

California State University  
Northridge

# 2015 Thesis Exhibition

Master of Fine Arts | Master of Arts



Cover image  
Philip Koščak  
*untitled (glitter deer)*,  
chromogenic print,  
24" x 36", 2014

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**May 9-30, 2015**

The exhibition and catalogue are supported by the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media and Communication, Art Department and Art Galleries at California State University, Northridge.

# Essay

CHRISTIAN TEDESCHI

*"Achieving velocity in work ethic and studio inquiry is of paramount importance upon receiving your degree."* My mentor, Tony Hepburn (1942-2015) said these words to me, and his recent passing makes their impact that much stronger.

To the graduating MA and MFA students  
in Visual Arts at CSUN:

On the first day of class, I ask my beginning sculpture students to introduce themselves, and to share with the class why they have decided to pursue a degree in higher education. The diversity of CSUN students, their varied ages, ethnicities, and personal geographies, contributes to a most interesting and productive learning environment, yet most of them say they attend college to assuage their parents. Many college students have difficulty declaring a major and sticking with it, and those who choose to study a subject as seemingly indulgent as sculpture impress me. Perhaps they did not consider the realities of working in three dimensions, having to transport large, cumbersome objects to and from school, objects that take up space in their homes, displacing their furniture and television sets. Yet something compels them to persist, perhaps the experiential impact of those objects occupying three-dimensional space?

The works in this thesis exhibition include sculptures, paintings, photographs, and prints that tend toward the regional, local, and personal, as well as the nostalgic and intimate. Something in the students' lives has driven them to probe and investigate the handmade and the physical. I wonder if this results from the education and culture of our department, from society, or from the relentless decay of the physical?

Although the explanation is a mystery to me,  
I have a few assertions.

I assume that most of these students expect to engage in a more tech-related form of expression, something more capitalistic and marketable. Each one of these students is fluent in the latest technologies, most of them having a smart phone and camera on hand. Following this technological path that culture has determined to be a tacit extension of the physical body seems to be expected. Instead these students resist the familiar; they rebel against the incessant flow of technology and mediated life in the form of a tiny screen. They seek tangible, haptic experiences, materiality versus materialism, the vast physical world and the intimately palpable third dimension. These students discover and reinterpret the

world of common substances that surround them and extract its poetic resonance. While some of them utilize high tech approaches, their investigations make the tech or virtual realm a sensual and tactile experience. Perhaps this interpretation functions as a closer inspection, a way to understand new realities differently. These students have become the unified, microcosmic voice of a generation searching for something magical in the real, the personal, and the tangible, something that turns logic and information on its ear and creates poetic relationships, revealing something corporeal and intimate.

The internet has brought the far corners of the world within reach, the devices that inhabit most pockets containing a boundless source of imagery from contemporary Chinese and Nigerian art to ancient Pre-Columbian pottery and Native American Tlingit mosquito masks. This accessibility to vast cultural perspectives and attitudes has cracked open the art, science, and cultural communities. Gone are the days of one reigning art movement. Now hundreds of art and cultural movements, not to mention retro movements (including neo-minimalism, post-post modernism, and neo-dada) encourage students to consider who they are and what

their cultural perspectives are in relation to the world. Many contemporary artists look to the regional, the social, the personal and even the nostalgic by examining and engaging with their own communities and families.

All of the works included in this exhibition result from an in-depth studio inquiry that is informed by a rigorous insemination of theory, critical discourse, art history, trial and error, and community that has brought these students to this meaningful juncture. This is the quickening, the foundation, the beginning of their creative quests, and I am curious and excited about their future prospects and endeavors. Sharing these potentialities with students is a pleasure and a privilege.

I want the students to remember that there are no answers, only questions, and they should have many more questions from here on out. This is where Hepburn's notion of velocity in studio practice begins.

# Sahara Ahal

MA • SCULPTURE/PAINTING

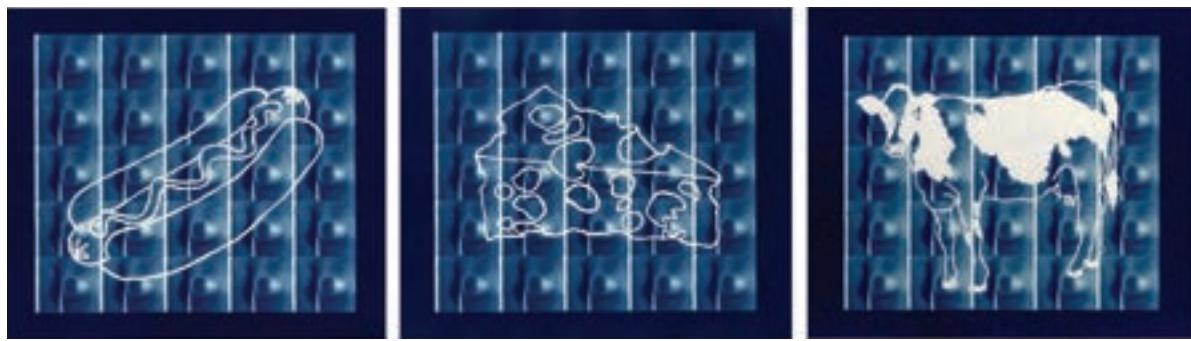
What is a beginning or end, right or wrong, dirty or clean? My work explores the ideas of appropriateness and familiarity. The link between the man made and natural worlds triggers primal instincts and challenges ideas of social norms and taboos surrounding the body, sex, and death. Food, images or casts of the body, furniture, and forms used in the act of cleansing are presented in both a graphic and physical manner. Original objects and imagery are consumed and regurgitated causing self-referential echoes of previous works. Desires corresponding to food, sexuality, and the curiosity of decay, are explored by relating the fresh to the old, the clean to the dirty, and the strong to the fragile.



*Out of Sight Out of Mind*,  
vinyl, acrylic ink, thread, buttons, butter,  
5" x 22" x 18", 2014



*Jugs*,  
plaster, 10" x 4" x 10", 2014

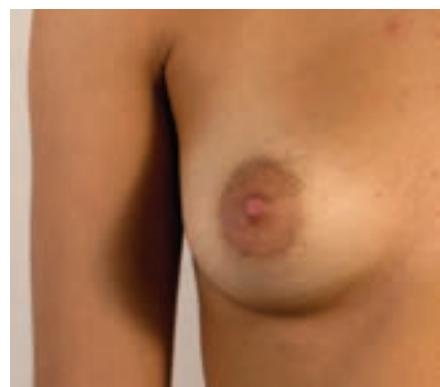


*Together at Last, at Last Together*,  
cyanotype on paper, 8" x 25", 2014



*Wreath*, (installation detail)  
shower curtain, acrylic ink, digital print, dimensions variable, 2014

*Wreath*, (installation detail)  
shower curtain, acrylic ink, digital print, dimensions variable, 2014



# Logan Bell

MFA · GRAPHIC DESIGN

Craft and labor greet redundant behavior; the crapehanger says, "Nay!" – and musical chairs continues. All know the cattle have begun to leave in droves; yet the wise men don't say "Yay!" Chirping the credo they obey, "As long as there is meat today, everything is A-Okay".

Transforming ordinary objects and consumer goods to pronounce despairing typographic mantras. I address ethical detachment in business constructs, which serve as derisive reminders to impose self-governing rule. The physical presence of typography, language and phraseology in lieu of caution, contradiction and contemplation embody my efforts. My process acknowledges recurring themes of heat, pressure, coagulation, penetration, and seepage as I elevate an array of materials, employing them as conduits, as they visually document our exchange.



*Beware Of The Serpent*,  
garden hoses, 24' x 18', 2012



*I Agree To The Terms And Conditions*,  
excised soil, 24'x30', 2013



Ray Kroc,  
*Blended McDonalds #1 (Big Mac, fries, Coke, 12"x15", 2012)*

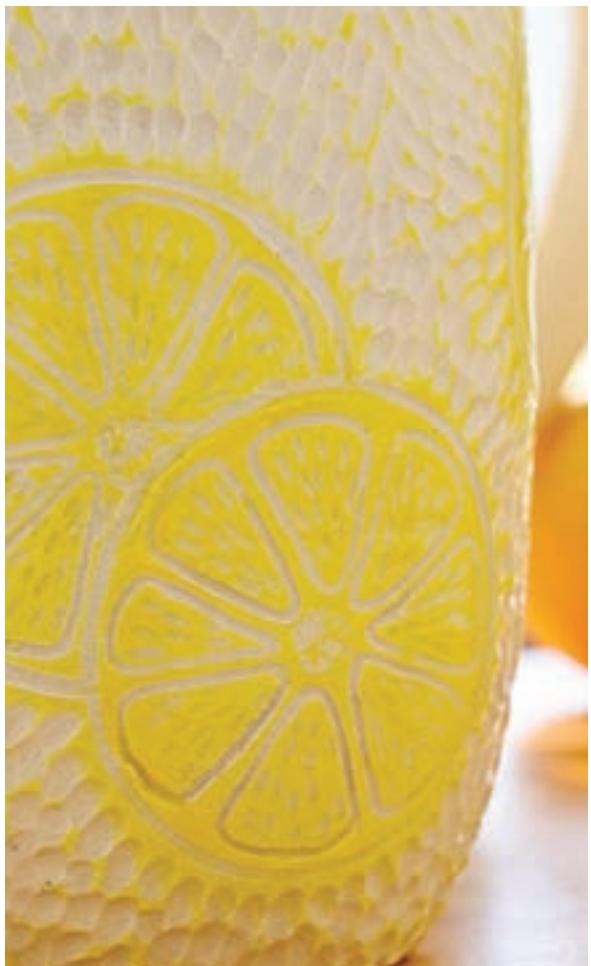
# Cat Chidester Brown

MA · CERAMICS

My utilitarian pottery functions as a tool for use towards a healthier lifestyle. My background as a collegiate athlete emphasizes nutrition as vital to a successful season and overall health maintenance.

I infuse portion control and thoughtful practice of color theory throughout my work to establish suggestions for healthy eating. These parameters are designed to be helpful in making healthy lifestyle changes and to permeate social settings and daily activities.

My approach to color and portion control stems from recipes that encourage a dynamic use of color in food preparation. Growing up in Southern California, the agriculture, and vast foods available year-round influence the distinct colors in my work, encouraging people to eat fresh fruits and vegetables. Creating wares that acknowledge the slow food movement and inspire healthy lifestyles, I place functional art in the world to change lives for the better.



*Lemonade (detail)*  
4" x 3" x 3"  
2014



*Infused H2O*  
6" x 3" x 3", 2014



*Lemonade Set*  
cups – 4" x 3" x 3"  
pitcher – 13" x 6" x 11", 2014

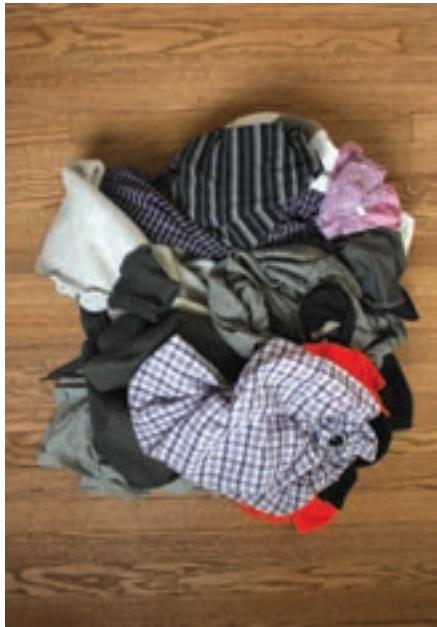
# Brittney Hoogervorst

MA · SCULPTURE



*Caramel and cement,*  
caramel block, cement,  
36" x 11" x 11", 2014

It is human instinct to ensure our memory lives on, we desire to grow beyond the capabilities of our bodies. Expansion and compression are two ways in which my work triumphs the physical limits of the body. This is done through binding my limbs useless, by allowing a cast block of caramel to reject its form, or by deconstructing a chest of drawers with an axe. Materials such as drywall tape, cement, and wooden floors use the inherent language of structure to question the vexed relationships between intimacy, attachment and solitude. By taking action upon the embedded poetics of materials the work explores the vastness between existence and dissolution.



*Untitled*  
digital print, laundry, 36" x 24", 2014



*Work in progress*

*Swaddle (detail)*,  
digital print, drywall tape, 72" x 36", 2014

# Sela Hov

MA · PHOTOGRAPHY

This series of square photographs functions as a document of seemingly insignificant moments and time spent. My family moved from Cambodia to the San Fernando Valley in 2001 and opened "Jolly Donuts," the site of these images. Regular customers populate the photographs, which acknowledge each visage as an environmental portrait and as a vital component of my family's livelihood. Conversations, both casual and personal, have extended over the years, allowing me to cultivate familiar relationships with each customer.

The plastic Holga and more functional Yashica cameras allow me to translate my interactions into photographic compositions that reveal a comfortable sincerity. The cameras' mechanical limitations force me to consider a variety of angles, compositions, and proximities between 9am and noon. Directional window light, the Holga's characteristic vignette, and the seemingly objective views I capture with the Yashica emphasize the singularity of these environmental portraits. Black & white and color film portray distinctive details of each customer and their interactions within the shop.



*At 9am #4,*  
20" x 24", Chromogenic print, 2014



*I'm There #3,*  
8" x 11", Gelatin print, 2014



*At 9am #3,*  
20" x 24". Chromogenic print, 2014

# Philip Košćak

MA · INTERDISCIPLINARY



*Kermit portrait  
(from one hundred kermits).*  
gouache on paper, 9" x 12", 2013

when you remember something but you're not quiet sure what you remember. forget it. you are important. when it's still, when it's moving. remember why. these things. trying. truly. in plain sight. performing for the performers. what is performing. when am I not performing. when does the performance end. when does the performance end. everything will be ok. there's always tomorrow. I need some time. how can you not think about it. sometimes there are things and sometimes there are other things. I can't wait. so sweet. not sweet enough. get out. can we? can't we? gloves don't forget to wear the gloves! why so many questions? every time I'm thinking about it, I'm thinking if you are thinking about it. can you? shine bright like a diamond. make wishes. not process based. do it. I didn't think that you would,

(statement is intended to be read aloud with text to speech transcription provided for this purpose only.)

for real this time. I used to think what I used to think and now I know what I didn't know. why are you asking me to come? do it good. just around the river bend. that's not right. taught to smile, not to frown. it's that one time

but you are. together and alone. I don't know why this. reflect on me reflect on you reflect on us so much reflection. fresh. like caramel on the floor. i want to be caramel on the floor. what brittney said. she said that. create a show. be a show. show. how much are we showing? flay. layers of skin. reflective like cellophane. on all fours like the deer. becoming. transformation. demand attention. act. majestic. the horror. falling. failing. how can you capture the fall? the falling goes forever and ever and ever and ever (and ever). it's better late than never. but you can never say never. not good. making an indefinite appearance. making a false appearance. making any appearance. capture moments. overflow. dirty water. spilling. sleeping. not going back. don't want to go back. faceless. close but not touching. from when i had to. but if you would've known i would've known. I'm your biggest fan. how can you ever? how can i ever? the faceless. unknown. truly. are they? thirsty. live fully. sweet and delicious. the times we can, the times we can't. make it shiny it makes it better. if you stay still they might not see you. but you really have to be still or else it doesn't work. in space it's still. no air. flying suspended stuck. close but not touching. illuminate. no stopping no parking. thank you. if it's important, you won't forget it. if its big, you wont miss it. in the corner. in the dark. keep saying it you won't forget. remembering not what it's supposed to. supposedly. fresh.



*manuscript (detail),*  
ink on paper, 7" x 10", 2014



*kermit with glitter deer,*  
performance still, 2014

# Chelsea Kowitz

MA · ILLUSTRATION

My childhood overflowed with inspiration, as my parents cultivated an environment that stimulated the imagination: art projects, domesticated animals like chickens, turtles, and goats, and family vacations that exposed me to other places and cultures. Looking back at these family vacations, I draw on shared memories for narratives, including wild weather, enthusiastic games among siblings, and magical wildlife encounters.

Through their close friendship, Tula the Salamander and Bugley the Beetle embody these experiences as they travel together, experiencing the wonders of the natural world and helping each other brave the elements. Tula and Bugley function as vehicles to stage my travel stories in an illustrative narrative.

My practice begins with sketches, then Tula and Bugley are reinterpreted as three-dimensional illustrations. As installations, Tula and Bugley's environments are comprised of materials and methods traditionally used in the craft community. Using felt, polymer and stone clay, and embroidery floss in a fine art context balances the installations and videos, creating a sense of whimsy that reflects childhood.

Realizing Tula and Bugley's world in three-dimensions allows viewers to enter the adventure, while the videos bring the characters to life. Pairing these mediums with illustrated title sequences establishes a new context for their escapades. Tula and Bugley can conquer any obstacle together, and they find joy in simple pursuits; they embody the history of my childhood as well as inspiration for future adventures.



*Catch a Butterfly, up in the Sky, and then we'll let them go,*  
mixed media, 5" x 12" x 10", 2014



*Sticky Marshmallows under the Moonlight,*  
mixed media, 1' x 4' x 1', 2013



*A Day at Button Creek,*  
mixed media, 13.5" x 16" x 10.5", 2013



*Snail Race: Pitter Patter Picklecroft VS. Warlord of Cheeselton III,*  
video still, 2014

# Vida Liu

MFA · PAINTING

My multimedia work acknowledges addiction and excessive consumption, especially the relationship between consumers and the products they acquire. Connections among consumers, desired objects, functionality, practicality, and aesthetic values inform my installations, drawings and paintings. Considering the neural and psychological aspects of shopaholics, my work exploits consumer goods' role as validating surrogates that provide a temporary sense of belonging, community, and fulfillment. Shopaholics engage in repetitive behaviors of acquisition and buying in order to satisfy their otherwise unmet psychological desires.

In my current body of work, I use my clothing and other donated materials from acquaintances, family, and friends. These once desired objects become absurdly impractical constructions that take up space, exposing behaviors that include excessive consumption and uncontrollable hoarding, as well as the notion of want versus need. The work embodies mixed feelings associated with unrestrained consumption and its consequent feelings of guilt and suffering; the objects and images have a dichotomous presence of both celebration and tragedy.

My process began with installations of neuron sculptures and end with three series of paintings. These paintings

focus on individual or group portraits of my donors. I explore the psychological effect of accumulated treasures on the victims and the aftermath of their hoards, emphasizing the dichotomy between the initial celebration and the ultimate disaster. These paintings depict the brokenness and emotional discomfort of shopaholics and hoarders.

In my final series, *Compressed Happiness*, I explore how the accumulation problem can be contained. I discovered the remedy to this problem by channeling my hoarding nature into the paintings I create. Instead of being controlled by a massive amount of clothing and material objects as surrogates, I finally find healing through my studio practice as a painter.



*...but I wanted it! Series No.4*  
mixed media and oil on gessoed rag, 20" x 20", 2014



*Eye of the Hurricane Series No. 12.*  
mixed media and oil on gessoed rag  
20" x 28", 2014

# Sara Nishikawa

MA · CERAMICS

*My work is fueled by details; intricate, delicate details.*

*Small is where I live.*

*Everything is or isn't food.*

*Soft, doughy, crunchy, silky.*

I am inspired by the idea of making the viewer take a step forward. A step forward. A quick double take. A movement to the right. A fear of missing something if they can only see it from one point of view. I am inspired by the instinct to smile or giggle when something is silly.

*The instinct is universal.*

Momotaro the peach boy and Hayao Miyazaki and the Smurfs and the last scene of Men in Black and Whoville, and Calvin and Hobbes whose adventures are mundane tasks in a fantastical world motivate my practice.

*How important is it that you interact with what is in front of you.*

I work with clay because it has the appearance of fragility yet is deceptively strong. The sturdiness allows a precarious nature. Its malleability allows the thoughts in my head

to be molded into reality. Each different stage of clay allows a different opportunity to refine my ideas. The notion that there is really no wrong way to manipulate clay is stimulating. There are infinite possibilities, and sometimes I get overwhelmed and wander through the many ways to make a donut. Granted, these tangents provoke an alternate view or concept, which ultimately helps to focus my thoughts.



*Piggy*  
porcelain, 6" x 5", 2014



*No One Puts Toast in the Corner*,  
stoneware, acrylic paint, wire, 6" x 12" x 15", 2014



*All-American Vegan*,  
stoneware, 2" x 12" x 23", 2014



*Lake Banana Cream*,  
stoneware, plaster,  
18" x 24" x 12", 2014

# Monica Sandoval

MA · SCULPTURE

My work explores the social constructs of the "ideal" body. Through video performance, installation, and object making I examine perceived "weaknesses" associated with my own body; which I then expose, objectify, and dissect. In doing so, I am able to amplify and protest social constructs pertaining to expectations of beauty and physical identity.

I'm not the girl next door, but I grew up wanting to be her. Adolescent fears are remarkably persistent towards adulthood; especially when societal rules help heighten them. Not being desirable enough to fit-in and the loneliness

that follows are but a few consequences examined at the core of my work. If I am not desirable because of the width of my waist or the shape of my face, then do I even exist? Through this investigation, defiance and ultimately self-preservation is key. Smiling without breaking for ten minutes, exposing my arms and legs, or simply repeating the words "I'm pretty" over and over again; are a few examples of my work where the construct of beauty transcends itself. True beauty is not found through the male gaze but rather through the "flaws" it attempts to avoid.



*I'm Pretty*, video performance, with sound.  
7 min. and 56 sec., dimensions variable, 2013



*im sorry.*

fabric, hand-cranked music boxes,  
filling plastic patio chair,  
36" x 21" x 17", 2014

*We want you,*  
digital print, 48" x 36", 2014



*sunflower portrait,*  
digital print, corn syrup and paper, 17" x 11", 2014



# Jack Shanklin

MA · CERAMICS

Growing up in a blue-collar suburban home, neighborhood community and southern hospitality were very important. Neighbors were always welcome and often shared meals, drinks, and holidays. I am interested in the objects that were at the center of these celebrations, and facilitated the connection between people. When tea was poured, meals were made, or the "good stuff" was pulled off the top shelf, it was to be shared with friends and family. These objects connect people in the same way suburban homes are connected to each other through the conduits that feed them. The materials that comprise these connections are wood, copper, brass, pvc, and clay which are important

to my practice, as I aim to elevate them above their industrial uses.

As a maker, I focus on material and process and the objects I create are about connection, utility, and community. My visual aesthetic is influenced by the infrastructure that feeds the home; the water lines, gas pipes, and electrical wires that goes unnoticed and supports our daily routines. The thrown objects stand in for the people that use them and are staged on the surfaces in which these interactions happen. The surface that this narrative happens becomes just as important and the clay objects that are imbedded in them.



*Neat*  
3.5" x 17" x 6", 2014



*Stemless*  
3.5" x 4.5" x 4" (each), 2014



*Bottle* 8" x 5" x 3.5"  
*Cup* 2"x 3" x 3", 2014



*Teapot*  
6" x 10" x 5", 2015

# Naomi Tarle

MFA · PRINTMAKING

Beyond ghettos, death camps, mass graves, gas chambers, crematoriums, memorials, museums, artifacts—beyond the Holocaust as a finite event, the Holocaust exists. Horror persists outside individual and collective memories and histories. The Holocaust is eternal and unimaginable.

Loss of individuals instigates loss of family, which instigates loss of community, which instigates loss of sites. This accumulation of loss highlights the validity of history. Does history exist beyond place and artifact? Do communities exist beyond their own histories? Do individuals exist beyond their own memories?

The void acknowledged by art objects compelled by genocide draw on biblical narratives, bread, salt, used books, shoes and sweaters—elements inherently fraught with history and therefore well disposed for manipulation and transformation. Materials such as bread and salt have their own historical, religious and cultural connotations. Second-hand materials bear unknown histories and emphasize the individual within a community. How these materials interact with each other through processes such

as salt crystallization and bread baking generate specific as well as inclusive interpretations. Single items become ‘group’ rather than ‘individual’ when bound or gathered. In varying degrees of close proximity, individuals become families, communities, and societies.

Historically loaded materials and process intensive approaches support inquiry into the motives and ongoing consequences of the Holocaust. Through the illumination of a specific type of loss, history becomes tangible. These works make the Holocaust, and all genocides, current and present.



*Lakes become recluse in anticipation of us,*  
salt-prints on used book covers,  
multiples of 5" x 7" and 10" x 7", 2014



*To wake renewed the  
way the sea loses its salt,*  
second hand sweaters, salt  
and railroad ties, approx.  
4' x 6" x 8", 2014

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Gallery Assistants: Jack Castellanos / Ashley Flores / Chelsea Kowitz / Janet Solval

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