

The Print Club of New York^{Inc}

Spring 1997

President's Greeting

Julian Hyman

The Print Club of New York is completing its sixth year of operation and once again it has been an exciting and fulfilling year which featured a series of interesting membership events. These covered a wide range of topics including the work of Currier and Ives, contemporary Japanese printmakers, an introduction to poster art and a talk by Hananiah Harari on his career as an artist which has spanned six decades.

We wish to thank all of the members who replied to the excellent questionnaire developed by Glen Nelson our Membership Committee Chairman. The results of the survey appear in this edition of the Newsletter. We have already incorporated some of your suggestions. In response to a desire expressed for summer events, the Events Committee under Dr. Muriel Moss has scheduled a symposium on June 3 on the subject "What is a Print," and a reception and viewing of "Shall We Dance," an exhibition of prints, at the Susan Teller Gallery on July 10. We value your continued support of our activities and any suggestions you wish to make. We also hope that many of our members take the opportunity to join one of our committees.

We want to welcome Dr. Leonard Moss and Clifford Feder as new members of the Board of Trustees. Both have shown much interest in our Club and have attended many of our events. We look forward to adding their expertise to the Board.

I want to wish all of our members a safe and enjoyable summer. Our Fall season will begin with an opportunity to meet the artist and hear a discussion of our 1997-98 Presentation Print. I am looking forward to meeting many of you at this important event.

The Print Club of New York, Inc.

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Membership Survey Results

Glen Nelson

The Membership Committee recently compiled the results of the Print Club Questionnaire. We want to thank all of you who responded so quickly and with such excitement about your passion for prints. Nearly half of all of our members answered. 60% of the respondents indicated that they had been members since the Club's inception, and an additional 23% have been members for at least four years. Below are some of the findings.

Of the many benefits of being a Club member, respondents ranked the annual Presentation Print first with events a close second. Although it should be noted that a large number (23%) of respondents attended no events this past year, 40% replied that they had attended at least three Club events annually. Of that number, 19% said they attended 5 or more events. Even the members who reside outside the New York area voiced their support of the Club events and regularly schedule trips to New York to coincide with them.

Respondents favorite type of event is one featuring a discussion of an artist with the artist present. That preference is corroborated by the members' favorite events from the past; almost all included an artist as the featured speaker.

We were curious to discover what types of prints our members are collecting. Nearly all respondents collect Contemporary art, and the majority also collect Modern and Pre-World War II art. A varied range of other interests include Japanese prints, illustrated books, photography, Eastern European and Latin American art.

We asked for a list of favorite artists who are ranked below by number of votes:

1. Helen Frankenthaler
2. Jim Dine and Carol Wax
3. David Hockney and Jasper Johns
4. Will Barnet, Red Grooms, Frederick Merz, Kiki Smith
5. Martin Levine, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg
6. Robert Kipniss, Craig McPherson, James Rosenquist, Richard Serra, Wayne Thiebaud

Several of these artists are on the Print Selection Committee's list to approach for possible future prints. Presentation prints from the first five years of the Print Club's operation were also ranked by the respondents. All of the prints fared very well. In fact, each of the prints had a strong group of people who said it was their favorite.

The Club's Newsletter received high marks for its articles about artists and its listing of upcoming events. Respondents listed their favorite issues and recommended many improvements.

One of the key reasons for the Questionnaire was to receive criticisms and suggestions on making the Club more responsive to the membership. As we compiled the

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statistics and listed the suggestions, we were pleased with the many ideas that you expressed to make the Club better. These were discussed with the Board of Trustees and assignments were made to implement or investigate every criticism and suggestion. Also gratifying were the many Questionnaires filled with personal comments, and several included touching testimonials as to the value of Club membership.

Finally, the Questionnaire asked if members wanted to

volunteer for Club committees. Again, we were overwhelmed by your response. Nearly half of the respondents volunteered immediately or planned to volunteer in the near future. We welcome your help. If any more members would like to volunteer for a committee (Events, Membership, Print Selection, and Newsletter), drop a card to the appropriate committee, care of the Club, P.O. Box 4477, Grand Central Station, New York, NY, 10163, or call 212-479-7915.

Mark Tobey

Matthew J. Collins

Critics are happy to place the artist Mark Tobey into a single school within the classification of "Abstract Art." Tobey, however, refused to identify himself with any particular critical theory or group, once saying "I take no fixed position...Since I have no determined ideas, that is no philosophical relationship to pre-conceived methods, my work obviously changes, or at least it appears to." Tobey's integration of varied styles and influences into his work, along with his world travels and philosophical views describe an artist who defies simple categorization.

Abstraction, a break from the traditions of realistic and figurative representation, can be divided into two schools. The first, relying on formal geometrical constructions, was initiated by the Dutch DeStijl group under Piet Mondrian. This group included Kasimir Malevich, Jean Arp, Alexander Calder, and Josef Albers. The second

group, centered on the use of color and matter for expression, can be seen to originate in the works of Kandinsky, and was extended, with many modifications, by de Staël, and Jackson Pollock. These artists mark the beginnings of the evolution of painterly abstraction into Spatialism, Action Painting, and Op Art. It is in this second group that Tobey is frequently classified.

Known primarily for his "white writing" paintings, Tobey also produced over 60 prints, using a variety of graphic techniques including aquatint, drypoint, and serigraph. These works cover a variety of styles and subject matter, from pure abstraction to delicate figure studies.

Tobey was born on December 11, 1890, in Centerville, Wisconsin. His family moved several times over the next 16 years between Tennessee, Wisconsin, and Indiana before settling in Chicago. While there, Tobey took a variety of part-time jobs in order to help support his family while he attended high school. On Saturdays, he was sent by his parents to the Art Institute where he took watercolor and oil painting classes, but he was forced to leave after two years, due to his father's illness. Uninterested in his father's business (carpenter, housebuilder, and farmer), he was hired in 1909 as an errand boy in a fashion studio. In 1911, Tobey moved to New York, desiring to become a fashion artist. He traveled between Chicago and New York until 1917 when he settled in New York. During this time he began making charcoal portraits and concentrated on interior decoration, painting lamps, screens, and "imitation tapestries." Meanwhile, his caricatures of theatrical personalities were published in the *New York Times*. In 1917 he was given his first one-man exhibition at M. Knoedler & Co. which featured his portraits and other works.

In 1918 Tobey was introduced to the Bahá'í World Religion by Juliet Thompson. After spending time at their summer school in Boar's Head, Maine, he returned to New York, an active adherent. He moved to Seattle, Washington, in 1922 and began teaching art at the Cornish School of Allied Arts. At Cornish he was first introduced to Chinese brushwork styles and techniques by Teng Kuei, a Chinese student at the University of Washington.

He traveled extensively over the next years, moving to Paris in 1925. During this time he also stayed with American friends at their house near Châteaudun and went with them for a Mediterranean cruise with stops in Barcelona, Greece, Constantinople, and Beirut. He also made a pilgrimage to Haifa, the International Bahá'í World Center, returning to Paris in February 1926, after a

Upcoming Print Club Events

Tuesday, June 3, 6:00 p.m.

"What is a Print?", a symposium on the current complexities of this field. Panelists include moderator, Lynn Allen, printmaker and Professor of Art, Rutgers University; David Kiehl, Curator of Prints, The Whitney Museum of American Art; Joseph Goddhu, Director, Dept. of American Prints, Hirschl & Adler Galleries, Inc. and Alan Stone, Alan Stone Gallery. The symposium will be held at the Liederkrantz Club, 6 East 87th St.

Thursday, July 10, 6:00 p.m.

Members reception and viewing of "Shall We Dance," an exhibition of prints and drawings on the topic of dance at the Susan Teller Gallery, 568 Broadway, Room 103A.

Tuesday, September 16, 7:30 p.m.

Artist's talk and viewing of 1997 - 1998 Presentation Print at the Liederkrantz Club, 6 East 87th St.

stop in Cairo. He returned to Seattle in 1927, dividing his time between Seattle, Chicago, and New York.

In 1931 he moved to Devonshire, England, to teach at Dartington Hall, a progressive school founded and run by Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst. Although he taught at the school until 1937, he continued to travel, taking a summer trip to Mexico in 1932 and a trip to Rome, Naples, Hong Kong and Shanghai in the late spring of 1934. As part of that trip, Tobey spent a month in a Zen monastery outside of Kyoto, Japan, where he studied calligraphy, painted, mediated and wrote poetry. In addition to his travels during this period, he also taught summer art classes in New York in 1936 and 1937.

By late 1938, Tobey was back in Seattle, working on the WPA project under the direction of Robert Bruce Inverarity, state director of the Federal Art Project Administration, whom he had first met in 1927 when they had studied and shared a studio together. By mid-1939, however, Tobey's continued travels had taken him away for so much time that Inverarity dropped him from the project. Tobey would continue to travel extensively, but he made Seattle his primary home until 1960.

Speaking of his work in relation to this Seattle location, however, he claimed, "I am no more a Northwest painter than a cat." In 1960, the year in which he turned down his election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he moved to Basel, Switzerland, where he was based until his death.

"The oneness of mankind" is a prime tenet of the Bahá'í World faith, and he has expressed and stressed this idea of unity, not only in art, but in every phase of life. The basis for his work, much like the brush and ink work of Chinese artists, is the structural brush stroke. Unlike calligraphy, Tobey avoids pure black and white in his work, providing dynamic contrast by utilizing subtle tonal differences. Tobey was the first American painter to call attention to the affinity between modern Western content and Oriental form. His Abstract Expressionism, combining Eastern and Western ideas, began in 1935 with the execution of *Broadway Norm*, *Broadway*, and *Welcome Hero*, all done while at Dartington Hall. These three works synthesized his discoveries and previous experiments, initiating his signature "white writing" style, although the term itself was not used until a 1944 review of his one-man show at New York's Willard Gallery.

Tobey's acquaintance with the modernist styles of Europe, as well as the ancient arts of China and Japan, together with the philosophic and esthetic ideas that sustained them, played a significant role in the development of his art. In the "white writing" style, the figurative references in his painting were caught up and dissolved into skeins of delicate white tracery, calligraphic webs that constituted in their more advanced phases a kind of "all-over" painting similar to that developed by Jackson Pollock and the Abstract Expressionists. (Tobey did not, however, particularly like Pollock's work, once responding to a show he had seen by stating, "it was awful as far as I am concerned...I have my own dreams.")

This multiplicity of seemingly random and wandering lines demands microscopic study. As one gazes deeper into the forward surface of the work, the initial rigid surface opens, providing a vista to a new world, a new layer

of shapes and lines. The identity of individual shapes, clearly defined in their own right, eventually is subsumed into an infinitely detailed, movement-filled volume of color, hue, and line. In 1973, describing his works, he said that they "belong to the type that do not allow the viewer to rest on anything. He is bounced off or he has to keep moving with it."

Images exist on a human scale in Tobey's work, but with a focus that is shifted away from a traditional center. In the context of this lack of center, the images recede, become unimportant as specific elements, and are transformed into a dynamic surface where distance is neither close nor far, but simply present. The overall works also exist on a human scale; they are not large, as is so typical of the Abstract Expressionists. Compare these ideas of scale, for instance, with Franz Kline's black and white paintings, which, with their enormous black strokes and white areas, completely fill the canvas, giving the impression that the viewer is looking at a detail of a vast arrangement of powerful, opposing forces.

Particularly in Tobey's prints, relationships are also determined by differences in hue, with areas at first appearing solid, and closer inspection revealing shifting fragments that take their positions through relative size, clarity, coolness or warmth. As art critic and historian Paul Cummings has said, "The drama is in the regressive visual dynamics and not in the subject matter."

In 1965, Tobey produced a series of monotypes, shown at Galerie Jeanne Bucher in Paris. The monotypes were created with tempera applied to slabs of plastic rather than the copper, glass, or marble traditionally used. Lightweight, somewhat porous, and heavily textured, the rough surfaces caught, directed, and controlled the paint's application in a way that the slick surface of glass or copper could not. As recounted in the exhibition catalog, Tobey's methods were often unorthodox. He applied paint with a brush, his fingers, or even cut vegetables, such as a cabbage head, yielding interesting patterns and textures. He often drew with wax, which resisted the pigment he would later apply, and provided "a special kind of linear rhythm, a texture and a luminosity of a different sort, and above all, an element of the uncertain." In a November 1986 exhibition at Associated American Artists one of the monotypes was offered for \$2,000.

Tobey was first encouraged to try lithography in 1961 by Ernst Beyeler, and in 1968 he began to work with Gotthard de Beauclair who would publish most of his work. His first use of aquatint was the *Transitions* series, a portfolio of seven images, each approximately 13 1/2" x 9 1/2", published in 1970 by Edition de Beauclair (Frankfurt am Main, Germany) in an edition of 75 copies in a linen cover, accompanied by an artist's statement. In New York, the portfolio was available from the Martha Jackson Gallery for \$2,000, with some of the individual images available for \$350. This was quickly followed by *Six Impromptus on Omar Khayyam*, a series of 6 aquatints with six poems translated into English by Edward Fitzgerald. Each work was mounted on a handmade mat, with the set enclosed in a linen-covered case. The publication price was \$1,150 and was distributed in the U.S. by Peter Field Graphic Arts.

In 1972, Edition de Beauclair published 9 individual

works, 7 in an edition of 96, 2 in an edition of 60, ranging in price from \$270 (*Thanksgiving Leaf* and *Apparuit*) to \$900 for *Message from a Desert Star*, an uncharacteristically large work at 21" x 30". By March 1980, *Thanksgiving Leaf* was selling for \$800, *Apparuit* for \$600, and *Message...* was fetching \$2,750, all available from Peter Field.

The Cleveland Print Club commissioned Tobey to produce a print for its membership in 1972-73. The result was a drypoint, *Pensées Germinales*, published by Willie Steinert of Karlsruhe, Germany. This exceptionally attractive abstract image, approximately 9-1/4" high by 5-3/4" wide, was described by Merrill Rueppel of the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts as "concentrated in focus, intricate in construction, and profound in intent. It is an intimate art, quiet, balanced, and precise. It is also immensely vital and is charged with a dynamic power that often seems to burst forth from a relatively small format."

Other print works include a portfolio of 3 color etchings and 3 color lithographs published by Transworld Art in 1974 to coincide with the exhibition "Tribute to Mark Tobey" at the National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington, D.C.

His last two prints works were multicolor serigraphs: *Glowing Fall*, 18-3/4" x 13-1/4", in an edition of 100, and *Sonata*, 15-3/4 x 19-1/2", also in an edition of 100. Their initial price was \$650.

Many of Tobey's prints of the late '60s and early '70s represent the most refined form of his unique abstract esthetic, gracefully combining his interests in Eastern calligraphic and painting styles, natural and architectural references, and personal philosophy into mystically illuminated works of focus and clarity. They remain free of commercialism, mediating and binding the material to the spiritual, remaining independent of a specific outside world, yet maintaining a world view that deeply reflects his American experience:

Our ground today is not so much the national or regional ground as it is the understanding of this single earth. The earth has been round for some time now, but not in man's relations to man nor in the understanding of the arts of each as part of that roundness. As usual we have occupied ourselves too much with the outer, the objective, at the expense of the inner world wherein the true roundness lies.

Ours is a universal time and the significances of such a time all point to the need for the universalizing of the consciousness and the conscience of man. It is in the awareness of this that our future depends unless we are to sink into a universal dark age.

America more than any other country is placed geographically to lead in this understanding, and if from past methods of behavior she has constantly looked toward Europe, today she must assume her position,

Janus-faced, toward Asia, for in not too long a time the waves of the Orient shall wash heavily upon her shores.

All of this is deeply related with her growth in the arts. Naturally my work will reflect such a condition and so it is not surprising to me when an Oriental responds to a painting of mine as well as an American or European.

Tobey's works fulfill the early gestures of artists toward Orientalism in Western painting and provide a reconciliation between organicism and the precision of purist structure through a formal and structured abstraction. Simultaneously, his art maintains a spiritual commitment to human and naturalistic goals.

Mark Tobey died in Basel, at the age of 85, on April 24, 1976, just two weeks after a major retrospective of his works had opened at M. Knoedler & Co.

Currently, in New York, his prints are available through a number of dealers, including Long Fine Art, Achim Moeller Fine Art, TwoSixtyOne Arts, and Willard Gallery. His paintings can be seen at Paolo Baldacci Gallery, Marc de Montebello, Solage Landau Fine Art, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, Alexa Stellings, Willard Gallery, and Yoshii Fine Arts. Paintings and drawings by Tobey appear regularly at auction, although the print works are rarely seen in U.S. sales. At the May 7, 1997, Contemporary Art sale at Sotheby's, a 1956 painting, *Orison*, was offered with an estimate of \$12,000 - 15,000.)

While there are a number of individual writings about Tobey, there is not yet a complete *catalogue raisonné* of his painting and prints. Paul Cummings had been working on one up to his untimely death earlier this year. It is hoped that an individual or organization will take up the challenge to complete a catalogue of this master artist.

In his *Dictionary of Abstract Painting*, Michel Seuphor brilliantly sums up Tobey's work: "One may wonder why some works of small format — gouaches, water-colours, drawings — of Klee or Tobey, seem much more convincing to us than the vast compositions of Riopelle, Mathieu, Pollock, or Sam Francis. It must be because inflated language overreaches its goal and lacks zest. The spectacle of animal power, even magnificently endowed physically, always leaves us with a nostalgia for perfume, for inwardness, in spite of the spell of pure size. The restraint of Tobey or Klee touches us more because true eloquence comes from the heart, and the heart is a seed slow to mature.

Matthew Collins is a member of the Club's Board of Trustees. He wishes to thank the Print Room of the New York Public Library, Stephen Long and Bruce Siddons for research and editorial assistance.

Louis Lozowick: An Art Dealer's Memoir

Lillian Kornbluth

"Life in an art gallery is like life on a roller coaster." The day I discovered Louis Lozowick's lithographs was definitely a high on the roller coaster. To protect valuable works of art on paper, the Kornbluth Gallery in Fair Lawn of which I was owner/director had initiated a museum quality framing service. Early in 1972 a print collector with a large number of works by Louis Lozowick brought them in for framing. I saw the lithographs and marveled at the velvety blacks, the precise imagery, and especially, the images of industrial America as seen through the artist's vision. Quickly I arranged an appointment with the Lozowicks at their home in South Orange, New Jersey. Adele Lozowick, Louis' wife, greeted me graciously. Their home was enriched by many books and works of art. Louis was an expert on the Russian Suprematists, and his library was a Mecca for scholars.

Louis soon appeared, and it was obvious that this soft-spoken man was a gentle soul, a scholar who was truly an artists' artist.

It was Adele, in the tradition of many artists' wives, who negotiated with me for my purchases. Their collection was huge, an untapped treasury representing a lifetime of work that had accumulated through the depression years and the WPA period. The editions were small, never more than twenty-five and perhaps even smaller since Louis never kept records and was relying on estimates.

There was no haggling about prices. Although the WPA-era prices (some as low as five dollars) were still

marked on some of the lithographs, we agreed that the figures should be contemporary, and I agreed to whatever price the Lozowicks set. I chose ten wonderful works dating from 1928 to 1931 at a total cost of \$450.

I returned many times after that, each time buying more and more, each time finding higher prices, and each time discovering more and more eager buyers waiting at the Gallery. I particularly remember one client who told me that his wife was furious with him because he was spending grocery money on those "worthless" prints. He was astonished recently to discover what the "grocery money" had bought.

Late in 1972, my husband and I were invited to the opening reception at the Whitney Museum for the Lozowick retrospective exhibition which finally established his place as not only an artists' artist but also as an important figure before the larger art public. Unfortunately, Louis did not live long enough to witness this recognition. He died in September 1973 shortly before the Lozowick reputation soared. Janet Flint of the Smithsonian Institution produced a catalogue raisonné of the prints. Adele Lozowick shepherd-ed his work to ever more prestigious galleries and museum exhibitions. She still guards the Lozowick name with a sense of mission — protective and respectful — and she demands the same from anyone who deals with her.

The "up" day when I met Louis Lozowick has remained for me one of the high points of my gallery experience. This was not just a monetary transaction between artist and dealer. My friendship with Adele Lozowick and with so many others who share my interest in this fine artist was the primary reward.

Spring Membership Events

Members View Motherwell Prints at Stephen Long Gallery

The Stephen Long Gallery hosted a reception and special viewing on January 16 for Print Club members of its exhibit, "Robert Motherwell Prints, A Retrospective Exhibition." The exhibition featured prints by the "unknown Motherwell," i.e. his very last prints, including four posthumous prints, never seen before, in artist approved impressions which were printed by his estate.

Mr. Long, whose Gallery specializes in Motherwell, presented an overview of the artist's career as a print maker, noting that Motherwell was the last of his generation to concentrate on prints. Not only had he immersed himself in European modernism, but he also had been influenced by Stanley Hayter's famous Atelier 17 print studio which impressed him with the spontaneous gesture and automatism, the essence of Motherwell prints and paintings. Motherwell was a prolific printmaker from 1973 on, devoting three days a week to printmaking and employing two master printers. Mr. Long pointed out the variety of techniques used by Motherwell, his interest in calligraphy and the fusion of East and West in his work, and the way in which he etched his plate to get the deep

black color which has become a Motherwell signature.

Our special thanks to Mr. Long for sharing his love of Motherwell prints and for his informative presentation.

Robert Newman Speaks on Currier and Ives at the Old Print Shop

Members who attended the March 20 event at the Old Print Shop, Inc. were rewarded with a marvelous learning experience. Third generation owner, Robert Newman, spoke on the history of Currier and Ives from the formation of their firm in New York City in 1856 to the dissolution of the firm in 1907. Mr. Newman took us through the upstairs gallery where the walls were covered with a collection of Currier and Ives lithographs. A number of prints still possessed the bright colors that were desirable to brighten the poorly-lit homes of the mid-nineteenth century. Religious images were much preferred at the time. Today, New York City scenes, the West and leisure activities are in demand. Small folio prints originally sold for 25 cents and mid to large size prints for \$3.00 to \$5.00. The firm printed as many lithographs as it could sell. Colorists came and went, but many images were created by such fine artists as Fannie

Palmer, George Durrie, A.F. Tait, and Louis Maurer. Currier and Ives became the premier lithographers in the country. When their sons took over the firm in the 1880's, the quality and images deteriorated and lithographic stones were lost or destroyed. Subsequently, the Artistic Picture Publishing Co. reproduced many of the most popular images and the collector must beware of confusing these collotypes with the original lithographs.

Today, large folio prints in good condition can sell for \$30,000 to \$65,000. Small folio prints range from several hundred to several thousand dollars. The Old Print Shop, Inc. has handled Currier and Ives since its earliest days and is always gracious in sharing its expert knowledge about these and other quality American prints. We wish to thank Mr. Newman for his informative and entertaining presentation.

Allison Tolman Speaks on Contemporary Japanese Prints

Members spent an enjoyable evening on April 15 with Allison Tolman who represents the Tolman Collection of Contemporary Japanese prints in New York. Ms. Tolman along with her parents Mary and Norman Tolman are leading authorities on the current state of Japanese printmaking. Using representative prints of the major printmakers working today, she presented an overview of their methods and style.

Members were particularly interested in the work of Clifton Karhu, an American residing in Japan who continues the wood block tradition and is the most commercially successful print maker in Japan; Shinoda Toko, the most prominent woman printmaker in Japan, and the most expensive, whose lithographs in calligraphic style with color added by hand remind Western viewers of the work of Robert Motherwell; Tanaka Ryohei who produces detailed copper etchings of realistic country scenes and Sugiura Kazutoshi who creates brilliantly colored silk screens using the traditional flower motifs of Japanese screens but printed on 18 carat gold leaf backgrounds.

Ms. Tolman pointed out that contemporary Japanese printmakers, unlike their western counterparts or the ukiyo-e artists of the past, are craftsmen as well as artists, printing their own impressions in small editions. Also, unlike many artists in the United States, their work is less text driven, concentrating on the image. Their styles tend to fall into two groups, those following realistic traditions and those who favor abstraction. Woodblock is the favorite medium, followed by lithographs and etchings. Only a few artists work in mezzotint. She also pointed to the way in which artists are combining traditional Japanese motifs with more abstract or "modernist" twists, for example the work of Wako Shuji who combines a gorgeous piece of traditional Japanese fabric with whimsical, abstract, curving lines.

A large turnout of Club members shared Ms. Tolman's enthusiasm and delight in the beautiful impressions she brought for viewing.

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