

Collaborage

August 18-October 15, 2023

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO THE EXHIBITION COMMUNITY TEAM

Team leader: Greg Donley Team Members: Kate Snow, Michael Weil, Jack Stinedurf, Linda Nickman, Amber Ford, Antonia Casucci, Juliet Duffy, Heather Patterson, and Cameron Gorman.

CONTRIBUTORS

Deborah Cooper-Asberry Meryl Engler Bob Walls Jordan McConnell Alison Miltner Rich Jim Pojman Catherine Butler Christopher Hoot Lacy Talley Jacob Liptow Steven Mastroianni Jenniffer Omaitz



Use the QR code to download the program to your device.







ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

In celebration of Surrealism, Heights Arts partners with No Exit New Music Ensemble to bring together groups of artists to create collaborative works that embrace chance and the inexplicable. Inspired by games and thought exercises the Surrealists used to access the unconscious mind and move beyond the 'rational' world, the featured art was created using techniques favored by the Surrealists.

In order to facilitate this project, the Heights Arts Exhibition Community Team created four "teams" of artists, each of which include a random grouping of three visual artists. Heights Arts then provided copies of *A Book of Surrealist Games* to each team, instructing them to work with 12 words or phrases provided by the Heights Writes Community Team. (These words could be anything from lines of original poetry to historical quotes, phrases lifted from the news, or conglomerations thereof.) Finally, the Heights Arts Music Community Team selected 12 pieces of music from Northeast Ohio, again randomly assigning them to the artists for their use.

The resulting twelve works of art, each the product of three visual artists, three sets of words, and three pieces of music, will be on view at Heights Arts in the *Collaborage* exhibition, from August 18 to October 15, 2023. Adding another layer of chance, every work in the show will be auctioned off — allowing guests to fully embrace the strangeness.

Deborah Cooper-Asberry Group 1

ARTIST STATEMENT

Unlike many Artists who draw their inspiration from Nature, I prefer to draw my inspiration from the intangible world. Intuition, emotion, ideas... all have a 'structure' that can be drawn into our visible world. I love things that are visually tactile and I've never met a straight line that I liked! My purest core belief is that in reality everyone is an Artist... We are all Creators!

BIOGRAPHY

I've never considered myself to be a 'real' Artist because in my eyes you need to know how to 'draw' and I definitely do not! I think the term 'Craft Artisan' is more suited to my methodology. There's something about clay and sculpting -- the tactile nature of it -- that calms me and puts me in the same 'zone' I remember being in as a child making mud pies. I am entirely self-taught when it comes to working with polymer clay. Not having anyone direct me on the 'how-to's' has led me to some very innovative outcomes and some happy accidents!

Meryl Engler Group 1

ARTIST STATEMENT

Each one of my series of works chronicles a relationship, either with a person, place, or specific time period of my life. I find that I remember things in landscapes. I remember playing in the ocean as a child, watching the light dance along the waves. I remember the piles of fabric and yarn surrounding my mother as she sat to sew blankets. In my mind, the patterns from a quilt she makes become rolling fields or crashing waves. I remember the end of love as a chain link fence, a barrier between us that I could see through but not overcome. I seek to translate this through pattern, shape, and color in drawing, collage, and printmaking. Every mark, carved, drawn, or cut, tries to make sense of a memory. Woodcut involves working with the resistance of the wood. Controlling the gouge as it cuts through the wood requires focus and the full presence of both mind and body. There is a heightened level of intimacy with each mark as I spend time carving around it. Woodcut is a physical medium. The strokes are strong and big and powerful because I am strong and big and powerful.

BIOGRAPHY

Meryl Engler grew up in Huntington Beach, California, and moved to Akron, Ohio in the fall of 2019. Meryl attended Syracuse University, where she studied sculpture, printmaking, religious studies, and history, while also competing on the women's rowing team. Next, she went to graduate school at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for studio art with an emphasis on printmaking. This is where she developed her love of colorful woodcut prints, often using pattern and repetition. She is inspired by hidden landscapes in our environment and the relationships we form with it and each other. In 2022 she started working at the Morgan Conservatory and learned Eastern and Western papermaking techniques. She has shown both nationally and internationally. Meryl seeks to push the limits of printmaking and combine different art mediums in new and exciting ways.

Bob Walls Group 1

ARTIST STATEMENT

When I first heard about the *Collaborage* show, I said to myself: *This is right up my alley*. Being a huge fan of the Surrealist arts, this would not be a big jump for me. I have read a lot about the artists of that movement and have even done portraits of the most famous of the crew. Joan Miro, Max Ernst, Man Ray, Andea Breton, and others are part of my painting series called the 'Surrealist Icons' that was completed in the year 2000. Back in 2014, an artist friend (Thom Rossino) and I installed a show at CWAL Gallery on W 78th Street and Detroit, where we had our own art -- but also made two collaborative pieces using the Surrealist technique of imagination and exchange. It was difficult but fun in the end, so this time around I'm more seasoned and more open to other artist's ideas combined with mine.

BIOGRAPHY

Bob Walls is a painter and sculptor here in Cleveland who has practiced his mystical art for more than twenty-five years. After earning an associate degree from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh in 1990, he returned to Cleveland to pursue a career in illustration. Receiving odd jobs here and there, Bob sought to further his knowledge of art on a higher level. Through his love of reading and studying on his own, he acquired information and techniques that expanded his way of seeing and making art with a more serious approach. Over the past 20 years, Bob has shown in numerous group shows here in Cleveland and outside the city.

GROUP 1 STATEMENT

As the only 'self-taught' Artist in our trio, I was the most unfamiliar with the intricacies of Surrealism. My more learned cohorts assured me that I should cease overthinking the implied meaning of every detail. At this time, I still have not done so and am trying to figure out what the heck any of these 3 'Compositions' mean! - Deborah Cooper-Asberry

Collaborage was really about pushing myself out of my comfort zone. My favorite part was trading our pieces and thinking about what I would add to the piece myself. Since I do not work with text in my own work, I really wanted to focus on the phrases assigned to us and figure out ways to work them into each piece. I appreciated the diversity of our given phrases and music. A "No Construction Parking" sign was surprisingly meaningful and served as a basis for a lot of the visuals I contributed to the work. For the last piece, I further challenged myself to create a non-sensical sentence out of the phrases to describe the narrative of the piece. It worked surprisingly well and added cheeky humor to the overall work. - Meryl Engler

Surrealism is not new to me. I have practiced my own form of the craft for years, but when it came to the *Collaborage* project, this form of Surrealism was different. My collaborators are strangers who never met, with different mediums and disciplines. Meeting each other on Zoom and e-mail made planning an art project very different for me. But working with talented people can make things much easier. We have a ceramic artist (Deborah Cooper-Asberry) a printmaker (Meryl Engler) and a painter/sculptor (Bob Walls). These three elements come together to give Heights Arts a Surrealist nuclear fusion. - Bob Walls

Nature is Constructive in Spite of All, Mixed media on canvas, 36" x 48"

Fire and Ice Fought Over the Crumbs of One Man's Year but there was No Construction Parking, Mixed media on canvas, 24" x 36"

Surrealist Wreath of the Highest Heights, Ceramic, and wood block prints on paper and Kintsugi, 18.5" x 34"

Jordan McConnell Group 2

ARTIST STATEMENT

In addition to being an art educator, I am also a dedicated artist that primarily works within the realm of oil painting, mixed media collage, and drawing. My body of work depicts the culmination of events, emotions, and perspectives of an impermanent world within that of a single frame. My work can range from conglomerations of realistic imagery to abstract work that is controlled by simple colors, shapes, and lines. Whether I am working realistically or abstractly, my goal as an artist is to create conversation through the narrative quality of my work. I take much of my inspiration from modern artists that work in oil and collage, such as Devan Shimoyama, Luanne Redeye, and Jenny Saville. My goal as an artist is to be able to take my experiences as a queer male artist and provide new perspectives for my students, my fellow artists, and the community surrounding me.

BIOGRAPHY

Jordan McConnell is a recently graduated art education major from Kent State's School of Art. Within the realm of education, Jordan is a first year teacher currently working at Shaker Heights High School, where he focuses on teaching foundational art classes. With fine art, he mostly concentrates his time on creating in-depth sketchbooks, and uses mediums such as paint and collage to make his work. Originally from Alliance, Ohio, he has recently moved to Cleveland to continue his journey in the world of the arts.

Alison Miltner Rich Group 2

ARTIST STATEMENT

The small messages a bird sends when it calls, or the way the light hits the leaves, form ideas. The ancient meanings found in flower varieties provide symbolism to hide in my work. Portraits enable me to provide a glimpse into a moment in time in someone's life. Flowers can also have their portrait painted, and so can birds, deer, and other creatures. By replicating these beautiful things I try to honor them. Sometimes it is through whimsy, and other times it is by recreating it as perfectly as I can. Watercolor requires patience. A slow moment in the day to layer and choose and mix colors, and apply them to the surface. Each painting is very personal, and a small part of me is left on the paper. Nature speaks to those who are willing to listen.

BIOGRAPHY

Alison Miltner Rich is a resident of Cuyahoga Falls and has been working in watercolor for the past twenty years. She enjoys the process of layering and building details to create work that expresses her love of nature. She received a bachelor's degree in Art Education from Kent State University in 2002, and a master's degree in School Improvement Leadership from Olivet Nazarene University in 2013. She has been a visual art teacher in Chicago and Akron for two decades, and teaches art at Miller South School for the Visual and Performing Arts. Rich recently received a City of Cuyahoga Falls River in the City Grant through the National Endowment for the Arts and created a triptych about the Cuyahoga River.

Jim Pojman Group 2

ARTIST STATEMENT

My contribution to this collaborative project is to merge photography with Surrealism's techniques: automatism, text, unexpected juxtaposition, and artificial intelligence. By surrendering control, I capture fleeting moments that challenge reality. Text enriches the visuals, while unexpected combinations spark curiosity. Collaborating with ChatGPT, an AI bot, expands our imagination. The images invite viewers to explore hidden narratives, question boundaries, and embrace the enigmatic. (Written by ChatGPT.)

BIOGRAPHY

I have lived overseas for more than 20 years in India, Venezuela, and China. During those years I had the opportunity to travel extensively in those countries and several dozen others as well. I was able to see the world at a slower pace and interact with people individually. These travels helped develop my interest in environmental and occupational portrait photography. The result of my travels included several exhibits and self-published books. Since returning to the States in 2014, I have concentrated on photography as a medium to investigate social and political topics in this country.

GROUP 2 STATEMENT

"Surreal Reverie" is a collaborative triptych that pays homage to the concept of Surrealism, an art movement that began over a century ago. Composed of three human artists, our collaborative team used the assistance of ChatGPT and AI image creation software to embark on a multidisciplinary exploration, weaving together photography, painting, collage, and text. This triptych embraces the essence of Surrealism-exploring the realms of the subconscious and blurring the boundaries of reality. By implementing literary snippets, listening to experimental music, and collaborating on all three compositions, this triptych is able to harken back to the strategies and concepts used by the original Surrealists. As a result, each artwork in the series unfolds as a visual narrative, inviting viewers into a dreamscape where imagination takes center stage. The process behind "Surreal Reverie" was a harmonious interplay of human creativity and artificial intelligence. ChatGPT, our AI collaborator, acted as a catalyst, augmenting our artistic expressions and providing fresh perspectives. AI image creation software allowed us to experiment with novel visual elements, pushing the boundaries of our own artistic techniques. Through this collaborative endeavor, we sought to evoke emotions, challenge perceptions, and ignite introspection within the viewer. The triptych serves as an ode to the enduring legacy of Surrealism, as well as a testament to the ever-evolving landscape of artistic creation in the digital age.

Jordan McConnell Alison Miltner Rich Jim Pojman ChatGPT

Surreal Reverie Composition #1, Acrylic paint, watercolor paint, embroidery floss, paper collage, archival pigment prints, 30" x 30"

Surreal Reverie Composition #2, Acrylic paint, watercolor paint, wallpaper, archival pigment prints, 30" x 30"

Surreal Reverie Composition #3, Acrylic paint, watercolor paint, embroidery floss, paper collage, ink, archival pigment prints, 30" x 30"

Catherine Butler Group 3

ARTIST STATEMENT

My work is a visual vaudeville show. I find my conceptual roots in the Dada movement of the early 20th century and the picture books of my childhood. I am interested in the cross-pollination of ideas and genres, using materials in both ways that they were not intended to be used and in ways that use their specific characteristics to express ideas. My intention is to create mystery, to startle, and to delight. At times I use juxtaposition to provoke critical thought about our interactions with the Earth and its inhabitants or about issues of our culture and society. For the past forty years, I have primarily been known for my jewelry creations, however, throughout this time, I have also drawn, collaged, mono-printed, and done performance and installation art. Lately, I am drawn to exploring my interests in other media and realms.

BIOGRAPHY

Artist and arts educator Catherine Butler has been creating curiosities for the world to view, explore, and wear for decades. She aims to bring thought-provoking delight to her audiences. In addition to installation and performance art, Butler is also known for her jewelry, costumes, drawings, and prints. A native Clevelander, she holds a BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art and has been active in Cleveland's creative community since the early 1980s. Her work can be found in the collections of the Danner Foundation's Die Neue Sammlung (one of the foremost collections of contemporary and 20th-century jewelry in the world), which is permanently housed in the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, Germany, the Racine Art Museum in Wisconsin, and the Ohio Craft Museum. She is currently chair of Visual Art at Laurel School in Shaker Heights.

Christopher Hoot Group 3

ARTIST STATEMENT

Abstract artwork realized/discovered/revealed by working with photo-collages/vector graphics mediated by experimental marbling and discarded laser-cut acrylic/paper but incorporated with the absurdity of chance encounters while being inspired by music and architectural design, all while striving to give appropriate form to content in a visually compelling and thought-provoking manner.

BIOGRAPHY

Christopher Hoot teaches art and design at the Myers School of Art at the University of Akron and is Coordinator of Foundations 2D Design. His current creative research combines photography with painting and marbling techniques, producing multiple-layered, low-relief abstract landscapes, cityscapes, and soundscapes which focus on visual music, architectonic structures, and generating new realms. His artwork has recently been exhibited in various venues, including the CAN Triennial 2022 in the Hildebrandt Collective, The Time Travelers' Garden group exhibition at Beachwood, Sim(plex)cities: a solo exhibition at Summit ArtSpace (2021), and has been acquired by Summa Healthcare. More of his artwork can be seen on Instagram @christo4hoot

Lacy Talley Group 3

ARTIST STATEMENT

Lacy Talley, a Cleveland-based artist, is known for her colorful, eccentric, figure-based acrylic paintings that capture otherworldly existences with a jovial poise. Her bright, bold palette is complemented by the different perspectives she pushes in her pieces. The artist's aesthetic choices are intuitive rather than premeditated. Through her gestural brushstrokes, Lacy's paintings summon a joyful, ordered chaos, emotional response. Her style is nuanced by a range of inspirations, including the properties of crystals and how they relate to the body and impact one's way to regulate thoughts and emotions. The personal edge that Lacy brings to each painting alters and enhances recognizable subject matter, cultivating an imaginative visual experience.

BIOGRAPHY

Lacy Talley, a Cleveland-based artist, is known for her colorful, eccentric, figure-based acrylic paintings that capture otherworldly existences with a jovial poise. Her bright, bold palette is complemented by the different perspectives she pushes in her pieces. Throughout the years of her creative journey, Lacy placed her main focus on branding and identity projects, illustration work, and mural art. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Visual Communication Design and a minor in Pan African Studies from Kent State University. Lacy primarily works in acrylic paint, resin, clay, and digital art in a fusion style of Afro Futurism and Surrealism. As an Art Director, she has worked with Spotify, Moet Hennessy, SpikedDDD, Cadillac, and more on campaign rollouts, presentation decks, and partnerships. Recently, Lacy has partnered with Maker's Mark for their Art & Soul Program, highlighting emerging Black Creators making the world remarkable with their vision. She has worked in partnership with the National Basketball Association and the Marcus Graham Project as one of the designers of the Kareem Abdul-Jabbar Social Justice Champion Award, as well as the Cleveland Summit location marker. As a Creative Director, Lacy has curated the following shows and exhibitions: Cleveland Collabs, Nucleation, Crystallize. As an art educator, Lacy works with the youth on the art of upcycling through the Center for Arts-Inspired Learning and Karamu House. Lacy has also been selected to participate in the Heights Art Collaborage Group Exhibition, showing from August 18 to October 15, 2023.

GROUP 3 STATEMENT

Using chance encounters, we drew numbers blindly, allowing us to decide how we would pass our initial compositions to each other and whether each artwork was attached to one piece of music and one snippet of words or to all the music and to all the words—which could then dance together. Each trade provided a surprise: A new context, a new concept, and a new challenge—pushing us all into using new ways of working and new ways of interacting.

Orbital Future, Acrylic paint, glass marbles, net, acrylic sheets, chalk, marker, paper, 25 1/2" x 15"

Cosmic Interlude, Acrylic paint, wood cutout, paper, 16" x 20"

Preceptor, Acrylic paint, marker, paper, pastels, 32" x 28.5"

Jacob Liptow Group 4

ARTIST STATEMENT

As an artist, I strive to create works that captivate their viewers in an intentional and immersive environment. Working solely in the abstract, I hope to create a sense of beauty that may feel unfamiliar or other-worldly, a type of beauty only imagined by the human mind. My work lies somewhere interstitially between mathematics and organics. Much of our structural and geometric discoveries find root in the natural world around us. Tensegrity, for example, is the structural system used by the bones and tendons in our own body. By manipulating and refining these systems, we can create objects so intrinsically linked to our own bodies, yet alien-esque in their purity. In this way, my work seeks to evoke feelings far more than meaning and to leave viewers with an expanded awareness of the beauty in the environment they inhabit.

BIOGRAPHY

Jacob "Archie" Liptow is a practicing architectural designer in North East Ohio. He attended Kent State University's College of Architecture and Environmental Design, while also studying scenic design, art, and music. His personal work spans 2-dimensional collage work, digital art, sculpture, and installation. Along with the creative endeavors of his career, he is actively involved in community art initiatives and has/will be participating in Rooms to Let: Slavic village, BorderLight Fringe Festival, and other smaller-scale events. His work draws a great deal of inspiration from various architectural forms and structural systems. He aims to create surreal and immersive works through the manipulation and regeneration of elements from the natural world.

Steven Mastroianni Group 4

ARTIST STATEMENT

These photogenic drawings, or "photograms", are unique prints made with light-sensitive materials. Often called "cameraless photography", they're made by placing objects, drawings, and stencils into direct contact with light-sensitive emulsions, and fixing a permanent reverse shadow of those items to create an image. Evocative of watery depths, imaginary heavens, and mysterious maps, these luminous prints create an immersive dimension with their own rules of scale and space. Like dreams, these objects seem familiar but weird; letters that don't exist, mechanical forms floating in dark space or deep water, math problems that don't add up. Drawing from the subconscious, dream imagery, and musical inspiration, I use a sense of synesthesia to create my imagery.

BIOGRAPHY

I am an artist, photographer, educator, curator, and musician working in Cleveland, Ohio. My current practice consists of drawing, printmaking, and alternative photo process-based work examining the intersection of symbols, Surrealism, and abstraction. My work was most recently featured in a solo exhibit at the Massillon Museum, and I was a 2022 artist-in-residence for the Akron Soul Train. My work is included in the collections of University Hospitals, Progressive Insurance, Cleveland Clinic, and many private collections.

Jenniffer Omaitz Group 4

ARTIST STATEMENT

The work in this series is part of a larger investigation that explores the architecture of stacked structures-inspired by international architects who started designing to address space constraints, refocusing on how to create a sense of community and reduce the environmental footprint. My investigation pursues these questions, only in theory, by using an ad-hoc assemblage to investigate questions surrounding climate change, postmodern architecture, modular architecture, and psychological spaces. The work began as a series of six drawings and three pedestal pieces and is quickly evolving into complex series of works. These two new additions allow for further investigation into this subject. All of my work (painting, sculpture and installation) explores urban and geographic environments in a constant state of transformation. I contrast states of change, order and chaos that relate to the visual experience of environmental shift. Painting and Installation Art are modes of communicating our sensitivity to environmental factors; these practices provide me with a cadence and context through which to express ideas. My installations explore order/chaos theory by invoking abstraction through the juxtaposition of technology, architecture, and nature colliding. Paintings are a meditation on movement, color, permutation, and gesture; boundary coordinates operating between space and color. Overall, my work explores space; both physically and psychologically. This refers to "Space" as it is applied to a two-dimensional surface, or a three-dimensional location.

BIOGRAPHY

Jenniffer Omaitz (b. Cleveland, OH) lives in Kent, OH and works in Kent and Cleveland. She holds an M.F.A. in painting from Kent State University (2009) and a B.F.A in painting from the Cleveland Institute of Art (2002). Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at The Sculpture Center, Cleveland; SPACES Gallery, Denver (represented, Kent State University, Hinterland, Denver, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland. Her work was also featured at the 2010 Biennial of the Americas in Denver and the CAN Triennial in Cleveland in 2018. Jenniffer was both the recipient of a 2017 fellowship residency with the Akron Soul Train and a 2019 Ohio Arts Council grantee for an Individual Excellence Award. Omaitz currently teaches in the College of Architecture and Environmental Design at Kent State University.

GROUP 4 STATEMENT

While we brought our own familiar methods and practices to each initial piece, the collaborative process was a leap into unfamiliar territories. Jacob brings a hands-on experimentation with his biomorphic forms, building tension within his organic and geometric shapes, Jenniffer brings an architectural eye to her deconstructed sculpture, and Steven brings a constructivist, free-association approach with his cyanotype prints. The challenge was leaving enough "blank canvas" on each piece and setting it free to be transformed by each other's aesthetic. In the sculptural pieces, we were each free to add our own signature marks and add-ons, and with the print we each brought unique stencils and objects, like a potluck, to use in the final exposure of the cyanotype. The biggest challenge in this was creating something from our respective wheelhouses which would also serve as an open invitation to collaborate in unpredictable ways.

I Have A City To Cover In Lines (#1 & 2), Cyanotype and ink on paper, 42" x 32"

Busy City; Quiet Lights, Papier-mâché, wire and bamboo, (11) 4" x 3" x 8"

Voices in the City, Mixed media assemblage, 22" x 17" x 15"

RELATED PROGRAMMING

EKPHRASTACY: Artists Talk + Poets Respond | September 21, 7:00 p.m. LEARN MORE

Amy Hughes, Sujata Lakhe, and Vince Robinson join Heights Poet Laureate Siaara Freeman to perform original works inspired by the exhibitions on view in our gallery space—*Collaborage* and Gregory Johnson. Artists also discuss their work.

COMING SOON FROM HEIGHTS ARTS

GALLERY CONCERT: David Bays | August 31, 7:00 p.m.

David Bays and the Achy Joints bring striking and dramatic rock-inspired guitar and deeply visceral lyrics to their performances.

GALLERY CONCERT: Afi Scruggs | September 14, 7:00 p.m.

Afi Scruggs, ensemble leader of Afi 'n the Mix, will bring the rhythm at this free Gallery Concert! If you love to groove, no matter the music, you'll definitely want to be in the audience when Afi plays.

No Exit's Year of Surreality Performance | October 13, 7:00 p.m.

This reality-breaking program also features special guest poets Ray McNiece and Raja Freeman performing original works.

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VOLUNTEER FOR A HEIGHTS ARTS COMMUNITY TEAM

Heights Arts has a long history of inviting the community to share their passion and expertise to help the Organization develop and present its public programming. Three ongoing Volunteer Community Teams are charged with facilitating the strategies and action plans for Heights Arts' core programming in the literary, musical, and visual arts disciplines. The purpose of Heights Arts' community teams is to expand community engagement in developing and presenting the programs of the organization, and to tap into the significant expertise that resides in our community. We invite poets, musicians, artists, and other members of the community to work with us to select and showcase the region's visual artists, poets, and musicians in our literary, musical, and exhibition programming.

To read more about our community teams and submit an application, visit us HERE

BECOME A HEIGHTS ARTS MEMBER

Now more than ever, we appreciate your consideration to give to Heights Arts by becoming a member. As a member of Heights Arts, you receive discounts, special invitations, and members-only events, as well as perks from our community partners. Your membership is tax-deductible and you have the opportunity to say you're helping to support local artists, musicians, creative writers, and public art in the community. You'll have your finger on the pulse of all things Heights Arts. What are you waiting for?

Join us today! Membership information can be found on our website HERE

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