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Alan Peascod - influences and dialogue

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Art Monthly review of exhibition [here](#).

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The background of the entire page is an abstract artwork. It features a dark, almost black, textured surface. Overlaid on this are various golden-yellow and light brown elements. On the left side, there are several curved, ribbon-like shapes that resemble calligraphic flourishes or perhaps stylized leaves. On the right side, there is a more complex, textured area that looks like a cracked or aged surface, possibly a piece of old paper or a stone wall. The overall effect is one of depth and contrast, with the bright golden-yellow elements standing out against the dark background.

Alan Peascod

influences & dialogue

Elizabeth Charles

Simone Fraser

John Kuczwal

Graham Oldroyd

Wollongong City Gallery

Alan Peascod: influences & dialogue



Introduction

Alan Peascod was an influential teacher, mentor and friend to many in the ceramics community of Australia, especially in the places where he lived and worked, the Illawarra, Canberra and later Gulgong.

Timed to coincide with the thirtieth anniversary of the Wollongong City Gallery - an apt moment for reflection on the culture of the region - this exhibition is an investigation of traditions and techniques, creative interaction and influence over three decades, centering on Peascod's practice. Interestingly, the research we undertook for this exhibition revealed a wealth of ceramics held in private collections throughout the Illawarra and beyond - a source of cultural richness in the region that has been largely overlooked.

The four artists included alongside Alan Peascod in the exhibition are representative of the scope of his connections and influences. Graham Oldroyd's practice, at the outset and for many years, was linked to Peascod's, in a relationship that evolved from student to

colleague through a shared captivation with surfaces, forms and glazes, and inspiration sought and gained from ancient and Islamic Egypt.

While Oldroyd's work has taken him into diverse fields and regions - working both in architectural ceramics from a base in Bali and as a painter - Simone Fraser has retained a fascination with and focus on extraordinary dry glaze effects and a concern with almost archaeological surfaces since she first studied with Peascod. Her attenuated, corrugated forms suggest new technical and aesthetic frameworks for what constitutes a 'pot'.

Elizabeth Charles also demonstrates in her ceramics a continuing absorption with the possibilities of dry glazes to create a sense of both animation and timelessness. Quite unusually in Australia, she engages with the little-known tradition of Islamic sculptural ceramics to great effect in combination with her glaze approach.

John Kuczwal met Peascod in the late 1980s and his work represents a very specific and individual response to the reduced lustre glaze

work that was so characteristic of the Peascod domain. Kuczwal's exquisite lustre ware pursues, via distinctive imagery and simplicity of form, a fascination with the capacities of this most refined of ceramic glaze techniques.

We are particularly pleased to include four tributes to Alan Peascod and his practice from experts in the field, and thank Graham Oldroyd, Janet Mansfield, Alan Caiger-Smith and Owen Rye for their contributions.

We also thank Ellen Peascod and her family for their support of the exhibition; Tony Hull for his advice and assistance; and acknowledge all of the collectors from whom we have received loans of Peascod's work.

Craig Judd and Amanda Lawson
Curators
October 2008

Above image: Alan Peascod in his studio at Gulgong
Right image: Alan Peascod, *Gold Form II*, Gold resinate lustre over black glaze and etched, 1980, stoneware

Alan Peascod: Magician Graham Oldroyd

It's funny when you least expect it, life can grab you by the arm and take control of your destiny. Such was the impact of meeting Alan Peascod in 1970. From that moment my fate was sealed. Alan had a personal charisma and passion for ceramics and through his generosity of teaching we developed a friendship which spanned 36 years.

I first met Al at a fete at the Wollongong High School where he was demonstrating and I was attempting to finish some pots for my H.S.C. art exam. I sat all day watching Al throw on the wheel until I finally plucked up the courage to ask him to teach me. For whatever reason he said ... 'sure but you have to commit' and proceeded to make himself available for free tuition every Thursday night at the Mt Kembla studio. The Kembla studio then was always full of production as Alan in those early days was a ferocious creator. Truckloads of pots were weekly transported down the hill to the double chamber kiln he had built a few years earlier at his parents', Bill and Margaret's, house in Dapto.

It was at that same time Alan also started his long career of formal teaching by becoming a part-time teacher at the Wollongong TAFE in Gladstone Avenue. In the following years in both Canberra, overseas and again in Wollongong, Alan taught many students and gave the creative foundation to so many artists who have gone on to make wide spread artistic contributions themselves.

As a teacher Alan was able to inspire a need to create and through personal example show how a lifetime of artistic pursuit was one of happiness. Alan had that classical art tradition flowing inside him, and that was his 'inner necessity' to make beauty from the mud of the earth.

He was constantly in pursuit of perfection. It was this desire which often led him to creating objects of a sublime quality - objects which were as close to a state of ceramic 'dreaming' as any of the great master potters have achieved.

His career as a ceramic artist is vast, stylistically varied and technologically brilliant. Alan was harsh in his judgment of his work, and by doing so set high standards which became the parameters of his ceramic adventure.

He believed it was the role of the artist to be true to himself only and this often brought him up against the criticism of others. Much of his later ceramic work was figurative in nature, very blunt in its political expression and drew criticism from the art bureaucracy at which it was aimed. However, in my view these later sculptural works historically will be held equally high as with the years he concentrated on vessels.

Through his work Alan wrote his own path, his own destiny and having 'one hell of a journey' along the way. That was just Al's style, his signature style. Alan had a scandalous and maverick approach to ceramics and his best work came from a love/hate relationship with his creativity.

Although Alan may be most remembered for his fascination with lustre and Islamic ceramics he had a technical mind which allowed him to transverse cultural boundaries. The blending of these together to form a vision is what sets him well apart from many of his contemporaries. But Alan didn't reside in any specific place of cultural reference. Over the years he developed a ceramic repertoire which was multi-lingual and created a vocabulary as sophisticated as many great writers. This was the Peascod genius.

Of all the physical characteristics I remember of Al it was his poise after he spoke. He would say something and within the breath it took to utter the words, he would silence himself. Sort of taken side-ways by something which had clicked in his imagination. This was in high resolution contrast to those days we drove around in that hotted-up orange Monaro that made him such a Wollongong lad.

Alan was a generous man, and his gift to many was the 'magic' of ceramic. He was such a magician - ceramic technology was his vocabulary and you need to look at the back of the dictionary to find the words he used. His passion for his work as an artist was without boundaries. Towards the end of his life when ceramics became too hard he focused on his drawing and notebook illustrations and these works have really yet to be widely exhibited.

I was fortunate to see Alan in Mudjee before he passed away. In the few days before his death I had the most wonderful time with Al, Ellen, Sam and Jessica.

Although Al was weak he would (at times) sit around his bed and dream up stories from the past or be totally frank and open about the present. I still hold those moments of laughter so clearly in my mind's eye and as you view the pieces in this exhibition you can see who has had the last laugh.

September 2008
Bali



Technical Innovator

Janet Mansfield

Graduating in ceramics from the National Art School in 1965, then working and teaching in Canberra, Wollongong, and absorbing cultures in the Middle East, Europe, India and later Italy, Alan Peascod and his family finally settled in Gulgong, NSW, where his career concentrated on his practice of ceramic art, its forms, its surfaces and materials. Erudite, inventive, relentless in his research, uncompromising in his attitude, Peascod became “one of the most important contributors to ceramic art in Australia” (Peter Haynes, Canberra, 1985).

There are many layers to the life and work of Alan Peascod. He was a technical innovator – by 1985 he had built and fired more than 47 oil, coal and wood forced-draught kilns seeking particular qualities to clays and glazes; he developed a rapid drying technique for his clay forms using a gas burner; and over a period of concentrated firings, each week producing 1000 glaze tests (Kim Bow, Wollongong, 1990). His work included reduced lustre glazes and gold-plated vessels, metal saturated techniques (he worked for a period in a bronze factory to develop this style), satirical figures in both porcelain and stoneware, maiolica wares on terracotta and acid etching on high-fired vessels and what he called his greatest achievement – the dry matt glazes of blue and green, purples and ochre-red colours. He became a master of surfaces that enhanced forms that were refined, imaginative and unique.

The influence of these styles as well as the techniques he invented became widespread throughout Australia and abroad, through his teaching, the workshops that he gave, his lectures and, in particular, through the many exhibitions of his work.

In his writings for magazines, reviews of books and his choice of colleagues and friends, Alan Peascod made clear his attitude to what he believed was important. In his figurative works,

he was looking to explore the human condition. He used satirical ideas to draw attention to his beliefs about the education system and the quality of professional art practice.

These figures gave him another avenue to experiment with surface textures and also allowed him to express his views of society and the flaws he found in human nature. In an article he wrote for his 1997 exhibition at the Ceramic Art Gallery in Sydney, he wrote about the potential for ceramics to adapt a creative language to his own purposes. “Multilayered slips, sgraffito and glazes are used to vary the language of firing,” he wrote saying he was looking to derive quiet “yet aggressive or other contradictory visual qualities in an attempt to bring vitality to the work.”

Always interested in drawing, in this he was influenced by his father the painter, Bill Peascod, it was in his final years, living in Gulgong and weakened by illness, that some of his best drawings and prints were made. Similar to his drawing on clay, these works further emphasised his artistic talent and his appreciation of his environment and his attitude to society. Gulgong offered him an inspiration of the Australian landscape, the proximity of friends and a gallery that promoted his work. He embarked on building a studio and house built on a Middle Eastern inspiration, a new kiln for reduced wood-fired lustre was built and proved successful but his health deteriorated and drawing became his solace. But in this, as in every other aspect of his creative work, he brought wonder to others by the life and perception evident in his hands and mind. “For me,” he wrote, “it is the spiritual objective that has become the generator of artistic pursuit.”

August 2008
Mudgee

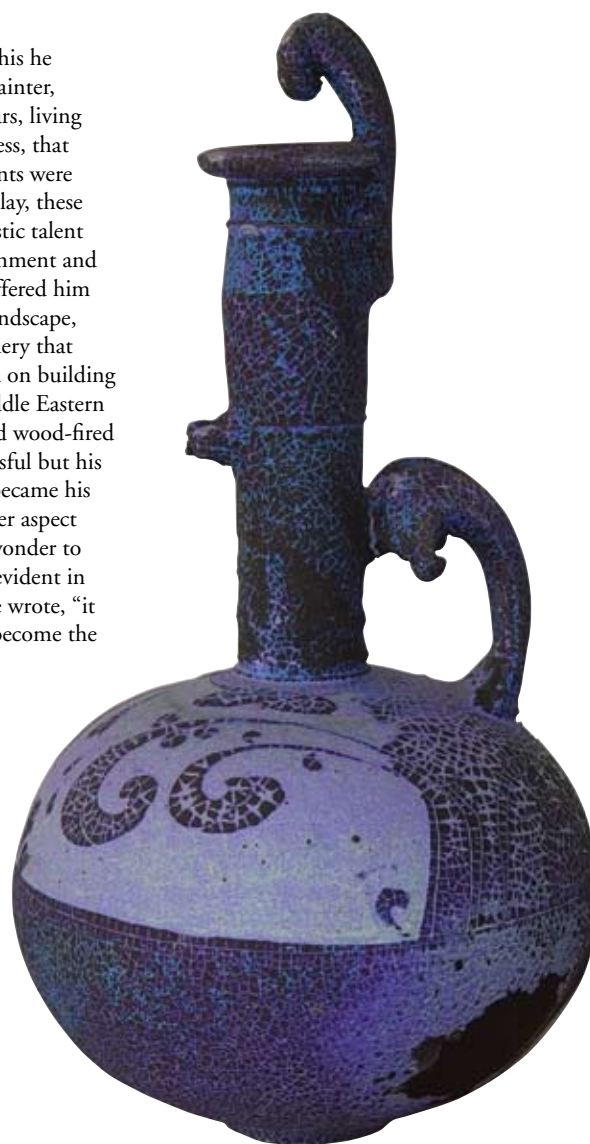


Image: Alan Peascod, *Dry glaze pot*, 1985, sgraffito slip under dry matt glaze. Stoneware. Height: 46cm

Richness and Beauty

Owen Rye

Alan Peascod's greatest accomplishment is his work with reduced or Arab lustre. Internationally few contemporaries, notably Alan Caiger-Smith and Giampetro Rampini, mastered this ancient technology. Alan worked with them and exchanged experience and knowledge. But knowledge is not the sole explanation of his achievements; he possessed rare skills which I was often privileged to see him using. In making vessels clay flowed through his hands like liquid. He had the sensitivity of touch to brush on the lustre coating at a minutely precise thickness, to achieve the richest result. This over a shiny glaze surface which increased the difficulty. His firing of lustre was a masterpiece of sensory observation of the colour, smell and sound of the flame and smoke, manipulating and changing the fire at just the right moments to most enhance the final result, converting dull layers of powder to thin metallic iridescent films of great beauty.

Peascod loved complex surfaces possessing what he termed 'visual density'. Study this on one of his reduced lustre vessels.

Turn it slowly in a soft light (remembering that the original Islamic lusterware would have been viewed mainly by candle or lamp-light). See how the multitude of ever-changing glowing colours integrate with the freely worked sgraffito drawings. Partially revealed beneath (his concept of 'windows') is an unblemished shiny glaze, the several components blended together in an inalienable whole.

Alan kept his techniques secret for various reasons but as a friend over thirty years I was privy to many of those secrets. Some techniques were incredibly simple, but it took an intuitive leap on his part to discover that simplicity, and few others would be able to escape conventional thought enough to unravel the truth.

His aesthetic imagination led to conceptual developments that required new technology for their genesis, but his achievements transcended technical virtuosity. He agonised over aesthetic questions few others could formulate. Through most of his career his fascination with Islamic art was a fundamental source feeding his ceramic creativity. Much of Peascod's imagery evolved through his love of the Islamic sense of ornament, including calligraphy, and he studied Islamic

ceramics in great detail. Those interests are rare among Australian potters who generally base their work on Asian antecedents, or follow current art world trends.

Peascod was, in common with many of the world's best ceramicists, free from being driven by the extremes of contemporary visual art theory. Rather, his work was based in a deep appreciation of ceramic history and his sense of richness and beauty is expressed in his unique contributions to that history. Within that context painting and drawing were at the core of much of his work, earlier via his interest in Islamic iconography and latterly in exploring the figurative through painting on majolica and porcelain sculpture and also in his drawing. In his final years he became a close observer of people. His 1990 Wollongong Art Gallery exhibition "Shibboleth and Heterodoxy" exposed the worst manifestations of greed and duplicity, ambition and injustice he had seen in academia. Later in Gulgong his work in porcelain sculpture, majolica, drawings and photographs revealed a softened and more optimistic view of humanity.

September 2008
Melbourne

Breaking Boundaries

Alan Caiger-Smith

Alan said that we first met when he visited my workshop at Aldermaston in 1968. At that time he was fully committed to stoneware but I'd like to think that my lustre firings had some subliminal effect on him. We next met in Sydney in 1981. By that time he was working intensively on reduced lustre, following up and extending the ideas and techniques he had acquired from Said el Sadr and the potters of Fostat a few years earlier, which affected him like a revelation. It was seasoned tradition and shocking innovation rolled into one. Next year he came over to England and we spent time working together and firing lustre with wood in my newly built experimental kiln. The shared experience was unforgettable and his inventiveness made me realise that a living tradition must continually break its own boundaries.

Alan had a strong intellectual side and everything he did emerged from a background of wide-ranging thought. He would spend ages turning a particular project around in his mind, discussing its aesthetic possibilities and alternative ways of achieving them, and then suddenly go into action, throwing on the wheel at breath-taking speed, glazing and painting with total conviction and no second thoughts. (He was apt to fire the kiln equally impetuously, though I did my best to restrain him). With the completed work in his hands, he would disappear into a trance-like state as he evaluated the results. On occasions it seemed an extravagant waste of time, but actually a whole new project would be taking shape in his imagination.

Trance-like thought, open-minded discussion and then resolute action.....I think each of the three elements was an essential part of his creative energy. He had wonderful gifts as an artist, whether drawing, painting, sculpting, making pots, taking photographs or teaching

(which was for him an art-form as much as a profession); he was also restlessly inventive and had an intuitive insight into materials and processes. But he was also highly self-critical and required of himself and others outspoken honesty, convinced originality and no short cuts. He could be challenging company and he never shrank from confrontation. Thus he acquired devoted enemies as well as heartfelt friends.

People richly endowed with creative gifts are servants of their gifts as well as masters. Alan excelled in both these roles and he remained courageously true to his calling throughout years of declining health, using his energies to the limit. Whatever the medium, works of art are a kind of stored energy. Ultimately, Alan's works themselves communicate his passion, his quality and his irrepressible enquiries more vividly than anything his friends can say.

August 2008
Berkshire, UK.

Elizabeth Charles

- 1960 Born Murwillumbah, NSW
1979-81 Diploma of Art (Visual) Canberra School of Art
1983- 30 group exhibitions - the most recent: The Shape between Continuity and Innovation (Museo Internazionale Delle Ceramiche, Faenza, Italy, 2002), Ceramics: the Australian & New Zealand Context (Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery, 2002) & 25th Gold Coast International Ceramics Art Award (Gold Coast City Art Gallery, 2005).
1984-89 Teacher, (F/T) TAFE NSW
1985-86 Diploma of Teaching (Technical) Sydney CAE
1985-88 Member, School of Art & Design Staff Development Committee, TAFE NSW
1989 Staff Development Co-ordinator, School of Art & Design, TAFE NSW
1989- 9 solo exhibitions, the most recent From a Shared Studio (Narek Galleries, Tanja, 2006)
1990 Awarded Professional Development Grant, Visual Arts Crafts Board of the Australia Council
1990-99 Senior Head Teacher, Arts & Media, Goulburn College of TAFE
1999 Lecturer, Distance Diploma Program, School of Art, Australian National University
1999- Senior Head Teacher, Arts & Media, Southern Highlands Directorate, TAFE NSW Illawarra Institute
2005 Lecturer, Faculty of Fine Arts, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

image: Elizabeth Charles, *Jug III*, 2006, slips, dry glaze on stoneware, 70 x 27 x 27cm. Photograph by Joseph Lafferty.



Simone Fraser

- 1951 Born Cape Town South Africa
1981 Graduated with a Diploma of Visual Arts (major Ceramics) Canberra School of Art
1982-89 Practicing Ceramist
Administrator and teacher at the ANU Arts Centre Pottery and CSA
2001 Completed Graduate Diploma Visual Arts Monash University VIC
1981 - Numerous group and solo exhibitions
Present Practicing Ceramist.
Part time Ceramics teacher: National Art School and TAFE Sydney NSW

Selected group and solo exhibitions:

- 1986 'First National Ceramics Award' Canberra School of Art. ACT Curated by Peter Haynes
1987 '1987 North Queensland Ceramic Awards' Perc Tucker Gallery Qld. Curator Ross Searle
1991 'Decorated Vessel' National Ceramics Conference, Brisbane. Curators: S.Outridge-field, S.Ostling
1991 'Aspects' RMIT gallery Melbourne. Curator: Kevin White and Pru Venables
1998 Gold Coast Ceramic Award
2003 Ceramics: The Australian & New Zealand context. Campbelltown Regional Gallery
2004 Delmar Gallery 'The Hollow and the Whole' Curators: Merran Esson and Ruth Howard

Collections include: National Gallery of Australia, Australian regional gallery & many private.
Commissions include: Qantas Art collection, Crown Casino Melbourne and the Sultan of Brunei.
Represented by: Sabbia Gallery Sydney and Narek Galleries Tanja NSW.

image: Simone Fraser, *Ceramic Form*, 2007, dry glaze, (h) 67cm.



John Kuczwal

- 1951 Born Bavaria, West Germany.
- 1956 Family migrated to Australia and settled in Wollongong NSW.
- 1970 Declined scholarship to attend East Sydney Technical College (National Art School) and commenced employment with the Attorney General's Department.
- 1987 Solo exhibition of paintings and drawings at "Seaview" Gallery, Newcastle.
- 1989 Met with Alan Peascod and expressed interest in reduced pigment lustre.
- 1990 Attended night classes at Gladstone Avenue Technical College, West Wollongong and participated in group wood firings of lustre pottery.
- 1990 Began to solo fire wood fired lustre and explore the technique of reduced pigment lustre.
- 1996 Lustre exhibition "Art for Art Sake" Gallery, Wollongong.
- 1996 Work represented in the Australian Wood-Fire Survey exhibition, Canberra.
- 2000 Lustre exhibition "Nesac" Gallery, Wollongong.
- 2006 "Painting with Smoke" lustre exhibition, Wollongong City Gallery.
- 1994 - Began to travel and investigate museum collections of lustre pottery in Japan and Europe and meet with present day practitioners of lustre including Takuo Kato in Japan, and Alan Caiger-Smith and Sutton Taylor in Britain.
- 2008 Travelled to Dureta and Gubbio in Italy to view museum collections and meet with present practitioners of lustre.



image: John Kuczwal, *Three running hares*, 2007, reduced pigment lustre. 36cm (w) x 8cm (d).

Graham Oldroyd



- 1953 Born Bulli, N.S.W., Australia.
- 1972-73 National Art School, Sydney, Australia. Canberra School of Art Site Research into Islamic Art in Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Turkey.
- 1975 Established studio, Wombarra, N.S.W., Australia.
- 1977-79 Lecturer, East Sydney Technical College, Australia.
- 1980-84 Head of Ceramics, East Sydney Technical College, Australia.
- 1981 Research Arab lustre and Islamic Glaze, Cairo.
- 1984 Overseas Guest Lecturer, Camberwell School of Art, London, UK.
- 1985-86 Head Division of Ceramics for TAFE Education, N.S.W., Australia.
- 1986-87 Commissioned by New Parliament House / Canberra for Major Artwork, Australia.
- 1988-93 Established Studio with Philip Lakeman for Architectural Commissions.
- 1994 Worked throughout Asia on Architectural Commissions.
- 1995-97 Advisor and Designer at Pesamuan Ceramic Studio, Bali, Indonesia.
- 1997- President Director of P.T. Pesamuan Keramik Seni, Bali, Indonesia.
- 2007 Commission: Jeju Golf Resort - Jeju Island - Korea.

image: Graham Oldroyd, *Lidded vessel*, stoneware, thrown and altered, dry glaze, carved decoration. 38cm (h). Collection of Wollongong City Gallery, gift of Colin Denley. Photography by Bernie Fischer.

Alan Peascod

Born 1943; died 2007

Between 1968 - 2007 Alan Peascod had over 80 solo exhibitions and was part of 65 group exhibitions.

Selected solo exhibitions

- 1985 -87 First Retrospective Exhibition (15 year survey)
- 1987 Anatol Orient Gallery, London
- 1992 Doctoral Exhibition, Wollongong City Gallery;
- 1994 Second Retrospective Exhibition, Ceramic Art Gallery, Sydney
- 1995 Guest exhibitor: Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, Scotland
- 1996 Faenza, Italy (sponsored by Ceramic Art Gallery)
- 2001 Galerie Le Vieux – Bourg, Lonay, Switzerland
- 2002 Parco Ranghiasi, Gubbio (Umbria) Italy
- 2002-5 Cudgegong Gallery, Gulgong, NSW

Represented (selected)

National Gallery of Australia
Art Gallery of New South Wales
National Gallery of Victoria
Art Gallery of South Australia
Wollongong City Gallery
Bathurst Regional Art Gallery
Shepparton Regional Art Gallery
Ballarat Regional Art Gallery

Overseas

Museo Hispano/Arabe Alhambra Palace, Granada, Spain
Vice Presidential Collection Washington DC
Auckland Museum and Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki Auckland,
Dresden Museum, Dresden, Germany
International Ceramics Museum, Faenza Italy
Pallazzo dei Consoli Museum, Gubbio, Italy



Image: Alan Peascod, *Gold form*, 1979, thrown form with press moulded components. Gold lustre with resists. Stoneware. 40cm (h).

Simone Fraser is represented by Sabbia Gallery, Sydney
Elizabeth Charles is represented by Narek Gallery, Tanja



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weekends 12noon - 4pm

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All works by Alan Peascod which appear in this catalogue have been generously loaned by Ellen Peascod

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8 July - 15 August 2009



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