

Issue 2

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# *Domestically*



# *& Analogue*



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## Contents

Walls and Windows

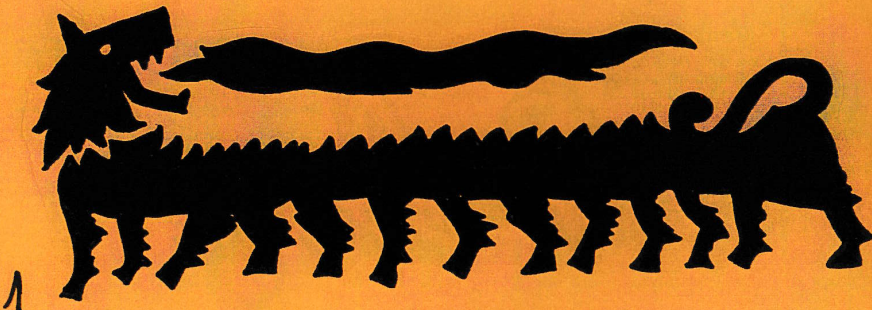
P.2

Sleeping Under The Stars (and Stripes)

P.5

Becky and Kate

P.12



## Walls and Windows

*Treehouse of Horror VII* is the first episode in *The Simpsons* eighth season. Within this programme there are three short chapters: 1) Bart discovers his long-lost twin; 2) Lisa grows a miniature world; 3) Two aliens impersonate Bill Clinton and Bob Dole in order to win the 1996 presidential election.

The second of these, *The Genesis Tub*, is just over four minutes in duration and centres around Bart and Lisa's school science projects. Having already proven the danger of smoking, alcohol and 'Chinese Food', Lisa's aim is to show the negative effect of cola on a human tooth. Meanwhile, Bart's experiment involves rubbing a balloon against himself and creating a contact with Lisa in order to prove that 'nerds conduct electricity'.

In the episode, Lisa places a tooth into a shallow dish and surrounds it with cola before Bart electrocutes her. Charged with static electricity, Lisa accidentally creates an arc between her finger and the tooth. Waking up the next morning, she observes how mould is now filling the dish. Wanting to get a closer look, she then uses a microscope only to find out that the mould was actually atomic-level vegetation and a growing population of tiny stone-age people, some of whom are surrounding the tooth whilst others are warming themselves around microscopic campfires. Looking through the microscope after breakfast, Lisa marvels at the speed which her micro-people are evolving as the tooth has now become a town hall and renaissance-period buildings have been built. Later, during the night, the dish begins to emanate light as the now futuristic scene, complete with electric lighting evolves beyond our current age and into a new one - featuring Elon Musk style vacuum trains and saucers which hover overhead. Eventually, the minute scientists living in her world find a way of shrinking Lisa and they pull her into the dish where they promptly bow down and declare her to be god.

Humankind's fascination with small worlds has been perfectly presented to us in another form – in Tim Dunn's 'Model Villages' – part of the BBC's *Boring Talks* podcast.



In his presentation, Tim describes all the things he likes about model villages along with a raft of information he's collected through his own research. Listeners learn of the fact that model villages owe their history to 16<sup>th</sup> century Japanese bonsai gardens, for example. They discover the fact that big model villages exist, such as *France Miniature* which is so large that the entire place is built in the shape of France. They also hear about the phenomena of model villages within model villages and even model, model villages within model villages – like mathematical fractals or the film *Inception*. Most interestingly however, listeners are presented with a description of *Tucktonia* in Devon, a model village which was built specifically so members of the public could visit a city without having to actually go there.



The sensation of walking around a model village or watching *The Genesis Tub* is a similar to playing certain computer games. In the early 90s, for example, games such as *Theme Hospital*, *Sim City* and *Transport Tycoon* were created. These games all used an isometric grid which gives the player a disconnected, god-like perspective on the world below. The gamer looks down from above and has superhuman power (the ability to both build and destroy without breaking a sweat) all whilst being completely removed from it – like visiting the *Tucktonian* version of London without the stress, expense or danger of being in the *real* London.

*Transport Tycoon Deluxe* – one of these games – launched in 1994, can now be downloaded for free online under its new name 'Open TTD': <https://www.openttd.org>

Interestingly, this particular game still has a massive fan following all over the globe who have, collectively and lovingly, reverse-engineered the entire game – meaning that it is now able to run on modern computers. What's more, these transport-obsessed gamers have spent countless hours updating the game so that players can freely download modern trains, buses and lorries – all incorporating the latest company colour schemes from around the world. Even better, they have updated the choice of track. Originally, gamers only had one choice of track, which meant that only steam and diesel trains could be operated. However, modern players can now choose to have track with a third rail or overhead catenary, meaning that electric trains and trams can be operated.

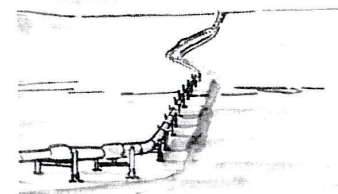
Like the army of volunteers who loyally keep the few remaining model villages in the UK going, this diverse group of fans is affectionately fighting to keep this ageing game alive. Moreover, the near-constant writing of new code is akin to the continuous remodelling of these villages, allowing it to always remain in the present.

Like *France Miniature*, I recently downloaded a new file for *Transport Tycoon* called 'Iceland Mega Rail'. This massive file must've taken months to create as it is a scale model of the entire country of Iceland. In my tyrannical state and using the cheat code for an unlimited supply of money, I flattened huge swathes of the country in order to build a high-speed rail link between the cities of Reykjavik and Akureyri (HS2?) So vast is the map that it took a train (travelling over 100mph) over a week to make the journey!

Similarly, painting can be talked about in terms of a removal of oneself from the world and as an alternate reality. Described as a paradox, painting can be thought about as both a window and a wall. One is presented with a space that it is both a flat façade but somewhere one's mind can freely inhabit. You can explore a model village but you are made aware of the fact you are an observer and not a participant. You cannot, for example, enter into the tiny houses, ride on the trains or swim down the rivers. Similarly, you can play computer games but you cannot physically enter into the space of the game – the computer screen is a wall. So it is with painting. Your mind can freely inhabit the spaces within a painting but you can only go so far before you realise that fundamentally, you are merely looking at minerals scraped over a sheet of cotton or linen.

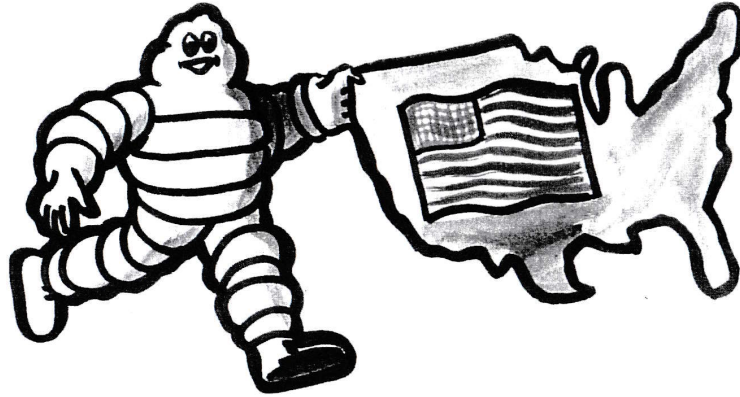
Increasingly, the paintings that I have been making have been seeking to exploit this. Using the isometric structure of 90s games, the work elevates the viewer to the same god-like position mentioned above. Like *Transport Tycoon* with its seemingly infinite expanse of tiles on the isometric grid, my paintings are used as snapshots of somewhere along an infinitesimal plane.

Painting, model villages and 90s computer games may offer us a microcosmic view of the world, they may allow us to mentally escape to another place, but each one is ultimately a façade and, not so much a wall, but more a mirror which we can use to look back at ourselves and indeed our society as a whole.





## Sleeping Under The Stars (and Stripes)



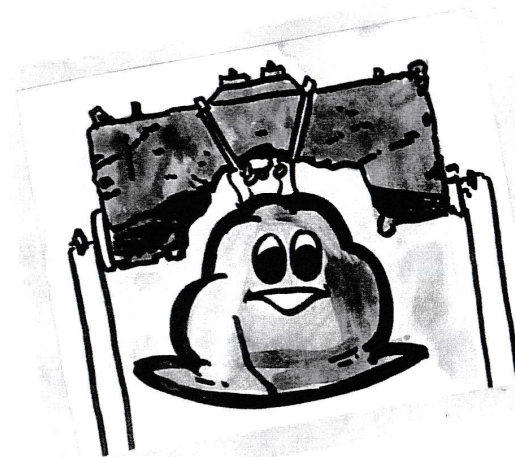
After yet another rainy morning in Walthamstow, dragging myself through the slick wet streets past the kebab shops and ubiquitous chicken joints to the garage, I decided life had to change. Fighting, as usual, for a space to stand in the packed train, I somehow felt more awkward than normal. I hated travelling by Tube – people would always argue or complain, just because of my taller-than-average stature and rolls of white skin. Putting my noise-cancelling headphones on, I began listening to Swedish band *First Aid Kit's* 'Stay Gold' album. Immediately, I knew that the monotony of my London life was about to come to an end when I heard the lyrics to 'Waitress Song':

***I could move to a small town and become a waitress. Say my name was Stacey and I was figuring things out.***

As soon as I arrived at the garage, before I had even begun to roll tyres around the floor, I handed in my notice.

That's how it began. Two weeks later, I was sat, face pressed against the window, en-route to small town America with nothing in my hand except a small collection of *i-spy* books, which I planned on using to keep me entertained.

As a treat to myself and to help me acclimatise, I bought myself tickets to see Miley Cyrus on that very first night. It was such a fantastic concert – she performed loads of songs from her *Bangerz* album and finished, of course, with *Nothing Breaks Like A Heart*. I had arrived!



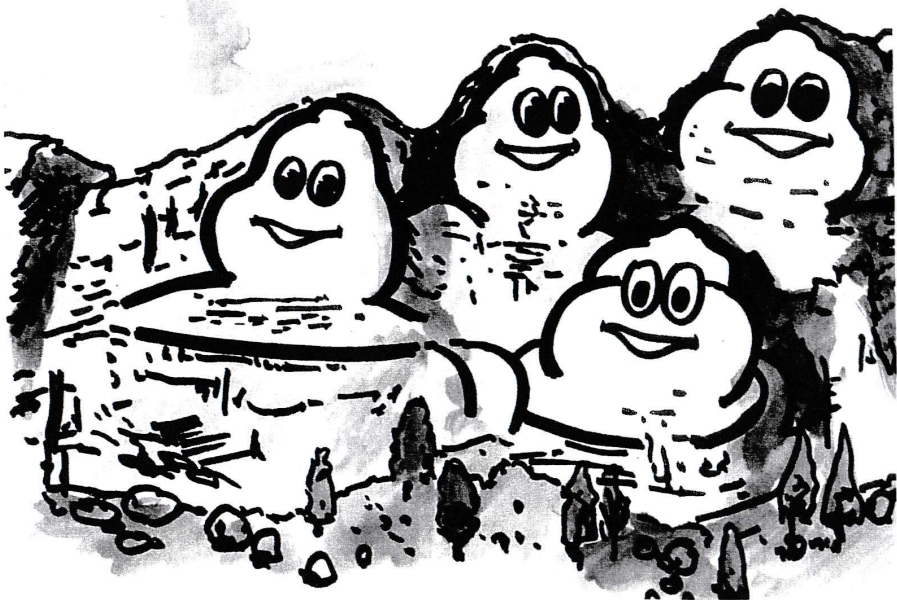
Taking an iconic Greyhound coach for the first time in my life, I felt alive! Rolling through small town America, parallel to the Appalachian Trail, I absorbed all the sights and smells – the roadside diners, the fields of crops, the dense forests and the awful cups of coffee.

Arriving in Philadelphia, two days later I headed straight for that iconic landmark – the Liberty Bell. Having seen it on TV and in photographs it seemed extremely familiar, somehow.



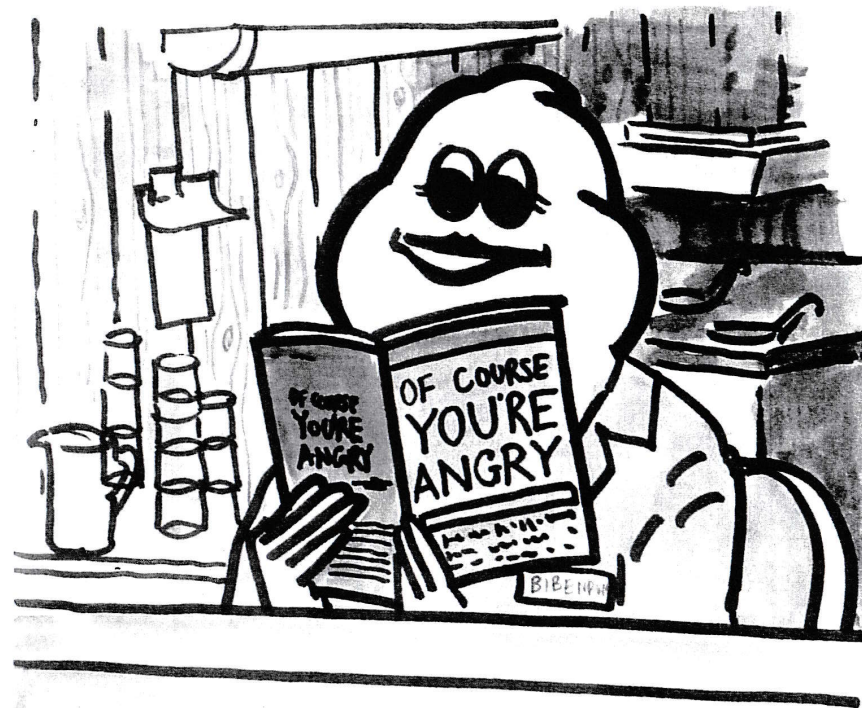
Hours later, it was time to head off again. Having slept in my first motel, I felt ready for the comfort of another long series of coach journeys in order to catch up on more sleep. This time I was heading west. For the next week, various vehicles took me through the states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota and finally to South Dakota. My destination was, of course, the mighty Mount Rushmore. Mainly, the journey was plain sailing apart from a minor setback somewhere in Ohio, when my services were called for.

Around two in the afternoon, there was an almighty bang followed by some sudden jerking movements. At first, I put it down to the copious amount of beef jerky I'd been eating and the large cola I'd been rapidly guzzling, but it soon became clear that the bus had hit a rock and punctured two of its tyres. Luckily, I always carry plenty of spares with me, so we were soon trundling back through the quiet backwaters, heading for the Interstate once more.



Upon arriving at Mount Rushmore I couldn't help but notice how alike all the U.S. Presidents seemed. I mean, sure, they're all white, middle-aged males but they seemed uncannily similar to one another. What's more, I was struck by how handsome they seemed.

After I'd marvelled at the mountain for a considerable time and changed many tyres in the parking lot, I decided it was time to get back on the road. I'd recently listened to the *Stanford's Travel* podcast and heard author Julian Sayerer talk about his book, *Interstate*, in which he describes hitchhiking around The States. Inspired by him, I hitchhiked for the first time in my life, and successfully! Slowly, I rolled through Wyoming and into Colorado, on the backs of scooters, in trucks and, once, in a motorbike sidecar!



Sensing that my funds were rapidly dwindling, despite my best efforts, I decided to get a job. Remarkably, I ended up in the same truck stop that features in the film *Dumb and Dumber* – the one where Harry and Lloyd have their first encounter with Sea Bass and gang.

Working in the truck stop was surprisingly good fun. My days were spent reading, serving bottles of Boilermakers to the truckers and wiping grease from the white net curtains, hanging in each window.

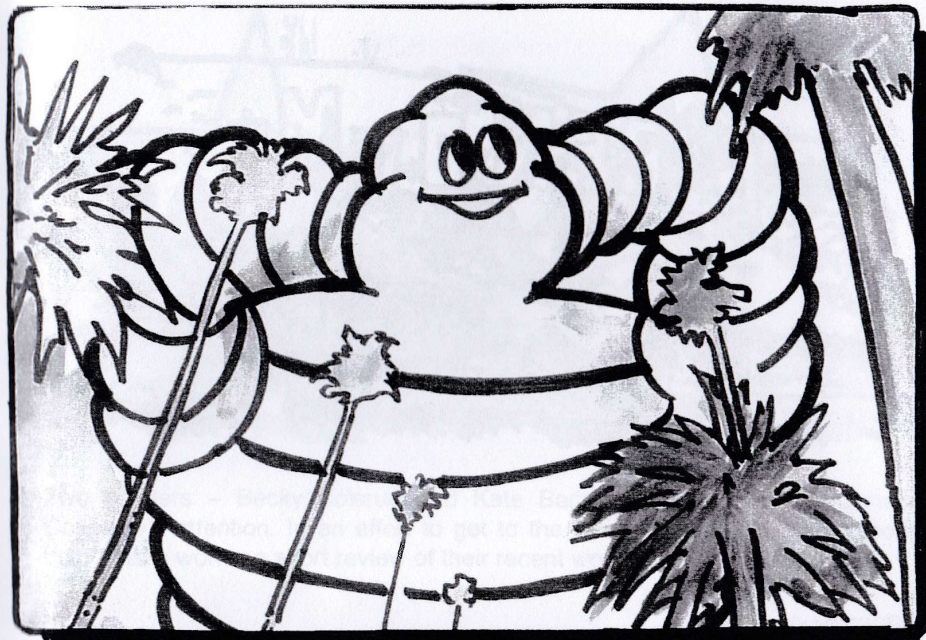


When I'd saved up enough, it was time for me to make my dreams come true and visit California. The further west, it seemed, the bluer the skies became, the sweeter the air and the blacker the coffee. Upon crossing the Rockies and heading downwards towards the Pacific, I saw my first cacti. Expecting them to be pulpy and green, I was somewhat taken aback by their plump, white flesh.



There was so much I wanted to see and do in The Golden State. However, visiting the Winchester Mystery House – that and seeing the Hollywood sign in LA were top of my list. You can understand my shock then when I realised that the iconic sign had been replaced with my name! Was I dreaming?

Later that day, driving in an open-top car in the Hollywood hills, I was stunned to see Lana Del Ray drinking a bulletproof coffee. I decided to write a postcard...



Dearest Bibendumette,  
Having a wonderful  
time here in the States.  
Saw Lana Del Rey  
today and hoping to  
visit the Winchester  
Mystery House tomorrow.  
I'm hoping to catch a  
glimpse of that T.V.  
remote!

Lots of love,  
Bibendum x

Bibendumette,

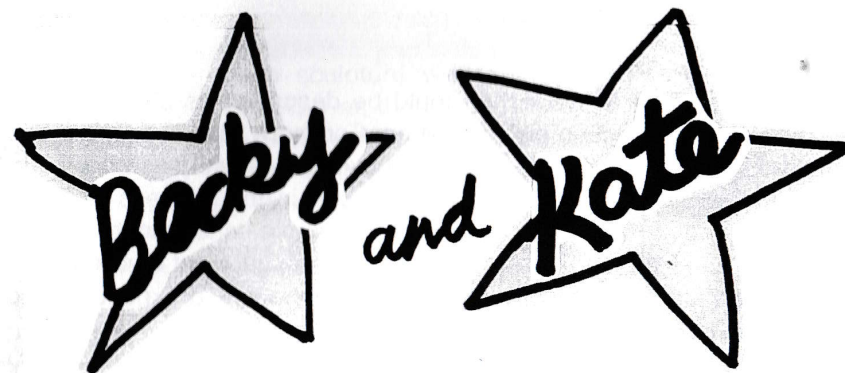
FRANCE.





After writing my postcard home I made for the many film studios in Beverley Hills, where I had a meeting with David Lynch. I had managed to secure an audition and screen test for a possible remake of *Mulholland Drive*.

It was during this time, sat in a sweaty, small studio that I began to feel somewhat homesick. I remembered the dank buses of back home, the ubiquitous chicken joints and the kebab shops. I decided it was time to leave.



Two painters – Becky Kolsrud and Kate Bancroft – have caught Michael Coppelov's attention. In an effort to get to the heart of what's so great about both artist's works, a short review of their recent work has been penned.

Becky Kolsrud's paintings didn't yell at me from across the packed room at the opening to the group show, *Out Of This World*, at Stephen Friedman gallery last month. Instead, they subtly lured me in, where they held me captive for a considerable amount of time.

Her mysterious paintings are a masterclass in simplicity. Painting has often been described as a battleground and many painters all too often make the fatal mistake of overwork- labouring away at small sections and trapping themselves in the process. Not so with Becky Kolsrud. Her work is confident, cool and utterly seductive. Swathes of solid blue fill the canvases from top to toe, punctured only by the head of a women, a rocky outcrop or a river of long brown hair.

Further, her choice of colours seems self-assured. A semi-limited palette, with perhaps no more than two blues, brown, grey-green, a skin-tone and cadmium red brings an important sense of cohesion and further adds to the over-arching confidence in these paintings. Indeed, this bold choice of colour allows the work to seamlessly slide into abstraction.



Many painters produce work that could be described as straddling the fence between abstraction and figuration. For many, this is problematic. Becky Kolsrud's paintings straddle these two camps with ease however. Indeed, the ambiguity, for me, is a key factor in the success of these paintings. Reading the field of blue, for example, one cannot decide whether it should be read figuratively (as a stylish garment or deep lake) or as an area of pure abstraction— in the way one would expect to read an Yves Klein.

However one decides, it is this flitting to and fro that grounds the work in solid art theory, whilst simultaneously (and paradoxically) freeing it from the heavy weight of the history of painting. If you're serious about painting, check out Becky's work.

Having followed her on Instagram for a couple of years, I was understandably thrilled to discover that Kate Bancroft and I have a mutual friend, Robert Rivers. Last summer, I was thrilled to be able to see her work in a group show at The Slade and it did not disappoint – in fact, it knocked the rest of the work on show out the park.

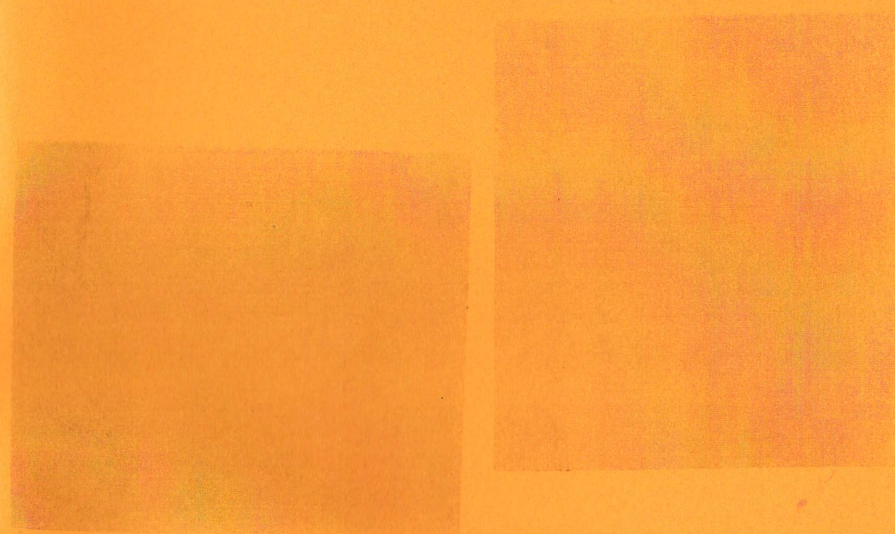
Small ceramic heads were presented on a range of shelves that covered the walls in a corner of the gallery. Self-portraits, these heads were arranged in a whole manner of different orientations. Some, akin to ancient Greek vases, used sculpted hair plaits as handles, whereas others had gaping tops open. On some shelves, three small sculptures were huddled together and on others heads were upturned or placed on one side.

What they all had in common, apart from being portraits of the artist, was the choice of colour – yellow, black and pink. Similar to Becky Kolsrud's paintings, this not only brought continuity but also a boldness to the work.

What's more, each sculpture was obviously hollow, with an interior painted the same colour as the inside of the mouth or the throat beyond the oesophagus. Somewhat uncomfortably, these apertures gave the work a gritty human quality that contrasted with the playful handles of hair or the upside-down heads.

Meanwhile, on an adjacent wall, paintings on loose sheets of paper were hung. Similar to the sculptures, these paintings were of heads, using a very small selection of colours. The bold choice to use one or two colours per painting gave each one a sketch-like quality and a freshness rarely seen in painting.

Kate Bancroft's work effortlessly brings a painterly quality to 3D objects. If you get the opportunity, have a look at her work.





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