

PRESS RELEASE

This exhibition with its very distinctive focus of interest, far removed the tradition of ink and brush, offers a fresh look at contemporary Chinese art. Most of the works on show have been created in the last few years. They challenge us by affirming their difference and represent an up-to-date take on issues relating to sculpture and the world around us.

Twenty-five male and female artists, ranging from the pioneers of the late 70s and early 80s to the latest generations, affirm the three-dimensionality of their medium and re-appropriate the diversity of their materials. Whether these are of industrial, artisanal, mineral or natural origin, recycled or man-made – not to mention the use of video – all become raw or virtual materials for the development of artistic offerings that are as unexpected as they are relevant. The questions they raise both extend and confirm the overturning of artistic assumptions initiated by the avant-gardes of the last century.

Several themes will be developed through these pieces – some monumental, others fragile – which revisit and transform the traditional themes of landscape, nature and environmental challenges, examine the challenges of mega-urbanisation, consider the feminine in contemporary art, reinterpret Chinese cultural history, update and hence redefine myths such as that of the Phoenix, and deconstruct or reinterpret the forms of art history or of human representation in order to reshape them according to the new imaginative concerns of a redefinition of Chinese cultural identity and what makes it distinctive within the global art scene.

CURATORS: Fan Di'an, president of the C.A.F.A (Central Academy of Fine Art) and Michel Baudson, A.I.C.A – I.C.O.M.

COORDINATION: Arnaud Godart, WANG Ying

A co-production of the Museum Cluster of the City of Mons and the Mons 2015 Foundation, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Wallonia-Brussels International, the Belgian Embassy (Wallonia-Brussels Delegation) in China, Beijing, the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, and China Art & Entertainment Group.



THE ARTISTS

The exhibition will present work by XU Bing, ZHU Qingsheng, XIAO Yu, LIANG Shaoji, QIU Zhijie, LI Zhanyang, LIU Wei, LIANG Shuo, JIANG Xinyu, CHEN Wenling, SHI Hui, LI Hongbo, MIAO Xiaochun, LIN Tianmiao, AI Jin, WANG Luyan, XIANG Jing, ZHAN Wang, SUI Jianguo, WANG Mai, HE An, WANG Du, YANG Jiechang, CHEN Zen and WANG Jin.

XU Bing

Born in China in 1955, Xu Bing entered the Faculty of Engraving of the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in 1977, where he obtained a bachelor's degree in 1981 before joining the institution's teaching staff. In 1990, he moved to the United States. He now lives and works in Beijing and New York. His exhibitions have been held in art institutions such as MOMA in New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the British Museum, the National Gallery of Canada, the Prague National Gallery and the Museum Ludwig in Germany. In addition, Xu Bing has participated a number of times in the Venice Biennale, the Sydney Biennale and the São Paulo Biennale among other international exhibitions.

<u>Phoenix Project – Internal Urbanisation (models + sketches + video)</u>

Xu Bing's two giant 'phoenixes', which are assembled from Chinese urban construction waste, work tools and workers' everyday materials, symbolise the context and meaning of the human urbanisation process.

ZHU Qingsheng

Art historian, art critic and artist Lao Zhu (Zhu Qingsheng) was born in 1957. He graduated from the Faculty of Foreign Art History of the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in 1985 and gained a doctorate from the University of Heidelberg in 1995. He is currently a professor, director of the Centre for Visual Research and director of the Institute for Research into the Han People of Beijing University and chief editor of the Chinese Contemporary Art Annual.

Stones Painted Red

The project *Stones Painted Red* explores questions such as 'What is the nature of the world?', and the relationship of mountains and rivers in Chinese tradition. With the aim of protecting nature, this project originates from the artist's strong reaction and specific solution following a natural disaster.

XIAO Yu

Born in 1965, Xiao Yu graduated from the Faculty of Fresco Art of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. He received the Chinese Contemporary Art Award (CCAA) in 2000.

The Earth

The video *The Earth* is a visual record of an artistic performance given by Xiao Yu at the Beijing Pace Gallery. Set to pastoral music, the video constructs an ideal illusion of an idyllic world. At a time when Chinese contemporary art is interpreting the various problems of society in different ways, the video offers an alternative view of the reality of China by juxtaposing traditional farming and a cement works.

SHI Hui

Born in 1955, Shi Hui graduated from the Faculty of Crafts of the Chinese Academy of Fine Arts in 1982 before joining the institution's teaching staff. Her specialty is dyeing. Since the 1990s, she has focused on the art of the fibre.

Her work is characterised by the use of cotton, hemp, plants, rice paper, paper pulp and other fibrous materials, reflecting the cultural charm of the Eastern spirit.

Medicinal Plant Manual No.1

Is Ben Cao Gang Mu ('Medicinal Plant Manual') a synonym for Chinese traditional medicine or a popular hit? In fact, it was originally a poetic hymn to the plant world.

LIANG Shaoji

Born in 1945, Liang Shaoji was educated at the Secondary School attached to the Chinese Academy of Fine Arts. During the early years of his professional career, he worked on craft design and pictorial creativity. From the mid-1970s to the 1980s, he explored fibre art, focusing on soft sculpture. For some ten years, he investigated installations and natural sculptures, exploring the inherent charm of his materials.

Planar Tunnel

The Planar Tunnel is a silk sheet 145 cm in diameter. The artist draws enormous inspiration from the flattening, fragmentation and emptiness of silk fabric, a natural material obtained from the cocoon.

QIU Zhijie

Born in Zhangzhou, Qiu Zhijie graduated from the Faculty of Engraving of the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts in 1992. He is currently professor of the Multimedia Institute of the Chinese Academy of Fine Arts. As a famous contemporary artist, curator and critic in China, he creates masterpieces in several fields, including painting, photography, installations, video and performance art.

Qiu's Annotation: The Light and Colour of Lanterns

Qiu's Annotation: The Light and Colour of Lanterns is an old painting from the Ming Dynasty depicting the spectacular scene of the antiques market at the Temple of Confucius in Nanjing during the Festival of Lanterns in 1566. For this project, initiated in 2010, the artist first copied the painting before annotating it, but also created installations based on the characters and objects represented in the painting so that they can serve as stage props and interact automatically with the audience.

LI Zhanyang

Born in 1969, Li Zhanyang graduated in 1994 from the Faculty of Sculpture of the Lu Xun Institute of Fine Arts. He currently teaches at the Faculty of Sculpture of the Sichuan Province Academy of Fine Arts. He excels in creating narrative sculptures, and his technique is influenced by traditional painted sculpture. The language of his sculptures, simple but humorous, ironic and somewhat pessimistic, reveals profound experiences and a sense of physicality.

Rent-Rent Collection Yard

Rent-Rent Collection Yard is a sculptural ensemble in coloured clay. Based on the historical reality of the manor of Liu Wencai, a large landowner in the province of Sichuan who exploited farmers, this work is the fruit of the collective activity of the professors of the Faculty of Sculpture of the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts. It was completed only after several months of work in 1965.

LIU Wei

Liu Wei is one of the most important Chinese artists today. His work is particularly inspired by the extremely rapid urbanisation of China and the instability that the twenty-first century has brought. He has participated in numerous biennales, including Venice in 2005 and Busan and Lyon in 2007. In 2008, he received the Contemporary Art Award for Best Chinese Artist.

The Library

Since 2008, he has created sculptures using as his main materials books which are collected, then compressed and glued together to depict city districts with monumental buildings. They thus have a direct bearing on the realities of modernity and civilisation. While these works seem as hard as stone, they are in fact fragile and vulnerable, like today's society.

LIANG Shuo

Born in 1976, Liang Shuo graduated from the Faculty of Sculpture of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2000, before joining the institution's teaching staff.

Fit No. 8

Any object can be attached to this work without using screws or glue, creating a stable structure. However, it can also be dismantled if one wishes. The key to this work is that it shows the relationship between an object's appearances and its internal mechanism.

JIANG Xinyu

Born in 1979, Jiang Xinyu graduated from the Faculty of Choreography of the Central Academy of Drama. In 2014, he obtained a master's degree from the Institute of Experimental Art of the Central Academy of Fine Arts before joining the institution's teaching staff.

Beijing Car - NO. CT9953

Beijing CT9953 is the registration number of a second-hand Jetta that accompanied the artist for eight years. The car was pronounced worn out and taken off to the junk yard. He has turned the car into paintings with various motifs, stacked up the twenty-eight very thick and heavy paintings in a parking space, where he exhibits them as a ceremony.

CHEN Wenling

Born in 1969, Chen Wenling graduated from the Xiamen Academy of Arts and Trades and the Central Academy of Fine Arts. He is one of China's best-known contemporary sculptors.

Chinese Landscape No.1

China today is a complex mixture. Its society is in a transitional phase in which the characteristics of agricultural, industrial and post-industrial societies clash, overlap and evolve, allowing different configurations to engage in dialogue and exchange. This is exactly the possibility that this work tries to show.

LI Hongbo

Li Hongbo graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts of Jilin Normal University in 1996 and from the Faculty of Experimental Art of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2010. He is a member of the Experimental Art Committee of the Association of Chinese Artists.

A Tree

A Tree is a work resembling a tree that looks normal, but is made entirely from paper. Its shape can be changed by stretching and twisting the material so that it loses its hard texture and is given more softness. These changes also suggest the changing and fickle nature of the emotional world.

MIAO Xiaochun

Miao Xiaochun graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts and the Kunsthochschule in Kassel, Germany. He is now a professor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts. Since the 1990s, he has creatively explored the interface between the real and the virtual, working in parallel in several areas, including photography, painting and three-dimensional cartoons.

Unlimited

The charm of Miao Xiaochun's photographs and three-dimensional cartoons lies in their natural representation, which can be attributed to the artist's interest in culture both old and new. Like an exchanger, Miao Xiaochun links the old China that is on the verge of disappearing with the super-modern metropolises of China today.

LIN Tianmiao

Born in 1961, Lin Tianmiao graduated in 1984 from the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Normal University in the capital in 1989 and from the Art Student League, New York in 1989. A famous installation artist, she was awarded the Martell Prize for Best Artist of the Year in 2006. Her work is somewhat Western in form, but with cultural connotations characterised by an Eastern beauty and style.

Gazing back

According to a story dating from her childhood, the artist was greatly fearful of turning into a non-mammalian animal. In this work, she attempts to overcome this trauma. Here, the head of the middle-aged female figure is replaced by a monitor-eye, blurring the line between human and object. The figure lays eggs on a ritual stage. This very private act has been made public in a 'ceremonial' fashion.

Al Jing

Ai Jing is an artist, writer and singer-songwriter. In 1999, she started learning to paint with the Chinese contemporary artist Zhang Xiaogang. She then moved to New York to further her studies in contemporary art.

Tree of Life

This piece is typical of Ai Jing's artistic expression. Besides her choice of subjects, conceptual expressiveness is another personal characteristic of Ai Jing's work. Here, she uses tens of thousands of disposable chopsticks to create this tree of life, 3.50 metres tall, on the branches of which perches a raven symbolising the alarm sounded from the depths of her heart.

WANG Luyan

Born in 1956, Wang Luyan is one of the most important Chinese conceptual artists. He has been actively involved in the Chinese avant-garde art movement from its inception.

W Compass

Here, the conceptual aspect of Wang Luyan's work is expressed: the random vibration of the spring in the arms of the *W compass* distorts the circle that the compass draws, and this distortion caused by the compass is prescribed in the path it takes as it draws a circle. Two opposing forces somehow cancel one another out before our eyes.

XIANG Jing

Born in 1968, Xiang Jing graduated from the Faculty of Sculpture of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1995. That same year, her first solo exhibition was held and she was hailed as an 'artistic genius'.

Your Body

This piece presents a woman's body in detail. The body is larger than life-size, enabling our eyes to take it all in, even its most intimate parts. In this way, devoid of taboos or secrets, the body unsettles us. Confronted with such an overbearing body, our sexual curiosity as onlookers becomes confused.

ZHAN Wang

Born in December 1962, Zhan Wang graduated from the Faculty of Sculpture of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1988. He is one of China's leading contemporary artists.

Morphogeny No.1

Morphogeny No.1 is the first piece in the Artificial Rockeries series, work on which he began in 2004. It is derived from the silhouette of the artist's own body, reflected in the surface of stainless steel rockeries. After the details have been processed by computer, the silhouette is enlarged to create a sculpture.

SUI Jianguo

Born in 1956, Sui Jianguo graduated with a master's degree from the Faculty of Sculpture of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1989 before joining its teaching staff. He is regarded by critics as 'the Chinese sculptor who walks earliest and furthest in the conceptual direction'.

Blind Portraits

To create the series *Blind Portraits*, he blindfolded himself in order to prevent visual factors from having any impact on his consciousness. He modelled clay freely with his hands and imprinted the clay with his body in a primitive fashion. When the clay with the imprint left by the artist's body was enlarged ten or twenty times, the potential within the material was vigorously released on the sculptures' surface.

WANG Mai

Born in 1972, Wang Mai represents a new generation of Chinese artists among whom he is considered a leading talent. He began to establish his artistic and creative world in the early 1990s. From painting to poetry, and from shows to sculptural installations, Wang Mai combines a variety of artistic forms from an international viewpoint and employing a multidisciplinary artistic language rooted in cultural traditions.

Time Spaceship

The main material used for this work comes from an old toolbox from munition factory 798. With birch bark stuck to the outside, this toolbox has been transformed into a cradle, enlarged several times, like those used by the fishing and hunting tribes of northern China for their infants. The suspended cradle reminds us of a time spaceship. With a weather station added at the top, the vessel observes the very complicated and fluctuating political and cultural climate in the strait.

HE An

Born in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei Province, in 1971, He An graduated from the Hubei Academy of Fine Arts in 1996. He has since displayed work in numerous solo and other exhibitions around the world.

Miho Yoshioka

Between illegality and investigation, the artist designs his works using characters taken from the commercial signs of his hometown to reconstruct the names of people who have marked his life. The work *Miho Yoshioka* echoes the name of a Japanese porn actress – an illicit heroin of his youth whose prohibited videos were discreetly circulating in China.

WANG Du

Wang Du was born in 1956. After studying at the Canton Academy of Fine Arts from 1981 to 1985, he taught visual arts at the Institute of Architecture of the Polytechnic University of South China. In 1986 he founded the Salon of Artists from South China, in Canton, which he ran until 1990, when he relocated to France, settling in the Paris suburbs. From 1997 to 2000 he taught at the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Paris VIII.

Popular Luxury

This is an enlargement of an advertising leaflet for a website, crumpled, thrown to the ground, then picked up by the artist. It is typical of his work, which persistently debunks media hype to give an account of the whirlwind of what the artist calls our 'information consumption society', where the media represent a 'post-reality' that confuses the truth with the world of 'disposable realities' that they create.

YANG Jiechang

Born in Foshan, Guangdong Province, in 1956, Yang Jiechang studied traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy at the Foshan People's Art Institute and at the Canton Academy of Fine Arts, where he later taught from 1982 to 1988. In order to pursue his research into Chinese art and his theories further, he followed the teachings of Taoism in the Luofu Mountains and of Buddhism in Canton. Since late 1989, he has lived and worked mainly in Paris and Heidelberg.

Underground Flowers

This monumental work by Yang Jiechang was conceived in 1989 and created in 2009. It is an installation that collects bones from human skeletons made of white porcelain with floral motifs in the traditional 'China blue' colour. The bones are presented in wooden boxes, evoking human remains that might come from palaeontological excavations or from later periods – witnesses of a past that can only be reconstituted in bits and pieces.

CHEN Zhen

Chen Zhen was born in 1955. In 1973, he entered the Shanghai School of Fine Arts and Applied Arts, where he later became a professor. He then studied the art of stage scenery at the Shanghai Theatre Institute, where he taught from 1982. In 1986 he emigrated to Paris, to study at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts and then at the Institut des Hautes Études en Arts Plastiques. He taught at both institutions, and then at Nancy and at the Kitakyushu Centre for Contemporary Art in Japan. He died from incurable anaemia in 2000.

Round Table - Side by Side

This work confronts the cultural traditions of East and West, symbolised by Western chairs on one side and Chinese on the other, fixed to the edges of a table consisting of two semi-circular sections. At the centre of the Chinese section, a text in calligraphic characters is inscribed on the wood of a third panel, evoking the turntable found in banquet tables.

WANG Jin

Born in 1962, Wang Jin graduated from the Hangzhou Academy of Chinese Fine Arts in 1987. Since then, he has lived and worked in Beijing. After a few years of teaching, he became a freelance artist in 1992, initially devoting himself to performance art. In 1997, he created the first works in his cycle *A Chinese Dream*, on which he is still working today.

Chinese Dream

Wang Jin's artistic work is generally metaphorical in nature rather than directly explicit. In his series *Chinese Dream*, he extrapolates from materials and their capacity to symbolise old or new values in order to reveal both the contradiction and the potential fusion of their past and present meanings.

EXHIBITION DESIGN

The desire for this exhibition from the start was to occupy the entire site of the Former Slaughterhouse. As monumentality is at the centre of the exhibition, some of the works could only be exhibited outside. The Slaughterhouse garden is now occupied by works up to 6 metres high or long with a surface area of up to 200 square metres.

The layout inside the building is structured around a number of broad themes: work materials, the relationship with nature and the city, the heritage of tradition and the evolution of society, including the feminisation of art. The works, which dialogue with one another, have been arranged by the Museum Cluster's display design team and the exhibition's joint curators in the Great Hall and the Cold Room, giving visitors the opportunity to travel between intimate and completely open spaces, offering different perspectives on thematic groups.

THE CURATORS

The exhibition has both a Chinese curator, Mr Fan Di'an, and a Belgian curator, Mr Michel Baudson.

Michel Baudson is Honorary Director of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels - Ecole supérieure des Arts. He is also Honorary President of ABCA (the Belgian Association of Art Critics), a member of AICA (the International Association of Art Critics) and a member of ICOM (the International Commission of Museums). He is President of Jeunesse et Arts Plastiques, a.s.b.l (Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels) and Visiting Professor at the Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts (Shaanxi, China).

He has published *L'art et le temps*, Ludion, Brussels, 1984, *Conversation avec Tapta*, Artgo, Mons, 1994, *Panamarenko*, Flammarion, Paris, 1996, and *Tapta*, Bam, Mons, 2011.

Exhibitions he has organised include:

ARTISTS' VIDEO TAPES, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 1975; L'ART ET LE TEMPS, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels – Musée Rath, Geneva - Louisiana Museum, Denmark – Kunsthalle, Mannheim – Musée d'art contemporain, Vienne – Nouveau Musée, Villeurbannes / Lyon - Barbican Centre, London from 1984 to 1986:

THE UNKNOWN MODIGLIANI: DRAWINGS FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL ALEXANDRE Venice, London, Cologne, Bruges, Tokyo, Lisbon, Tel Aviv, Madrid, Montreal, Rouen. 1993-1996, MAGRITTE EN COMPAGNIE, Le Botanique, Brussels – Zachetta Museum, Warsaw, 1997; WU ZUOREN, *A la croisée de l'Orient et de l'Occident*, Brussels, Europalia China, 2009-10; TAPTA. Former Slaughterhouse. Mons. 2011:

DE L'ARBRE A LA FORÊT, Beirut, 2011;

IMAGES ET MOTS: Depuis Magritte

China (Museum of Fine Arts, Wuhan – National Museum of China, Beijing), 2012-13

Fan Di'an is President of the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA). Born in September 1955, he was the director of NAMOC (National Art Museum of China), before being appointed President of CAFA. He is currently, in addition to his post at CAFA, Vice President of the China Artists Association, Vice President of the Chinese Literature and Art Critics Association, Director of the National Art Museum Committee, a committee member of the China Oil Painting Society and a member of the National Committee of CPPCC. Fan Di'an has conducted research into 20th century Chinese art, criticism of contemporary art, exhibition curating and artistic museum design. During his tenure as director of NAMOC, he initiated the idea of a 'public centre' for the museum, promoted NAMOC's capabilities for academic research,

exhibition curating and cultural public services, and expanded the national art collections. In the same role, he also introduced international art in China in a positive manner, extended international art exchanges and chaired a number of revelatory art salons.

ON THE FRINGE OF THE EXHIBITION

Discover t'ai chi!

One of China's great treasures lies in the practice of t'ai chi and qigong. Discover t'ai chi – a true art of the body – in the presence of Chinese artworks. There are introductory sessions on 15 weekend and week-day dates. Information on available dates at www.mons2015.eu. Registration desirable at info@taijiquan.be

THE CATALOGUE

The exhibition catalogue is in two parts. The first contains both introductory texts and scholarly texts, including those by Mr Michel Baudson and Mr Fan Di'an, but also a piece by Ms Teng Yunning, deputy director of the Centre for Visual Studies of the University of Beijing. The second part will present a biography of each artist and an analysis of each work. The publication, richly illustrated so as not to limit each artist to just one work (and in order to give a broader vision of contemporary Chinese work), is translated into French and Chinese. An English version of all the texts is provided at the end of the catalogue.

THE FORMER SLAUGHTERHOUSE

Built in 1854-1855 by architect Charles Sury, the Former Slaughterhouse has been completely renovated with a view to use for other purposes. It is currently dedicated to the promotion of the visual arts, and has been open to the public since 2006. The main building, the Great Hall, extends 70 metres by 10 metres on a single level. The system by which the roof is supported has been retained in the interests of authenticity. The Stables and the Cold Room have also been adapted to serve a new role. The Stables house the non-profit *World Crafts Council of Belgium* dedicated to the applied arts, while the Cold Room is a multipurpose space.

VISUALS AVAILABLE TO THE PRESS

Every pictures are available on www.flickr.com/photos/mons 2015/sets

- 1. The Library LIU Wei 2014-2015 Photographic rights. LIU Buyi
- 2. A Tree LI Hongbo 2012 Photographic rights. LI Hongbo
- 3. Morphogeny No.1 ZHAN Wang 2014 Photographic rights. QU Shengdong
- 4. Fit No.8 LIANG Shuo 2014 Photographic rights. Gallery Yang
- 5. Rent-Rent Collection Yard . LI Zhanyang 2008 Photographic rights. LI Zhanyang
- 6. Unlimited- MIAO Xiaochun 2011-2012 Photographic rights. MIAO Xiaochun
- 7. Miho Yoshioka, **HE An**, 2014, Courtesy Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris & Brussels © **He An**
- 8. Birth LIN Tianmiao 2004 Photographic rights. LIN Tianmiao studio
- 9. The Tree of Life Al Jing 2010 Photographic rights. Al Jing studio
- 10. Your Body XIANG Jing 2005 Photographic rights. XIANG Jing
- 11. China Scene NO 1- CHEN Wenling 2007 © LIU Shanlong

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

I'M GOING TO SEE "FERVENT CHINA"

Former Slaughterhouse (Anciens abattoirs)

17, rue de la Trouille 7000 Mons T +32(0)65 56 20 34 www.mons2015.eu

Exhibition open Tuesday to Sunday, from 12:00 to 18:00 Free on every the first Sunday of the every month: 5 July / 2 August / 6 September / 4 October

I'M BUYING TICKETS

Admission: €6 / €4

Preferential charges:

- Reduced rates: young people 12 to 25. Seniors, groups...
- Children (under 12)
- Family (min 1 adult / max 2 adults and 5 children under 18 years)

You can also take advantage of the Mons 2015 Pass, valid until 24.01.2016

- Solo: 3 to 21 entries
- Duo: 6 to 42 entries
- Family: 9 to 63 entries

More information on 065/39.59.39

How to book and buy tickets

Monday to Sunday, 10:00 to 20:00 (including holidays)

- at the sales points in Mons
- by telephone on: 065 / 39.59.39
- 7/7, 24/24
- or at www.mons2015.eu

Book a group visit or guided tour: Monday to Friday, 9:00 to 17:30

• by telephone on: 065/35.34.88

• by email at: groupes@ville.mons.be

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