Never The Same River

Educational Guide

KV Duong
Adama Delphine Fawundu
Brendan Fernandes
Elliot & Erick Jiménez
Anoushka Mirchandani
Edison Peñafiel

Curated by Dexter Wimberly
August 12 – December 5, 2026

Never The Same River draws on the remark attributed to Heraclitus that no one ever steps in the same river twice. Just as rivers flow and bodies evolve, so too do identities, perceptions, and environments. The river becomes a metaphor for transformation, reflecting the impossibility of returning to a fixed state.

At its core, the exhibition considers how individuals assert agency over their own bodies against cultural and systemic forces that seek to define them. Reflecting on the tension and trauma surrounding migration, whether by necessity or by choice, the movement of people coincides with histories of displacement, resistance, and resilience. These questions arrive at a moment when millions of people worldwide are forcibly displaced, and when border enforcement, asylum restrictions, and climate-driven migration dominate political debate across continents. The exhibition insists that those crossing are people with interior lives, ancestral memory, and stories to tell on their own terms.

Through photography, video, sculpture, and painting, the artists and their works confront illusions of the status quo with fluid, merging forms and scenes, expanding beyond disciplinary limits, while casting off frameworks projected onto bodies and borders alike.

Reflect on what a river means to you? What kind of memory or experience does it bring to mind? What kind of surroundings is the river located in? What are the textures and movements you notice about the river?

Sensory Note
Videos on view include some flickering images and sounds.

Key Words

Heraclitus

A Greek philosopher (6th century BCE) from Ephesus, best known for theories on constant transition. One of his most famous being, "no one ever steps in the same river twice."[1]

Migration

The process of moving or being moved from one place to another.

Displacement

The situation where people are being forced to leave from where they normally live.



Adama Delphine Fawundu
(b. 1971, Brooklyn, NY)

Ngewo Whispers, 2023
Archival pigment
on Vibachrome
48 × 84 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Set among mysteriously towering trees draped in Spanish moss in Savannah, Georgia, a woman stands on a forest trail, seemingly beckoning us to join her in listening to nature's murmurs. Every element of the photograph carries intention. The location, the vibrant blue period dress, and the cascading cowrie shells crafted by Lafalaise Dion from Côte d'Ivoire together gesture toward the powerful manifestation of breath and life force throughout the African Diaspora. Here, the body is neither confined nor defined by imposed narratives. The figure stands sovereign within the landscape, attuned to forces older than borders, her partially veiled face refusing the viewer's claim to full knowledge of her. In this way, *Ngewo Whispers* embodies the exhibition's meditation on self-definition and change. Like an ever-shifting river, the woman suggests an identity that is fluid, shaped by migration and memory.

Questions

- The title *Ngewo Whispers*, alludes to nature's murmurs. What do you imagine is being whispered? Why?
- Discuss the positioning of the figure in the surrounding, what kind of feeling does this pose invoke?
- What do you notice on the face of the figure? Why do you imagine the artist decided to portray the figure this way?
- What are the repeated patterns and texture that you notice? What is the significance to the work?

Ways of Experiencing

- Imagine yourself in nature, what is the location? What kinds of whispers or murmurs would you like to share?
- Practice embodying this pose, reflect on how it makes you feel.
- **Making:** Inspired by the piece, create a wearable piece with the natural objects. What material will you choose?
- Reflect on what other natural objects you could imagine could be offered for trade and goods now.

Key Words

Ngewo

Ngewo is known as the God among the Mende people, found in what is known today as Sierra Leone. Ngewo, also known as *Leve* ("one who is above"), is a sky god responsible for the creation of the universe: human beings, animals, plants, medicine.[2]

Cowrie shells

Sea shells that are traded for goods, services, ornamental, and became power of trade throughout Africa, Asia, Europe and Oceania.[3] The cowrie shells became a part of headdress for ritual performed in western Côte d'Ivoire and symbolizes prosperity and fertility.[4]



Elliot & Erick Jiménez
(b. 1989, Miami, FL, live and work in Miami, FL and New York, NY)

Where Fertile Land Grows,
2026
Archival pigment prints on canvas, custom oak frames, integrated 19th-century French Gothic pew, acacia thorns, Swarovski crystals, cowrie shells, metal leaves, metal glitter, gold gilding
120 × 120 × 18 inches

Courtesy of the Artists and Spinello Projects

This installation considers migration not as a singular act, but as an inherited condition that continues to evolve across generations. Through the figure of Ogún, Lucumí syncretism, and references to Christian iconography, the Jiménez brothers reflect on passage, sacrifice, adaptation, and the dual realities of existing between cultures as first-generation Cuban Americans. Rather than focusing on arrival, the work examines what is carried forward: the memories, traditions, traumas, and resilience that become part of their inheritance. Across the installation, portals, inverted reflections, thorn-covered devotional objects, and the wounded lamb are interconnected metaphors for the ways migration transforms both individual and collective identity.

Questions

- Elliot and Erick refer to the dual realities between cultures. What are dualities that you notice are found in the work? What do you imagine they symbolize?
- The figures, objects, and animals have a central presence in the work. What do you notice about them and in relation to each other? What does it remind you of and why?
- Notice the materials and textures. How do the material choices impact the mood of the work? What is the significance of the textures?
- The installation invites us to think of migration as an inherited condition that continues to evolve across generations. In what ways does this idea resonate with communities today?

Key Words

Ogún

Is an Orisha (divine spirit) of the Yoruba religion that is adopted into other African religions and is known as a powerful deity of war, iron, metalworking, innovation, and divine judgement.[5][6][7]

Lucumí syncretism

Is a mix of West African Yoruba traditions, Roman Catholicism, and Spiritism from Santería, an Afro-Cuban religion, that centers around Orishas (deities) and Catholic imagery.[8]

Ways of Experiencing

- The artwork explores what is carried forward and evolved through generations in a passage of time. Brainstorm and write what you might have inherited and think about how they have been transformed through time. How has it evolved?
- The work asks us to consider our thinking about migration that involves sacrifice, adaptation, and moments of rest. Contemplate on rest, what do you do to relax?
- **Making:** The figures in the work reference a mirror reflection of tarot deck and reversal. Draw reflections of dualities. Think about a duality and draw an opposite reflection. What did you choose and why?



Anoushka Mirchandani
(b. 1988, Pune, India,
lives and works in
New York, NY)

One More Look, 2026
Oil, oil stick, oil pastel
on canvas, walnut frame
88 × 66 inches

Courtesy of the Artist
Photo Sebastian Bach

At the heart of Anoushka Mirchandani's practice are bold yet ethereal female figures, bodies that blur into their surroundings, rendered in oil and oil pastel with a loose, gestural hand. These women pose with unapologetic self-possession, challenging imposed norms of modesty and visibility and asserting agency over how their bodies are seen. At the same time, their partial erasure suggests the emotional labor of navigating multiple identities across time and space. Drawing from an expansive personal archive, including footage of her grandmothers who survived the 1947 Partition of India, Mirchandani constructs layered narratives that reflect both inherited and lived experiences of displacement. Her compositions merge familial histories with everyday imagery, revealing the tension between privacy and exposure, abandonment and reclamation.

Questions

- What do you notice about the surrounding environment of this painting? Where do you imagine this location is situated? Why do you think the artist chose this space?
- How does Mirchandani depict water in the painting? What do you notice about the color and stylistic textures? How does this affect the overall feeling of the work?
- Describe the figure's presence, movement and location in the painting. What is the significance of the pose and what do you think that this person might be experiencing?

Ways of Experiencing

- Imagine being in a body of water, how do you feel? Can you describe all the sensorial aspects of being submerged in water?
- Mirchandani combines stories in relation to her generational familial relationship to water? What are some memories of familial relationships in connection to water?

Key Words

Partition of India

In 1947 when over half of South Asia, during British colonial rule was known as "British India," was divided into the Union of India and the Dominion of Pakistan at that time.[9]



Anoushka Mirchandani
(b. 1988, Pune, India, lives and works in New York, NY)

The First Water is the Body,
2026
Unglazed ceramic, painted organza
Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the Artist
Photo Sebastian Bach

This installation is inspired by traditional South Asian *matkas*, unglazed clay vessels used to store and cool water. From the mouths of these hand-built ceramic forms, layered panels of painted organza spill onto the gallery floor. The translucent fabrics depict water hyacinths, strikingly beautiful purple flowers whose bulbous green stems spread across waterways like carpets, inspired by the Kochi backwaters of Kerala, India. Introduced as an ornamental species by several historical accounts during British colonial rule, the water hyacinth has transformed local ecosystems, choking waterways and threatening biodiversity, an enduring reminder of the ecological legacies of colonial exchange. The work holds multiple meanings: the vessel as both water bearer and carrier of cultural knowledge, and the entangled histories of colonialism, environmental change, migration, and diaspora that continue to reshape landscapes, memory, and ideas of home.

Key Words

Biodiversity

A wide variety and variability of life in one place.

Questions

- Mirchandani uses the South Asian *matkas* as vessels to store and cool water. How have vessels been represented in your life and do they hold meaning for you? If so, in what ways?
- The water hyacinth brought during British colonial rule transformed the local ecosystem. How does Mirchandani's work help rethink the ways we think about ecological impact? Who benefits from this movement of plants and who endures the ecological consequences?
- The title of the work, *The First Water is the Body*, originates from Natalie Diaz's poem, from *Postcolonial Love Poem* (2020). What do you think the title means? How does it relate to Mirchandani's work?

Ways of Experiencing

- Read *The First Water is the Body*, from *Postcolonial Love Poem* (2020) by Natalie Diaz and reflect on Mirchandani's work. How does it relate and resonate to Diaz's writing?
- Thinking about biodiversity discussed in Mirchandani's work, what is the biodiversity in where you live? What is needed to have a thriving biodiverse space?
- **Making:** Make a hand-made coil vessel. Materials: air dried clay, water, sharp tool, clean flat table surface

  a. Create a circular base for your vessel by flattening the clay and cutting out a circle for the base. A cup can be an easy reference to trace for a cut-out.

  b. Roll out sections of the clay on the table to create a long horizontal piece that will be used as a coil to layer from the base.

  c. Using the sharp tool, create hatch-marks on the top of the base and the bottom of the coil piece.

  d. Put water and lay the long coil piece down on the base. Smooth out the piece to blend the coil into the base.

  e. Create another long horizontal piece for the next layer of the coil pot.

  f. Repeat steps B-E until you get to the middle where the size of the pot may begin to vary. Make coils longer, wider, and shorter for varying shapes.

  g. When you reach the top, decide the size of the opening by varying the length of the coil shape.

  h. Smooth or create texture as desired on the vessel and let it air dry.

  i. Paint if you would like to change the color and add other textures and patterns.

  j. Share your work with friends and loved ones.



KV Duong
(b. 1980, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, lives and works in London, United Kingdom)

Family Portrait, 2026
Ink and acrylic on latex, resin-fiberglass backing, painted wooden stretcher
78 × 212 7/8 inches

Courtesy of the Artist and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London
Photo KV Duong

Family Portrait considers Asian representation within Western culture. Its source image is a photograph of KV Duong's family taken in Ho Chi Minh City in 1986, one year before their immigration to Canada. Through mirroring, replication, and filtering across time and history, the image shifts away from a specific family portrait towards a broader representation of Asian bodies and identities. Situated within a Western art institution, the five-panel work stages a communal gathering of the diaspora, creating space for people to exist, to be visible, and to be seen on their own terms. Duong works in his signature medium of latex, which is poured as a liquid, then dried, painted, stretched, and reinforced with a resin-fiberglass composite, a reference to his background in structural engineering. The material carries sensual associations tied to queer identity while also recalling the exploitative rubber plantations of French colonial rule in Vietnam from 1887 to 1954.

Questions

- Describe what you notice about the figures. What do you notice about their expression?
- What is the significance of communal gatherings to you? What does it feel like, who is participating, and what kind of activities are usually involved?
- Contemplate on moving to another country and the discussions that are made in preparation for arrangements and integration to a new place. What do you imagine is being considered when making a decision to move and why? How might this conversation connect to migration and movement that is occurring in the current global environment?
- Duong's work encourages us to contemplate further on mirroring, replication, and filtering. Where do you notice these patterns occurring throughout the work? How is it represented and why do you think the artist decided to use these methods?
- How do the materials used in Duong's work make us think further on the social and political impact of materiality?

Ways of Experiencing

- Have you or your family ever moved to another location? Reflect on this experience. What was the reason for the move? How did it impact you or your family at the time? And now?
- **Making**: Family structures are unique, different, and can be chosen. Draw a family portrait. Who is in the portrait? What is the setting? What are the poses and expressions of the people in the portrait? What are they wearing?

Key Words

Communal gatherings

Events where people come together.

Resin-fiberglass

A material made by combining a plastic polymer resin with fine glass fiber.



Edison Peñafiel
(b. 1985, Guayaquil, Ecuador, lives and works in Miami, FL)

MARE MAGNVM: Passage,
2021/2026
Single-channel video adapted from the twelve-channel installation
MARE MAGNVM
35:00, looped

Courtesy of the Artist

MARE MAGNVM: Passage is a single-channel iteration of Edison Peñafiel's 12-channel video installation *MARE MAGNVM* (2021), adapted for LED wall presentation. The work depicts a stylized, monochromatic sea populated by 14 boats each ferrying its own collection of figures caught in a perpetual loop. Every 35 minutes, the characters arrive back where they began. Like Sisyphus, condemned to roll his boulder up a hill only to watch it fall, Peñafiel's anonymous figures appear trapped in cycles of struggle, near success, and failure. Though presented larger-than-life, their boats are built from found objects, including wood, oil drums, and tires, evoking scenes of human migration both contemporary and historical. The title *MARE MAGNVM*, Latin for "Great Sea," was used by the Romans to describe the Mediterranean, waters that today reflect an ongoing crisis as millions flee war, instability, and climate change. The figures' faces are hidden behind papier-mâché masks typical of Peñafiel's native Ecuador. Belonging to no single religion, ethnicity, or nationality, they become everywoman and everyman, representatives of diasporic populations through-out history.

Musical deconstruction of the traditional Latin American children's song "La Mar Estaba Serena" by Edison Peñafiel, interpreted by Jonathan Gerstner (cello). *MARE MAGNVM* was produced with the technical support of MAD Arts and Immersiva.

Questions

- Peñafiel's work helps us rethink the idea of a journey on a loop. What do you think is the significance of this movement and repetition?
- When you think of the word passage what comes to mind? Why? How does this relate to your experiences?
- Describe what you notice about the figure and facial demeanor? What expression is being portrayed?
- How does the monochrome hue affect the meaning of the piece? What if it was in color?
- Why do you imagine the artist used a lullaby as part of the artwork? What significance does this choice of song have and how does it impact the overall mood of the work?

Key Words

Monochromatic

Use of only one single base color or hue, with variations of lightness and darkness.

Passage

Part of a route or journey.

Sisyphus

In Greek mythology was a king and founder of the city of Ephyra. He angered the gods with his trickery. As punishment, the gods have forced him to push a rock up a hill and as soon as he reaches the top, the rock falls down, having to repeat on loop for eternity.[10]

Ways of Experiencing

- **Making:** Draw a monochromatic journey. What color would you choose and why? Where are you going and why? What method would you use for travel (such as boat, train, bike, etc.)?
- Peñafiel uses a deconstruction of a Latin American children's song "La Mar Estaba Serena." Think about a song from your childhood. Revisit the song, think about the lyrics. When revisiting the song how does it make you feel? Why was this song significant to you?







Brendan Fernandes
(b. 1979, Nairobi, Kenya,
lives and works in Chicago, IL)

Move in Place V, I, VII, 2015
Archival inkjet prints
30 3/8 × 30 3/8 inches each

Courtesy of the Artist and
Monique Meloche Gallery,
Chicago

Much of Brendan Fernandes' work engages African objects removed from their places of origin during colonial expansion and now held in Western museum collections. Once activated through dance, ritual, and performance, these objects are frequently displayed as static artifacts, severed from their cultural contexts and forms of embodied knowledge. Fernandes juxtaposes them with ballet, a dance form that emerged alongside European imperial power, using the body to restore movement, agency, and life. These hybrid figures embody the exhibition's central concerns: bodies displaced across borders, identities that refuse fixity, and the possibility of reclaiming what has been taken. *Move in Place* questions how African art is collected and understood in the West while imagining new possibilities for movement, connection, and cultural memory.

Questions

- Why do you think Fernandes decided to title the pieces "*Move in Place*"?
- What are the objects that you notice in Fernandes' work? What kind of emotion is being conveyed? What do you imagine might have been the purpose of those objects?
- When viewing the work, what kind of gestures do you notice? What do you suppose these gestures suggest?
- Fernandes' work invites us to think further on collections and how art is collected. What was the last art collection that you encountered? Contemplate on the possible paths on how the work was placed in the collection. Why is this important to consider?

Ways of Experiencing

- Fernandes' work pairs movement to static artifacts. Find an object that you are drawn to and think of a couple of movements associated with the object. What shape does it take and why? How does your body feel when creating the form?
- Imagine building your own collection, what would you put together or curate and why?

Key Words

Static
Staying in one place;
no movement.

Artifacts
Objects made, used,
or modified by humans.

Collections
Curated group of work assembled
by an individual, institution,
or company.





Brendan Fernandes
(b. 1979, Nairobi, Kenya,
lives and works in Chicago, IL)

Still Release II, 2019
Walnut
36 ½ × 20 ¼ × 31 ½ inches

Still Release III, 2019
Walnut
36 ½ × 16 × 33 ¼ inches

Courtesy of the Artist
and Monique Meloche
Gallery, Chicago
Photos Sebastian Bach

Still Release is a series of sculptural rocking chairs that Brendan Fernandes describes as training devices, objects that simultaneously support, challenge, and choreograph the body. The works draw inspiration from objects in Isamu Noguchi's personal collection and from the blade-like chair Noguchi designed for Martha Graham's ballet *Appalachian Spring* (1944), reflecting influences from Japan, Burkina Faso, and Indonesia. Activated through performance, the chairs become instruments of endurance. Dancers are tasked with remaining perfectly still atop the rocking forms, contracting their core muscles to prevent movement. As fatigue inevitably sets in, the body must surrender and release, allowing motion to emerge. Stillness gives way to movement, and resistance becomes transformation. *Still Release* proposes an understanding of bodily autonomy central to this exhibition: movement not as mastery, but as an act of surrender, resilience, and continual becoming.

Questions

- Observe the rocking chair and its shape. Why do you imagine the artist decided to create this shape? What does the form of the chair remind you of?
- Fernandes describes the work as a training device—what do you think the chairs are training the body to do? Why?

Ways of Experiencing

- Fernandes' work encourages us to think about stillness and movement and how they relate to one another. Write about how you feel when you are still and when you are in motion. What are the similarities and differences?
- Create a gesture of rocking with your body—it can be full bodied, or made with small movements. What did you observe?

Key Words

Training devices

Tools or machines to teach skills, practice or create real-world conditions for simulation.

Autonomy

The state of being independent or self governance.



Adama Delphine Fawundu
(b. 1971, Brooklyn, NY)

Praise House series, 1998–2025
Archival inkjet prints,
custom wallpaper
19 ½ × 54 ⅜ inches each frame

Vibrations from the Deep, 2025
Two-channel HD video
7:56

Courtesy of the Artist
Installation photo Sebastian Bach

Adama Delphine Fawundu weaves connections between herself and her global kin, mapping both physical and metaphysical movements across Africa and its Diaspora. A daughter of the Mende, Bubi, Krim, Yoruba, and Bamileke peoples, Fawundu has explored these intersections since launching her photographic archive of hip-hop culture over 25 years ago. Her practice continues to center memory, conjuring, and the radical imaginary, challenging the boundaries of the photographic medium. Constructed through performance and self-representation in communion with the natural world, *Praise House* is a cosmological gesture. It envisions the migrations and transformations of African Indigenous worldviews as they echo through the Caribbean, the Americas, and Europe. Rooted in the textile traditions of her grandmother Adama in Sierra Leone, this project interlaces energies across geographies and generations.

Fawundu's video, *Vibrations from the Deep*, is a trans-geographic meditation created in reverence for the vitality of the cosmos, the earth, and humanity, honoring bodies of water that hold powerful stories of ancestral intelligence, resistance, and joy. Filmed in Nigeria, Congo, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Malta, Cuba, Brazil, and the United States (South Carolina, Utah, Georgia, and Maine), the video was constructed using *Kpoto Patchwok*, Fawundu's process of sampling and piecing together many parts to form a new perspective. The work opens with a meditation before the Great Salt Lake, performed in collaboration with the brine flies that maintain the lake's foundational ecosystem, one essential to the well-being of the surrounding region. A second meditation unfolds before the Congo River, where Fawundu contemplates the mass deaths caused by extreme mining in Goma and North Kivu, as well as the enduring influence of Kongo ancestral intelligence, and the landmass we call Congo, on the world. Like the river of the exhibition's title, these waters carry histories of displacement and endurance.

Questions

- What do you notice about the patterns, shapes, and color in this work? What do you think they represent?
- Describe the figure and the actions and movements that are performed. Why do you think the artist created this performance?
- What do you notice about what the figure is doing to their face? How do you interpret what is happening here?
- What is your relationship to water or bodies of water? What kind of feelings does it create for you?

Ways of Experiencing

- What are some important memories of your interaction with water in an environment? Can you describe in detail, what was the surrounding? What were the sensorial elements and textures you felt? How does it feel to revisit this memory?
- Fawundu's work invites us to consider the ways intersections are part of a larger ecosystem. Think about your current ecosystem. Draw the various parts of the ecosystem in your life to a larger whole. Where is it, who's in it, how does it function? How do they relate to one another?

Key Words

Cosmological
Philosophical and scientific study of the universe.

Sampling
Process of choosing a smaller part or group to focus from a larger group.

Ecosystem
Community of living things interacting with non living things.

Notes

End Notes

1. Daniel W. Graham, "Heraclitus," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, first published February 9, 2007, accessed August 17, 2026: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heraclitus/

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4. Lafalaise Dion, interview by *Something Curated*, "Interview: Discover the Power of Cowries with Lafalaise Dion, *Something Curated*, February 3, 2021, accessed August 17, 2026 https://somethingcurated.com/2021/02/03/interview-discover-the-power-of-cowries-with-lafalaise-dion/

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6. Sandra T. Barnes, *Africa's Ogun: Old World and New* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

7. H. Byron Earhart, *Religious Traditions of the World: a Journey through Africa, Mesoamerica, North America, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, China, and Japan* (San Francisco, California, 1993).

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9. *Population Redistribution and Development in South Asia*. (Cham: Springer Science & Business Media, 2012), 6.

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Activity: Throughout the exhibition, ideas of masks are introduced in the work. Masks can hold many different meanings whether it is expressive, cultural, spiritual, or for protection. This activity invites you to think about masks, its meaning while creating a mask.

Instructions

1. Using the mask template, cut out the shape of the mask. You may design a different outline of the mask. If you want to change the shape, use your pencil to draw it out and then cut with scissors.

2. Follow the dotted lines, to cut the eyes, nose, and mouth of the mask. For the eyes and nose, it may help to fold the paper in half to make the first cut or try using the hold puncher to make the initial hole to cut out from. Each face is a different shape. Hold the paper to your face to check and make adjustments accordingly. Making it larger or smaller to fit the size you need.

3. Decorate the masks using materials you have: paper, pencils, markers, etc.

4. Punch the hole on the left and right side of the mask and attach the string in the holes to fit around the head.

5. Reflect on what you made:

    a. What do you think about the design?

    b. What surprised you in the making process?

    c. How does it feel to wear the mask?

    d. If you made another one, what would you make and why?

Key Words

Mask

A cover for all or part of the face, can be used as a disguise, safety, spiritual or cultural significance, or for fun.

Materials

- Glue, tape or gluestick
- Pencils, Markers
- Scissors
- Hole puncher
- Yarn, string, and/or elastic band

Questions

- Think of a mask you want to make. What is it for? Who will wear it? What mood should it evoke? What shapes and colors would you like to use?
- What are the different ways that you interpret the word “mask”? How do masks appear in your life or in your surroundings?

Create a Mask



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