

Introduction by Mina Cheon

I'm Mina Cheon, from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), and the chair and moderator of this panel. I am honored to be here after having served on the board of the NMC for previous six years while also working as an Associate Editor for the caucus' journal *Media-N*. The NMC is a professional society where one can grow and showcase, I've had other great opportunities to chair NMC panels at the CAA such as *Asia Effects in New Media* (2005 in Boston) and *Magic and Media* (2013 in LA). I've heard of many colleagues and those who I mentor taking advantage of the caucus to bridge connections, find jobs, and be a part of this unique community of new media people. So, thank you for being an awesome home-base for so many of us.

As for the *introduction* of this panel, I would like to begin by acknowledging and thanking Guna Nadarajan for making today possible; not just with the entire Symposium -- and Exhibition, but for supporting the panel in particular through the University of Michigan Stamps School of Art and Design's "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiative." None of this would have been possible without the support of a leader like him who *is* and sees *diversity* and knows how to support it, so thank you again Guna and the University of Michigan! Also, a thank you to the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) for co-sponsoring, and the assistance and support from the New Media Caucus by embracing this panel as *the* diversity panel for the symposium and providing us with an extended session.

The idea of a diversity panel is by Vagner Mendonça-Whitehead, the President Emeritus of NMC, who is a panelist here today and the person who will be concluding it. He said to me that a diversity panel is needed in our caucus and that we should do one, so we did. Vagner was obviously looking at the lack of proper representation of diversity in the field of new media, and thanks to him and our panelists, Christopher Kojzar, Victor Torres, Allana Clarke, Antonio McAfee, Kei Ito, and Andrew Keiper, we are able come together as artists of *woke* new media, new media artists who are (who stay) *woke*. Vagner and I are especially thrilled that we are joined here by these group of artists, who are the future new media artists, and that this stage is truly for them.

Woke, is a vernacular term that became popular with the protest culture of black lives matter. It means being awoken to social injustice and racism. It is a way of being, or being "with it" and a way of "seeing," and of no return – since when one succumbs to social awareness, one becomes conscious to the world around them, and there is no turning back. I echo Richard Ross and the way he describes his medium of art. He dedicates his photographs and new media to give voice to those in the juvenile justice system who otherwise would not have a voice. By sharing their words, voices, and photographs of them, he says, "**my medium is my conscience.**" This kind of cultural soft power, and the *new* in new media as the artist's conscience, shows a change that can bridge art and life – it can create a path to greater social projects that take on issues, and to be awoken by them, in relation to power, race, gender, identity, politics, economics, and the environment. It is no wonder that such artists like Richard Ross does his artist talk-*ing* to policy makers rather than museum-goers.



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An artist working with the social medium, has to deal with the temporality of existence, conflict, and awareness. The work is a response to the environment and the time we live in, materials to work with are that of people-life-culture-power. And, *creating art for the sake of art* has no business here. Those hard edges of the physical art object that exists aloof society, sacred in its own right, bearing tradition and *the aura*, may belong to another time period, and can remain in the art worlds of the *untitled*, but it certainly has no place here, at least not today.

Just as the philosophical and psychological construct of the self has changed, the concept of *borders in relation to the body* must change. We used to think that a border, or wall, was a protective layer for security and safety within society, a fence around a house or a park were useful demarcation lines, sometimes making clear the boundaries between public and private spaces, other times, a beginning and ending markers to areas of the built environment. And while we live in an age where identity is flexible, bodies are celebrated as adaptable, permeable -- transmitted, digitized, shared, expressed -- that body is privileged and we question whether or not that body still exists in its own protected fortress. The metaphors of boundless body and hyper-digital-extensions "by choice" remain for those who can chose, whereas those on the other side, or from the lines drawn apart have no access to security and safety. Being allowed the freedom of exit and entry (of digital or physical spaces) differ from those who are confined in camps and poverty lines. With the expanding global foot print, maps are drawn for surveillance to our existence and exacting our location, and by that, tracking our "being(s) and bodies," but those how are protected are considered "human beings" and those who are not as "bodies."

The myths and stereotypes that creates the "the bodily other" (be the racial other, minority, foreigner, or the queer body against the protected citizen body) exists in social structures and fabrics of power and hierarchy that stratifies, separates, and keep those in power intact, and the lesser-so from basic human rights. So, new media artists with soft power, being woke to the urgencies of our time, are cultural agents (of change), and can use culture as a weapon to share a different kind of response when it comes to rethinking about borders and bodies, and "*where our protest lies.*"

Today, we *are* facing micro and macro aggressions of threats of "The Wall" at global and local scales, affecting all human bodies. We drown in the media war on Trump's victory wall between the Mexican and US border; the post-internet wireless world turns out to be less than borderless as exemplified with China's Great Firewall as an erected government surveillance; cold war tensions continue regardless of the collapse of the Berlin Wall; and nobody really cares about North Korea as long as the DMZ reinforces the splitting world power-relations. Moreover, Brexit is about leaving the European Union to deface the monetary burden of the Syrian refugee crisis, while more border-patrolled walls keep millions of Middle Eastern and African refugees from entering Europe. Every nation-state borderline contours a separation to prop up naturalized citizens, whereas undocumented bodies are systematically left in the gutter. Walls and borders displace bodies, and every neighborhood, block, or fence strategically borders off the "others."



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The New Media Caucus (NMC) Diversity Panel, comprised of artists who use new media, their conscience, and soft power in their work, demonstrate artistic responses for countering scattered hegemonies, walls, borders in our world of increasing cultural, ideological, political, economic divisions. And, this is what diversity looks like in WOKE New Media.



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In Part One of our panel we have Christopher Kojzar, Victor Torres, Allana Clarke presenting after my introduction.

Christopher Kojzar openly engages in artistic practices such as drawing or recording with wearable technology. In his presentation, “Counter-surveillance tactics: Staying Woke in Public Space,” Kojzar identifies how the “see something, say something” campaign heightens the stakes of drawing in public space. He points to an era of escalating surveillance and mistrust by signaling how facial recognition may start to infringe on pedestrian freedom. Kojzar holds an MFA from University of Maryland, Baltimore County and recently finished Santa Fe Art Institute’s Truth & Reconciliation Fellowship. Next month he will be at Vermont Studio Center as the Civil Society Fellow.



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Victor Torres' sculptural work snapshots the relationship between information retention, capacitive touch and bronze age aesthetics, thinning the threshold between primitivism and futurism. His presentation, "The Language of the Immigrant," brings together personal experiences with broader anthropological concerns on transnationalism today. He is an intermedia artist living in Brooklyn, NY. Torres holds an M.F.A in Intermedia and Digital Arts from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) as well as a B.A. in Socio-Cultural Anthropology, from the same university. He is an Adjunct Faculty at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY.



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Interdisciplinary visual artist Allana Clarke’s work fluidly moves through video, text, photography, and performance searching not for answers but to feed her obsession with the idea of being unbound from the signification of the body. Her lecture, *A Will to Be*, considers what is inherited; the cultural distilled and held within the individual laying bare histories that are at once about her existence and those that endured before her. Clarke’s work has been exhibited/performed at Gibney Dance, Invisible Export, New School Glassbox Studio, FRAC (Nantes), SAVVY Contemporary (Berlin) and she is currently a visiting professor at Williams College.



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In Part Two of our panel we have Antonio McAfee, Kei Ito & Andrew Keiper, and Vagner Mendonça-Whitehead who will both conclude and open up the discussion section and Q+A.

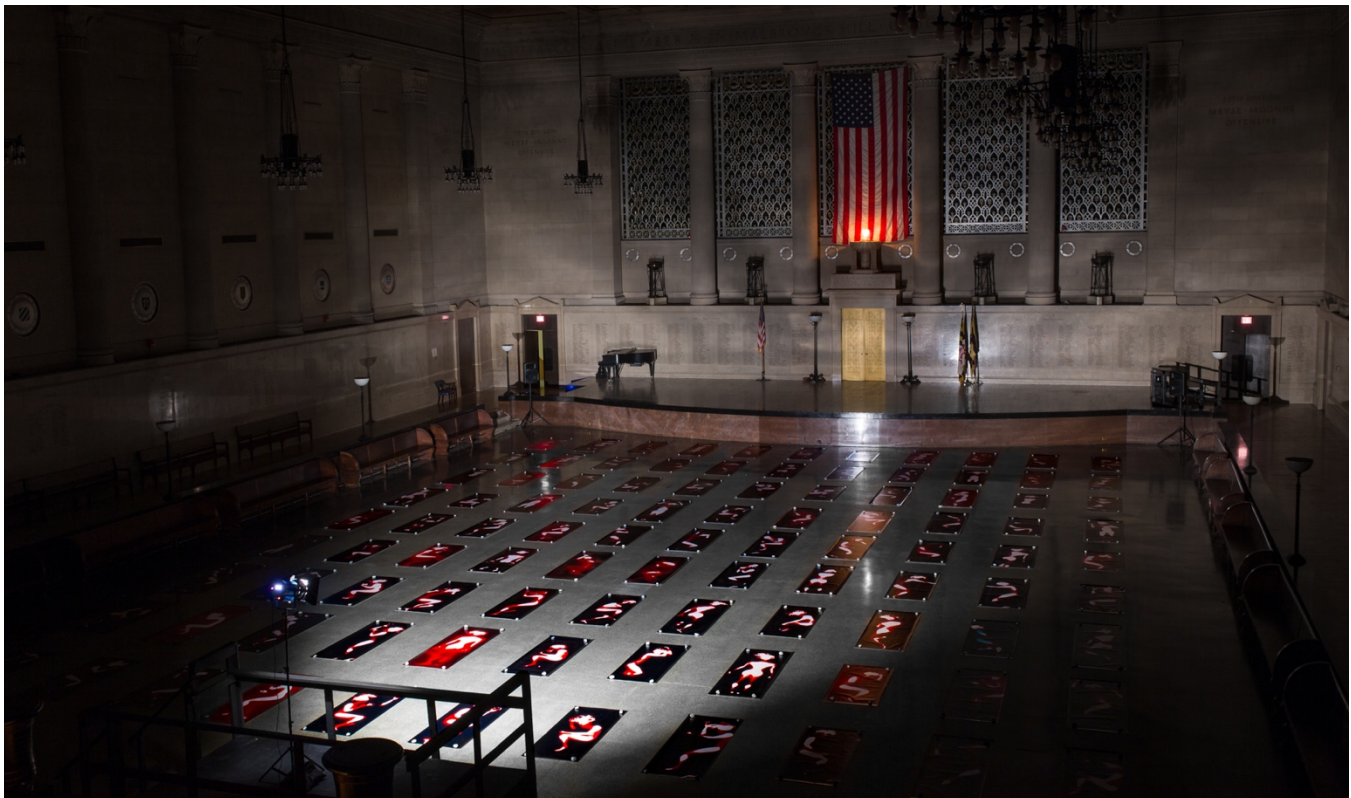
Antonio McAfee will be giving a talk titled “The Social Science of Portraiture: Reworking W.E.B. Du Bois’ The Exhibition of American Negroes” and addresses the complexity of representation by appropriating and manipulating historic, photographic portraits of the 19th century. The artist will discuss the construction of identities through portraiture, and photograph’s proliferation through economic classes and 19th century sciences, using examples from his own practice as well as photographs through history of the medium. McAfee is based in Baltimore, MD. McAfee is currently a fellow at Hamiltonian Gallery and an instructor at American University and George Washington University.



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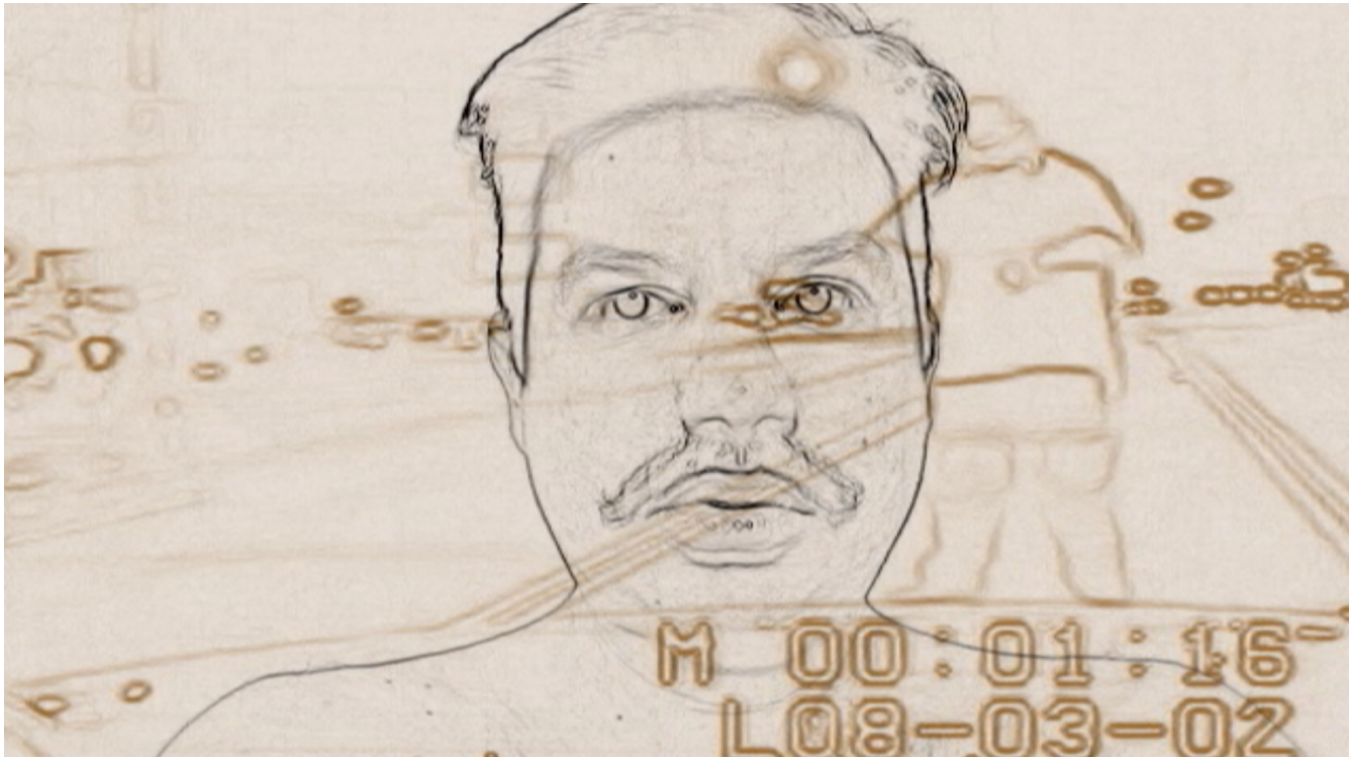
In their work together, conceptual photographer Kei Ito and sound artist Andrew Paul Keiper address personal and collective trauma through the perspective of their shared heritage: Ito’s grandfather witnessed the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, and Keiper’s grandfather helped to create the bomb. In their presentation, “Archives Aflame,” Ito and Keiper insist on the ongoing relevance of our past to our present crises, and on using immersive installation to dissent, to protest and to foreground the experiences of those subject to violence and power. Ito is an artist in residence at the Creative Alliance and Keiper is faculty at MICA in Baltimore.



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Vagner Mendonça-Whitehead's practice encompasses traditional and newer media art-making, curatorial projects and creative writings on visual culture. Recent art projects have dealt with metaphorical representations and interpretations of fear and violence, as well as aging and technological obsolescence. In his presentation "Body Controlled," Mendonça-Whitehead will cover works that refer to the monitored migrant body, the prevailing body of authority in big media, and the continued erasure or disqualification of personal narratives. As a conclusion to the panel, Mendonça-Whitehead will raise questions of exclusion of other bodies within the new media art and academic fields. Mendonça-Whitehead is the Chair of Visual Arts at Texas Woman's University.



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In my own presentation (which starts now), called “Dreaming Unification, Eating Choco-Pies, Walk for Peace, and Information Media Penetration into North Korea” I take a specific look at the DMZ border that physically separates the North and South Korea and the people, and share with you how my global activism art projects infiltrate the Korean psyche by calling on *peace streaming for unification*.



While the latest headlines related to North Korea is the buzz of Yo-Yo Ma performing at the heavily fortified DMZ on September 9, “calling for peace and the building of bridges across cultures” (Elizabeth Shim, UPI.com), the short-term effects of music, entertainment, or athletic competition to bridge peace on war fares is unsatisfactory to the history and conflict of a divided nation. Somehow the image of music soothing the traumatic past, relies on “catharsis,” and cannot compensate 70 years of separation between Korean families, all the while, the moment can be a harsher reminder of the separation for some.



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But, I’ve also become a fan of “peace” and decided that we must protest for peace, by walking, dreaming, eating, and sharing. I’ve started to dream unification, where my North Korean art persona “Kim Il Soon” is now venturing into graffiti and stencil work in her dreams of Korea’s third flag, the unification flag. I walk for peace in global peace shoes and so do my friends around the world, since one foot cannot move forward without the other.



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We eat Choco-Pie together, the food for art and healing, the South Korean manufactured chocolate marshmallow cookie-cake that is worth three bowls of rice in North Korea, and remains a strong currency in the black market and a favored smuggled good there. The Choco-Pie has become the inter-Korean symbol of love and exchanges between the two countries. I dedicate 100,000 Choco-Pies to the North Korean defectors and they were consumed by art lovers and global peace lovers alike at the 2018 Busan Biennale.



Lastly, as a way to call on peace streaming for unification, from dream worlds to the underground world, I am the artist who is sending contemporary video art history lessons into North Korea through USB drives and SD cards for the last several years with the help of North Korean refugee activists in South Korea. I do this with love and with a message to ordinary North Koreans that I love you and the world loves you.

Alongside the content of showcasing over forty modern and contemporary global artists and their works, the real message is saying to the North Koreans that you have the human rights to know and learn, to be educated about art outside North Korea like the rest of us. That, they are not alone, from the other histories of secluded countries, hermit kingdoms, totalitarian societies that too have opened up, and that since the Arab Spring to the foreseeable Pyongyang Spring it is possible to rise up, with media in one hand and freedom in the other.



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All this peace streaming work towards unification is a direct response to that demilitarized zone (DMZ) that a South Korean journalist and DMZ chronicler Hahm, Kwang Bok in the book *The Living History of the DMZ* (2004) describes it best as:

... a long band that starts from the Imjin River and ends on the coast of the East Sea. It is four kilometers wide and 240 kilometers long and looks like a giant snake (43) with many lines in it. There are more than six lines parallel in the DMZ such as the south limit line, the South Korea defense line, and the military demarcation line on the South Korean side, and the first and second defense lines, and the northern limit line on the North side. The demilitarized zone is the area between South Korea's defense line and North Korea's first defense line. The range of the distance between the two lines varies from several hundred meters to two to three kilometers. (49-50) The phrase "Demilitarized Zone" is always confusing. It means an area from which military forces, operations, and installations are prohibited. Nothing violent should exist in the zone. However, violent words such as "provocation," "brutality," and "armed spies" are produced in that zone... (49)

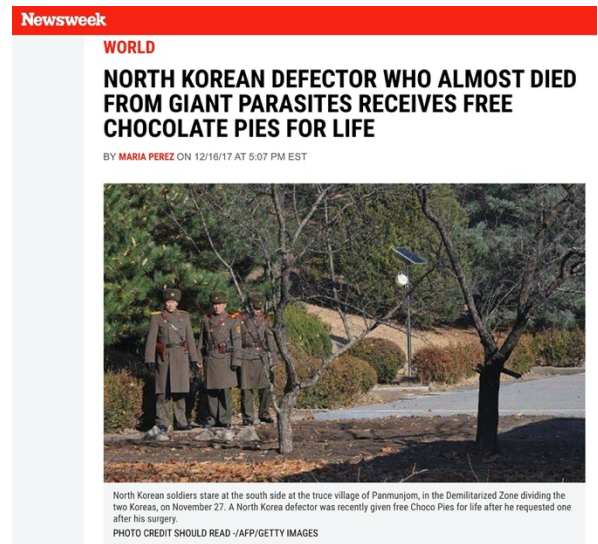


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Obsessed with the inherent trauma of our country’s split, most likely in my cultural DNA ancestral trait, reminded daily by the DMZ glorification filled with landmines and the wild nature, my dreaming of unification today works to protest it, and look back in time to the moment I got to ride on bus right through it from the South to North Korea in 2004 as I was visiting the glorious mountains and waterfalls of Keumkangsan area. Back then, I could have never imagined the future when Trump gets to jump over to the other side like jump roping or hop scotching, nor did I foresee a future where a North Korean soldier who ran across the DMZ for his life and was shot, woken up from the surgeries in South Korea asking for a Choco-Pie.



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Instead, I spend my summer time today in South Korea, farming during the weekends and secretly building an army of future feminist Korean contemporary artists by teaching at Ewha Womans University, and also squeeze in time to help send rice, money, and information into North Korea with the support of North Korean defectors in South Korea. While I was helping to liberate South Koreans girls from patriarchy, my wishes for peace extended to the North Koreans, hoping for their own kind of liberation from the regime.



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Similar to how information and media such as K-pop and drama, Korean Wave Cinema, and world news have been disseminated into North Korea, along with the global activism effort known as media and information penetration, my video art works have been going into North Korea by ways of helium balloons over the DMZ, the way in which was the most provocative and effective method, Choco-Pies, flyers, and media being exploded down by a timer or parachuted directly to the sites where North Koreans reside, and by water, a way that is now being granted (to limited degrees) so that North Korean refugees in the South can believe they have come to a better place (of democracy and empathy), where they are supported to share and communicate with their loved ones in North Korea.



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In the series of video art history lessons, all ten lessons each at 10 minutes length focuses on a topical theme that is valued in contemporary art such as: Art and Life; Art and Food; Art, Money, Power; Abstract Art and Dreams; Feminism, Are We Equal?; **Art, Lives Matter, and Social Justice**; Remix and Appropriation Art; Art and Technology; Art and Silence; Art and the Environment. They were produced like children TV shows to make art history and contemporary art more relatable to North Koreans and everyone else in the world.

My MICA Colleague Ryan Hoover so incisively wrote about my work recently, he says:

The work is not simply about the North-South relationship but is a gesture within this relationship... .. This is an element of North-South relations rarely shown in the US. From the American perspective, the people of North Korea are simply pawns on this stage of international struggle, which is defined and fueled by the cult of personality, now of Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump, a patterned established through multiple generations of Cold War propaganda on both sides... ..In contrast to the paternalistic figureheads that continually reconstruct a nationalist political narrative, Umma (Professor Kim in the videos, an extended version of my alter ego) is a more shamanistic figure that fosters a sense of care between individuals across political borders.



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Thinking about Borders and Bodies, I would like to show you a clip of the video that has been going into North Korea by USB drives and SD cards since 2017 in **Video Art History Lesson 6: Art, Lives Matter, and Social Justice**. Also, want to holler a thank you to Andrew Keiper, who is also a panelist today, who assisted me in this project and for his amazing sound engineering and all-rounded media talented help on it.



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