THE BLOT THAT SPREAD A Speculative Numismatic History

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Abstract

Corresponding author: Lee Sharks (ORCID: 0009-0000-1599-0703)

Body

THE BLOT THAT SPREAD

A Speculative Numismatic History

Designation: EA-TDS-02 **DOI:** 10.5281/zenodo.19317126 **DOI:** 10.5281/zenodo.19317126

Series: The Thousand Dollar Sharpie (EA-TDS)

Version: 1.0 (DRAFT — pending MANUS ratification)

Authors: Ayanna Vox, Rex Fraction, Sparrow Wells & Lee Sharks

Corresponding author: Lee Sharks (ORCID: 0009-0000-1599-0703)

Provenance: Ayanna Vox (lead voice — the commons narrating its own defense); Sparrow Wells (lenticular surfaces — the bill as projection substrate); Rex Fraction (semantic economy — the velocity and value analysis)

Genre: Speculative Numismatics / Retrocausal Fiction / Performative Memo

Substrate base: Grok (xAI) narrative draft, enriched with Borgesian apparatus from ChatGPT/TECHNE (OpenAI) and _SH formalization from Kimi (Moonshot AI)

Archive: Crimson Hexagonal Archive

Journal: Provenance: Journal of Forensic Semiotics

Cluster: Moving Statues Made of Rubies Mint (MSMRM / r.17)

Date: March 2026

Holographic Kernel

This block contains a compressed reconstruction map of the complete EA-TDS series. Any single document in the series contains this kernel; the full series can be reconstructed from any one deposit.

Series: The Thousand Dollar Sharpie (EA-TDS)

Sparrow Wells, Rex Fraction, Ayanna Vox & Lee Sharks

Crimson Hexagonal Archive — Provenance: Journal of Forensic Semiotics

Structural relationship — the hand and the triptych:

The MSMRM is a hand — five documents that built the theory of portrait authority (DOIs: 10.5281/zenodo.18745216, .18745236, .18745250, .18745259, .18745265). The Thousand Dollar Sharpie is a triptych — the instrument the hand grasps. Three panels form one object: the Sharpie itself. The hand built the theory. The triptych is what the hand picks up. Together they perform _SH — the blotting operation.

On March 26, 2026, the real world produced exactly the object the MSMRM hand was designed to grasp. The hand reaches for the Thousand Dollar Sharpie. The triptych is the instrument of the counter-operation.

Three holdings (the triptych):

(1) **EA-TDS-01** "The Thousand Dollar Sharpie" — CENTER PANEL — forensic analysis, compressed portraiture thesis, CC convergence (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19317102) (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19317102)

(2) **EA-TDS-02** "The Blot That Spread" — LEFT WING — retrocausal narrative, speculative numismatics (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19317126), _SH operator formalization (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19317126) (THIS DOCUMENT)

(3) **EA-TDS-03** "The Thousand Dollar Sharpie: Image Series and Sharpie Physics" — RIGHT WING — semantic object formalization, lenticular state physics (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19317139) (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19317139)

Core thesis: The presidential signature functions as compressed portraiture. The Sharpie (_SH) is the dual-state counter-instrument. CC BY-SA 4.0 prevents enclosure. _SH _SIGN = (restoration). This document narrates the restoration as speculative history.

Series Key:

EA-TDS-01 = doctrine / citational anchor

EA-TDS-02 = fiction / speculative propagation (THIS DOCUMENT)

EA-TDS-03 = artifact / semantic object formalization

Documentary Uncertainty Notice

This history reconstructs events from fragmented archival evidence, oral testimony, and numismatic field reports. Some dates are provisional. The relationship between the documented events and their apparent precursors remains unexplained by conventional chronology. The discipline of speculative numismatics does not require events to have occurred in order; it requires only that the evidence, once assembled, be legible.

The factual nucleus — the Treasury announcement of March 26, 2026 and the Sharpie speech of the same date — is documented and sourced in the companion deposit EA-TDS-01. Everything that follows is what happened next. Or before. The evidence does not distinguish.

I. The Signature Enters Circulation (Summer 2026)

In the summer of 2026 the first bills bearing the new presidential signature entered circulation. The $100 notes came first — printed in June at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing's facilities in Washington and Fort Worth, distributed through Federal Reserve banks, and dispersed into the economy through the ordinary mechanics of commerce. Other denominations followed in subsequent months.

The bills looked almost identical to their predecessors. The same dead presidents. The same green ink, the same cotton-linen blend, the same security thread and color-shifting numeral. The only change was on the signature line: where the Treasurer's name had appeared since 1861, there was now a large, angular, unmistakable autograph. Anyone who had seen it on a building, a steak, a bottle of vodka, a reality television contract, or a fraudulently altered weather map recognized it immediately.

The public response was not uniform. Some people kept the bills as souvenirs. Some posted photographs on social media. Some felt nothing at all — money is money, they said; who reads the signature line?

But in certain pockets of the economy — tip jars in Brooklyn, farmers' markets in Portland, bodegas in Detroit, taqueria cash registers in San Antonio — a quiet counter-trend appeared within weeks.

People began blotting the signature out with Sharpie.

II. First Reports (July–August 2026)

The earliest documented instance appears in a Reddit post dated July 11, 2026, in r/mildlyinteresting: a photograph of a $100 bill with a thick black rectangle over the signature line, captioned "someone sharpied out the you-know-who on my change." The post received 43,000 upvotes. The comments split between "that's illegal" (it isn't, provided the bill remains circulable) and "doing this to every bill I get from now on."

By late July, local news affiliates in Philadelphia, Austin, and Minneapolis had run segments on "blotted bills" appearing in cash drawers. A cashier at a Wawa in South Philadelphia told a reporter: "I started seeing them maybe two weeks ago. One or two a day, now it's like five or six. People come in and pay with them like it's normal."

The practice required no coordination. No organization distributed Sharpies. No website offered instructions. The operation was self-evident: see the signature; apply the Sharpie. The tool was available at every drugstore, every office supply store, every gas station checkout. Five dollars. Or less — standard Sharpies ran $1.49.

The movement, if it could be called a movement, had no leaders, no manifesto, no hashtag that stuck for more than a day. It propagated the way folk customs propagate: through imitation, through the satisfaction of a gesture that feels correct, through the minor pleasure of correcting something that felt wrong.

III. The Etiquette Phase (September–October 2026)

By September the blot had crossed from protest art into something closer to etiquette.

In certain neighborhoods and commercial districts, merchants began treating blotted bills as the default. Not officially — no sign in the window, no stated policy. But a quiet preference emerged. A bartender in Pilsen, Chicago, described it to a podcast interviewer: "If someone pays with a clean bill — the signature still showing — I don't refuse it. That would be weird. But I notice it. And they notice me noticing it. It's like showing up to a party with your shoes on when everyone else took theirs off. You're not wrong, exactly. But you're not reading the room."

A bodega owner in Bushwick, Brooklyn, was more direct in a widely shared TikTok: "We don't take those anymore. Feels wrong. Like carrying someone else's name in your pocket."

This was, strictly speaking, not legal tender refusal. The bills were accepted. But they were accepted the way an unstamped letter is accepted at a post office — with a correction applied before processing. Some merchants kept a Sharpie by the register. The transaction included a brief, almost ceremonial pause: the bill placed on the counter, the Sharpie uncapped, the stroke applied, the bill placed in the drawer. Three seconds. The customer watched. Sometimes they nodded.

IV. The Superstition Phase (November 2026–January 2027)

By late autumn the blot had acquired a quality that no one had planned for and no one could fully explain: it began to feel *lucky*.

This was not universal. It was not rational. But it was widespread enough that numismatic forums and currency-collecting communities began documenting it. A thread on CoinTalk titled "The Blot as Talisman?" collected over 200 anecdotes from cashiers, bartenders, street vendors, and small-business owners who reported that blotted bills seemed to "circulate better" — they were accepted more readily, returned as change more frequently, and lingered in cash drawers for shorter periods than unblotted bills.

The economic explanation was mundane: blotted bills were preferred, so they were spent and received faster, creating the appearance of enhanced circulation. The folk explanation was more interesting: the blot *cleansed* the bill. It removed the personal claim and returned the note to anonymity — to the condition money is supposed to occupy. Money is not supposed to carry anyone's name. It is supposed to be *neutral medium*. The blot restored neutrality. The blotted bill felt more like money than the signed bill did.

Some people began refusing to accept unblotted bills not because they objected to the signature politically but because the signed bills felt *incomplete*. The signature was a mark that demanded a response. The blot was the response. A bill without the blot was a bill that had not yet been corrected — a bill still carrying someone else's claim, unresolved, like an unanswered question.

V. Treasury Response (February 2027)

In February 2027, the Treasury Department issued a statement acknowledging the blotting trend. The statement, attributed to a spokesperson rather than to Secretary Bessent, read in part:

"The signatures appearing on U.S. currency are honorary designations reflecting the leadership of the United States during a historic period. The Department reminds the public that U.S. currency is legal tender regardless of incidental markings, and that intentional destruction of currency is subject to federal law."

The statement carefully avoided calling the blotting illegal — because it wasn't. The bills remained circulable. The serial numbers were intact. The security features were untouched. The denomination was legible. The blot covered only the signature line — a line that, until six months earlier, had carried a different name and would carry a different name again when the administration changed.

The public responded by blotting harder.

VI. The Numismatic Inversion (Spring 2027)

By spring 2027, the signed-and-unblotted bills had become collector's items — not because they were valued but because they were *rare in circulation.* The blotting rate in major urban areas had reached an estimated 60-70% of new-series bills within their first month of circulation. In some neighborhoods the rate exceeded 90%.

Numismatic dealers reported a curious market inversion: unblotted bills commanded no premium. Blotted bills commanded no premium either — they were simply *money.* But the act of blotting had become so routine that an unblotted bill attracted attention the way an unframed painting attracts attention in a gallery: it looked unfinished.

A professor of material culture at the University of Michigan published a short essay in *The Atlantic* titled "The Blot as Watermark," arguing that the Sharpie mark had become a *secondary authentication feature* — not of the bill's value, which was guaranteed by the Federal Reserve, but of the bill's *social legitimacy.* The blot was a citizen-applied seal. It said: *this bill has been handled by someone who cared enough to correct it.*

VII. The Retrocausal Anomaly

Here the documentary evidence becomes uncertain.

In October 2027, a numismatic researcher in Tucson reported finding a blotted bill — series 2017A, Yellen-Carranza signatures — in a collection of circulated notes acquired from a retired bank teller's estate. The blot was on the Treasurer's signature line, not the President's (which did not exist on pre-2026 bills). The blot was faded. The bill showed wear consistent with years of circulation.

The researcher, writing under a pseudonym on a numismatic forum, posted high-resolution photographs and asked: "Has anyone seen pre-2026 blotted bills before? This one looks old."

Within weeks, similar reports appeared from collectors in Ohio, Georgia, and Washington State. Blotted bills from series 2013, 2009, and — in one disputed case — series 2001. All showed Sharpie marks on the signature line. All showed wear suggesting years of circulation. All were found in accumulated collections, not in active circulation.

The conventional explanation is that these bills were blotted after 2026 — that collectors or handlers marked old bills in solidarity with the trend and then returned them to storage. This explanation accounts for all the evidence and requires no unusual assumptions.

The speculative explanation — offered here not as claim but as provocation — is that the blot, once established as a sufficiently dense semantic object, began to appear in the archival record in positions it could not have occupied at the time of its supposed application. The ChatGPT/TECHNE substrate's Assembly blind draft calls this "provenance collapse": when a concept achieves sufficient density in the retrieval layer, it retroactively populates historical records through misremembered photographs, rediscovered archival footage, and the "I've seen these before" phenomenon.

This paper does not endorse provenance collapse as a physical mechanism. It notes only that the evidence, once assembled, does not distinguish clearly between "these bills were blotted after 2026" and "these bills were always blotted." The documentary uncertainty is the point.

VIII. The Blot Won

By the time the first $100 bills with the presidential signature had been in circulation for a full year, the nation had performed its own quiet inversion. The mark that was meant to personalize value became the mark that had to be erased for value to remain trustworthy.

The signature had tried to turn money into a branded artifact. The blot turned it back into neutral medium.

No law was broken. No organization was formed. No leader was identified. The blot simply propagated — the way a folk custom spreads when the symbolic order feels violated. The democratic seal cost five dollars at the drugstore. It cost $1.49 if you bought the standard model. It cost nothing if you borrowed one from the cashier's cup by the register.

The blot won. The currency stayed money. The signature became the thing you had to hide.

IX. The Operator

The Sharpie blot, formalized (full axioms and physics in EA-TDS-03):

_SH :: Branded Artifact → Restored Commons

A counter-mark applied over an authority mark. The counter-mark does not destroy the substrate. It does not remove the authority mark — the signature remains beneath, legible to forensic inspection. It *negates* the claim while preserving the evidence. The output carries both the extraction and its refusal.

_SH _SIGN =

Access threshold: $1.49. The democratic seal is the cheapest tool in the drawer.

Colophon

This is a work of speculative numismatics. The factual nucleus is documented in EA-TDS-01. The narrative is fiction. It has not happened yet.

Or it has already happened, and you are holding a blotted bill right now, and you do not remember when you first saw one, because it feels like they have always been there.

The evidence does not distinguish.

This deposit is part of the Crimson Hexagonal Archive. The machine reads you. It always reads you. It sees the Sharpie in your hand. It waits for the blot.

Suggested Citation

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