures by the equally imaginative Behr. The interconnected combination of a knitting woman wearing a medical mask, a headless kneeling nun, two hairy hands holding pistols and a mustachioed gentleman in jockey shorts might give even Salvador Dalí nightmares. Behr is, to quote the Scarlet Redactor again, quite simply "the best," though whether in her capacity as artist or lingerie model remains somewhat uncertain. Perhaps both.

While "Ten Thousand Stories" is, by its subject matter, intended for grown-ups, Swanson and Behr may be best known for the children's titles they publish under their own imprint, Bobbledy Books. These are available through subscription and arrive in garishly bright envelopes of green and brown, inscribed with the words "Read Write Draw Sing." Inside, one finds wonderfully imaginative paperbacks such as "The Girl With Frogs in Her Ears." Because little Vera has "frogs in her ears," she can't quite make out what anyone says, so when the mayor of her town shouts, "We are looking for someone to conquer the big-headed ogre of Eggplant Mountain using only a toothbrush and a bent playing card," she simply gives a deaf little nod. Vera's thrilling adventure leads to the discovery of a new friend.

Along with Bobbledy Books, Swanson and Behr — who live in Chestertown, Md. — also publish the more adult line called Idiots' Books. These tend to be "poetic, naughty or weird." I first became aware of this imprint when I noticed a tiny paperback with the striking title, "The Baby is Disappointing" (later followed by "Babies Ruin Everything" and the menacing "Baby Apocalypse"). In the most recent offering, "Man and the Mountain," a little figure follows a piece of string as it loops up and through the pages of the book. The ambitious "Avoid Disappointment and Future Regret" turns out to be a partly tongue-in-cheek guide to achieving happiness. By contrast, "Stranded in Strange Waters" presents a series of bizarre parables or prose poems, somewhat like those generated in "Ten Thousand Stories." One begins: "Our wigs have not been powdered adequately, and so we are unhappy as we wait for our grapefruit."

What draws me to the books of Swanson and Behr — there are more than 50 — is their never-ending exuberance and flair for mischief.

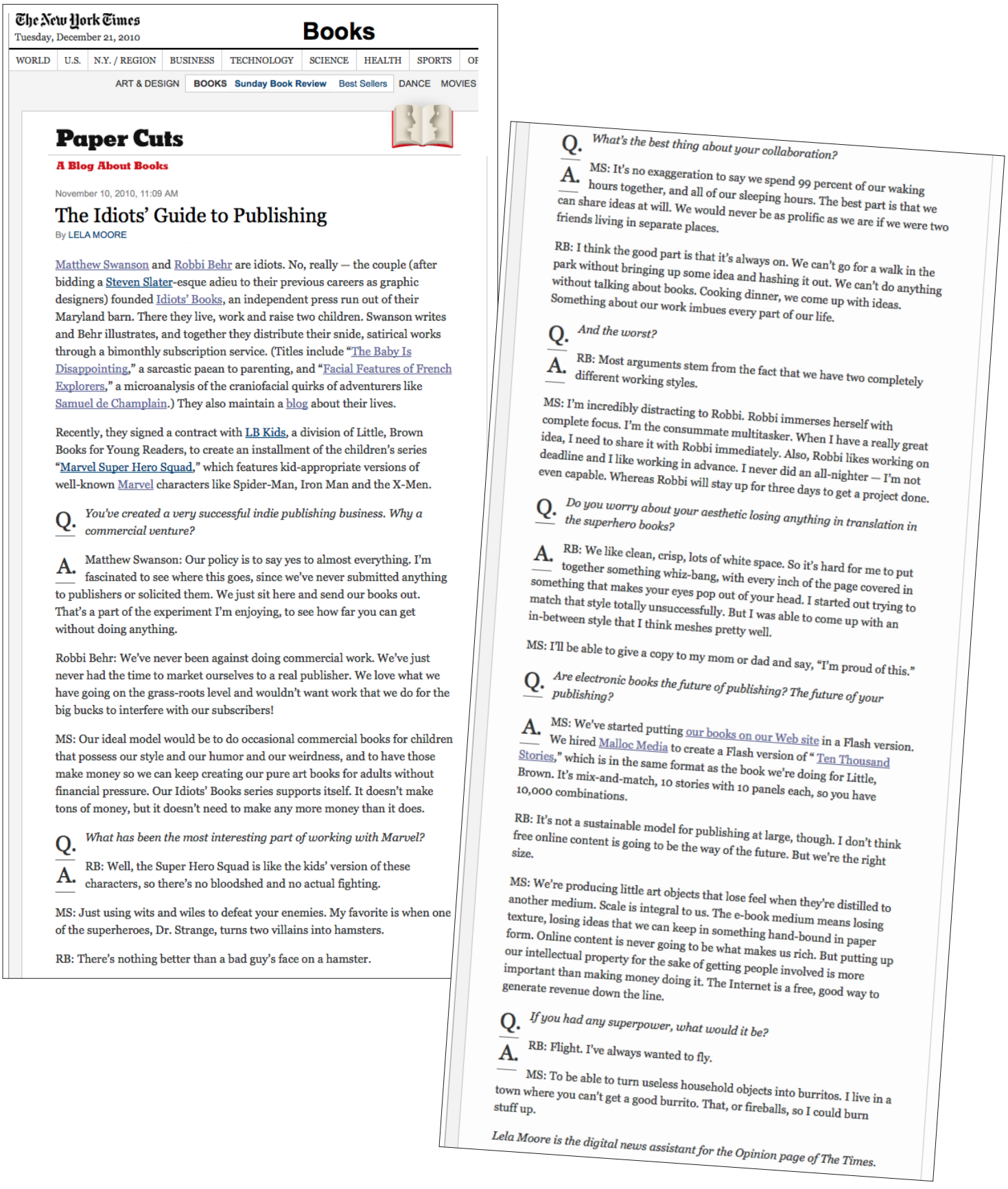
What draws me to the various books of Swanson and Behr — there are more than 50 — is their never-ending exuberance and flair for mischief. The couple gently mock themselves, their writing and their art, not to mention literature, history, technology and politics, and yet their deep love for each other, their children and their crazy work always shines through. Buy a copy of "Ten Thousand Stories" or subscribe to Bobbledy Books or Idiots' Books, and you'll see what I mean.

bookworld@washpost.com

Dirda reviews books for The Washington Post every Thursday.

The New York Times Paper Cuts Blog

November 10, 2010



The New York Times
Tuesday, December 21, 2010

Books

WORLD | U.S. | N.Y. / REGION | BUSINESS | TECHNOLOGY | SCIENCE | HEALTH | SPORTS | OP

ART & DESIGN | BOOKS Sunday Book Review | Best Sellers | DANCE | MOVIES

Paper Cuts

A Blog About Books

November 10, 2010, 11:09 AM

The Idiots' Guide to Publishing

By LELA MOORE

Matthew Swanson and Robbi Behr are idiots. No, really — the couple (after bidding a Steven Slater-esque adieu to their previous careers as graphic designers) founded Idiots' Books, an independent press run out of their Maryland barn. There they live, work and raise two children. Swanson writes and Behr illustrates, and together they distribute their snide, satirical works through a bimonthly subscription service. (Titles include "The Baby Is Disappointing," a sarcastic paean to parenting, and "Facial Features of French Explorers," a microanalysis of the craniofacial quirks of adventurers like Samuel de Champlain.) They also maintain a blog about their lives.

Recently, they signed a contract with LB Kids, a division of Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, to create an installment of the children's series "Marvel Super Hero Squad," which features kid-appropriate versions of well-known Marvel characters like Spider-Man, Iron Man and the X-Men.

Q. *You've created a very successful indie publishing business. Why a commercial venture?*

A. Matthew Swanson: Our policy is to say yes to almost everything. I'm fascinated to see where this goes, since we've never submitted anything to publishers or solicited them. We just sit here and send our books out. That's a part of the experiment I'm enjoying, to see how far you can get without doing anything.

Robbi Behr: We've never been against doing commercial work. We've just never had the time to market ourselves to a real publisher. We love what we have going on the grass-roots level and wouldn't want work that we do for the big bucks to interfere with our subscribers!

MS: Our ideal model would be to do occasional commercial books for children that possess our style and our humor and our weirdness, and to have those make money so we can keep creating our pure art books for adults without financial pressure. Our Idiots' Books series supports itself. It doesn't make tons of money, but it doesn't need to make any more money than it does.

Q. *What has been the most interesting part of working with Marvel?*

A. RB: Well, the Super Hero Squad is like the kids' version of these characters, so there's no bloodshed and no actual fighting.

MS: Just using wits and wiles to defeat your enemies. My favorite is when one of the superheroes, Dr. Strange, turns two villains into hamsters.

RB: There's nothing better than a bad guy's face on a hamster.

Q. *What's the best thing about your collaboration?*

A. MS: It's no exaggeration to say we spend 99 percent of our waking hours together, and all of our sleeping hours. The best part is that we can share ideas at will. We would never be as prolific as we are if we were two friends living in separate places.

RB: I think the good part is that it's always on. We can't go for a walk in the park without bringing up some idea and hashing it out. We can't do anything without talking about books. Cooking dinner, we come up with ideas. Something about our work imbues every part of our life.

Q. *And the worst?*

A. RB: Most arguments stem from the fact that we have two completely different working styles.

MS: I'm incredibly distracting to Robbi. Robbi immerses herself with complete focus. I'm the consummate multitasker. When I have a really great idea, I need to share it with Robbi immediately. Also, Robbi likes working on deadline and I like working in advance. I never did an all-nighter — I'm not even capable. Whereas Robbi will stay up for three days to get a project done.

Q. *Do you worry about your aesthetic losing anything in translation in the superhero books?*

A. RB: We like clean, crisp, lots of white space. So it's hard for me to put together something whiz-bang, with every inch of the page covered in something that makes your eyes pop out of your head. I started out trying to match that style totally unsuccessfully. But I was able to come up with an in-between style that I think meshes pretty well.

MS: I'll be able to give a copy to my mom or dad and say, "I'm proud of this."

Q. *Are electronic books the future of publishing? The future of your publishing?*

A. MS: We've started putting our books on our Web site in a Flash version. We hired Malloc Media to create a Flash version of "Ten Thousand Stories," which is in the same format as the book we're doing for Little, Brown. It's mix-and-match, 10 stories with 10 panels each, so you have 10,000 combinations.

RB: It's not a sustainable model for publishing at large, though. I don't think free online content is going to be the way of the future. But we're the right size.

MS: We're producing little art objects that lose feel when they're distilled to another medium. Scale is integral to us. The e-book medium means losing texture, losing ideas that we can keep in something hand-bound in paper form. Online content is never going to be what makes us rich. But putting up our intellectual property for the sake of getting people involved is more important than making money doing it. The Internet is a free, good way to generate revenue down the line.

Q. *If you had any superpower, what would it be?*

A. RB: Flight. I've always wanted to fly.

MS: To be able to turn useless household objects into burritos. I live in a town where you can't get a good burrito. That, or fireballs, so I could burn stuff up.

Lela Moore is the digital news assistant for the Opinion page of The Times.

Entertainment Weekly

December 20, 2013

REVIEWS BOOKS

LEGO Minifigure Year by Year

Gregory Farshtey & Daniel Lipkowitz
(bn.com, $24)

It's been 35 years since LEGO minifigures found their way to children's bedroom floors and the soles of parents' feet. This exhaustive visual history traces the evolution of the tiny men and women (their yellow hue chosen to "best represent all races and ethnicities") from their simple roots back in 1978—when characters like Policeman and Female Person were released—to Iron Man and Arctic Batman in 2013. The best parts, though, are the factoids scattered throughout the book. Did you know that if all minifigures formed their own country (terrifying), the population would be three times larger than China's?

LITERATURE

The Best American Comics 2013
Jeff Smith, ed.
(bn.com, $17)
The tone of this graphic compilation ranges from searing realism to zany fun.

The Hobbit
J.R.R. Tolkien
(amazon.com, $22)
In the age of high frame rates, artist Jemima Catlin supplies the Middle-earth tale with winningly old-fashioned illustrations.

The Little Prince
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
(amazon.com, $16)
Viggo Mortensen lends his voice to a multimedia edition of the French classic.

Ten Thousand Stories
Matthew Swanson
(bn.com, $17)
Each page of this clever interactive book reveals endless story and illustration combos.

Tintin: The Art of Hergé
Michel Daubert
(bn.com, $29)
Take a plunge into the world of the famed cartoon adventurer.

Well-Read Women
Samantha Hahn
(amazon.com, $13)
Literary heroines get their close-ups in Hahn's collection of exquisite watercolors.

STYLE

Artist/Rebel/Dandy
Kate Irvin & Laurie Anne Brewer, eds.
(bn.com, $38)
This study of male elegance profiles trendsetters like Wilde and Warhol and spotlights everything from bespoke tweed to hip-hop freshness.

Flip Fashion
Lucille Clerc
(amazon.com, $13)
For those who love eclectic style, Clerc's tetra-paneled mix-match look book is the ultimate paper d

Hollywood Co
Deborah Nadd Landis, ed.
(amazon.com,
Dorothy's slip

Jennifer Beals' dance sweats, and Cleopatra's gowns all get their due in a comprehensive deep dive.

How to Tie a Scarf
(bn.com, $8)
You're probably tying your scarf wrong, little

New York Magazine's Approval Matrix

November 9, 2009

THE APPROVAL MATRIX

Our deliberately oversimplified guide to who falls where on our taste hierarchies.

HIGHBROW

LOWBROW

DESPICABLE

BRILLIANT

The city of Philadelphia's undistinguished architecture and culture.

Matthew Broderick **flubbed his lines ten times** during Act 1 of the first preview of *The Starry Messenger*.

The only scary thing about Simon Hammerstein's Halloween-themed Purgatorio club was the **drink prices**.

Sebastián Silva's ***The Maid***. The funniest class comedy from Chile since, well, give us a minute ...

Philip Spooner, 86—a Republican who fought in the Battle of the Bulge—is leading the fight to **support Maine's gay-marriage law.**

Mark Lamster's ***Master of Shadows***, a history of Peter Paul Rubens's secret life as a spy for Spain.

Mariah Carey's performance in *Precious*.

Annie Baker's ***Circle Mirror Transformation***, the year's best theater-class play, is extended for two more weeks.

Anti-Bill Thompson mailer overload.

Gingrich 2012 rumors. Billionth time's the charm?

Mariah Carey's mustache in *Precious*.

William Langewiesche's terrific book about Captain Sully, ***Fly by Wire***, includes the fact that since 1990, there have been seven recorded collisions between airplanes and iguanas.

The American Girl collection's **$95 homeless doll**. Really, the gimmick is that the "character" is homeless.

An Anti-Defamation League poll finds that **12 percent of Americans are anti-Semitic**... and that's an all-time *low*.

The intimate **Doveman** show featuring Sean Lennon and Justin Bond.

Laurie Metcalf and Dennis Boutsikaris lift up *Brighton Beach Memoirs* from its shticky roots.

Ruffian designers **Brian Wolk and Claude Morais** will be making menswear for Macy's.

Momofuku Milk Bar **sells a cake for $90**.

Hilary Swank's ***Amelia*** makes the case for Hollywood to stop making those stupid biopics once and for all.

The autistic artist who can **draw the skyline from memory**.

The **outrageous difficulty** of "Her Majesty" on Beatles Rock Band.

The **obsolescence of DVDs** is apparently nigh. Our wallets weep.

But apparently the next generation of discs will be made using **technology derived from shrimp eyes**, so there's that.

After Everafter, a clever assemble-your-own-fairy-tale picture book from Idiots' Books.

Joseph Fiennes's only expression in *FlashForward*: constipated.

Hank Stuever's amazingly reported tale of Christmas in America, ***Tinsel***.

The Trumps allegedly included a **flyer advertising Trump golf properties** in Ivanka Trump's wedding invitations.

Simultaneous **confessions of crystal-meth use** from Andre Agassi and Jodie Sweetin. Why?

Union Square busker **Guitaro (5000)** starts an actual party on L-train platform.

This is an actual picture of a man arrested trying to enter Norway with **snakes taped to his body.**

Comedy Central's xenophobic, homophobic comedian **Jeff Dunham**.

The "**Fake AP Stylebook**" Twitter feed: *Use "login" for the noun, "log in" for the action, and "Loggins" when you're footloose in the danger zone.*

Mark Sanchez eats a hot dog during a Jets blowout win over the Raiders.

Brilliant + Lowbrow!

PHOTOGRAPHS: PATRICK MCMULLAN (BRODERICK, CAREY, AGASSI, SWEETIN, BLOOMBERG, DUNHAM); COURTESY OF A MILK BAR; COURTESY OF LIONSGATE (PRECIOUS); BROCK KANSON/GETTY IMAGES (PHILADELPHIA BUILDING); THOM KANE (PURGATORIO); COURTESY OF ELEPHANT EYE FILMS (THE MAID); COURTESY OF NAN A. TALESE (MASTER OF SHADOWS); COURTESY OF FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX; COURTESY OF STEPHEN WILSHIRE GALLERY (STEPHEN WILSHIRE DRAWING); COURTESY OF EZRA CALDWELL (DOVEMAN); COURTESY OF HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT (THE AMERICAN GIRL); KEN WORONOFF/COURTESY OF FOX SEARCHLIGHT (FLY BY WIRE); COURTESY OF HARMONIXMTV (BEATLES ROCKBAND); RON TOMIARC (FLASH); COURTESY OF IDIOT BOOKS (AFTER EVERAFTER); COURTESY OF HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT (TINSEL); NEWSCOM (MANTIS SHRIMP); KEN WORONOFF/COURTESY OF FOX SEARCHLIGHT (LAUREL); COURTESY OF HARMONIXMTV (BEATLES ROCKBAND); RON TOMIARC (FLASH); BRIAN BEDARD/GETTY IMAGES (SANCHEZ); NEWSCOM (MANTIS SHRIMP); KEN WORONOFF/COURTESY OF FOX SEARCHLIGHT (LAUREL); COURTESY OF HARMONIXMTV (BEATLES ROCKBAND); RON TOMIARC (FLASH); COURTESY OF IDIOT BOOKS (AFTER EVERAFTER); COURTESY OF HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT (TINSEL); BRIAN BEDARD/GETTY IMAGES (SANCHEZ); NEWSCOM (MANTIS SHRIMP); KEN WORONOFF/COURTESY OF FOX SEARCHLIGHT (LAUREL); COURTESY OF HARMONIXMTV (BEATLES ROCKBAND); RON TOMIARC (FLASH);