

Introduction

The MFA Studio Art Terminal Project Exhibition stands as a testament to the depth of inquiry, experimentation, and creative rigor undertaken by this year's graduating cohort. Over the course of their graduate studies, these five artists have pushed the boundaries of material, concept, and form — engaging with the world around them and responding with works that reflect both personal vision and critical dialogue. This exhibition brings together a diverse range of practices, from painting and drawing, to three unique takes on the medium of photography, offering a vivid snapshot of contemporary art making in its many voices and possibilities.

At the heart of this exhibition is the spirit of exploration — a willingness to take risks, embrace uncertainty, and confront the questions that shape not only artistic practice but our understanding of the world. Through processes both intuitive and research-based, these artists examine themes of cross-cultural personal history, perpetual change, the built environment, sensual activation through mark-making, and ideas around existence itself. Their works reveal a commitment to material investigation and conceptual depth, often challenging conventions and reimagining established forms.

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For each of these five artists, this exhibition is the culmination of three years of intensive study, including academic research and creative studio output, as well as an immersion in the Department of Art as instructors in undergraduate courses and labs. Through continuous mentorship from the faculty, as well as guest artists, critics and curators, the grads in our program are given a high bar for their creative output. As much as this exhibition celebrates individual achievement, it also reflects the collective experience of a community engaged in dialogue, critique, and collaboration. The studio becomes a space of exchange — where ideas are tested, perspectives shift, and creative voices emerge. The results are works that speak not only to the artists' dedication and vision but to the complex and often unpredictable nature of making art.

We invite you to spend time with this exhibition and to consider the various questions it poses. This exhibition marks both a culmination and a beginning: the threshold of new possibilities for these artists as they step into the next chapter of their creative lives.

ADAM DESORBO

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Adam DeSorbo is an artist from upstate New York currently living in Oregon with his rescue dog, Rex. He holds a B.S. in Environmental Studies from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry and is an MFA candidate at the University of Oregon. In addition to his formal education, he was taught to build by his dad in rural New York, learned to use an axe through backcountry trail work in New Hampshire and Maine, became overwhelmed with the abundance of the earth in the mountains of the east, and is currently wading in the complications of human ecology through studio practice and a life spent outside. It is his belief that work rooted in experience and process is where the self and the earth are woven with grief, magic, and everything in-between.





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Building Blocks of an Altered Earth

Building Blocks of an Altered Earth embraces the paradoxical nature of archiving a world in perpetual flux. At first glance, the meticulously arranged wooden grid—composed of four rows by six columns—suggests the cataloging impulses of a natural historian or an archivist, each compartment acting as its own repository of images, objects, and fragments. Yet, on closer inspection, a tension emerges between the order implied by the grid and the entropy suggested by materials like charred wood and photographs in various stages of fading or decay. These elements point to both the destructive forces of fire and the inexorable passage of time, underscoring the impossibility of truly halting the processes of transformation.

Photography acts as a central role, functioning as a tool for both documentation and remembrance. Repeated imagery, grids of small prints, and trail camera photographs capture fleeting moments— a deer in motion, a solitary figure, or a landscape’s ephemerality. These temporal imprints contrast sharply with the evolving nature of the objects around them, highlighting the ways in which photographic images both preserve and distort memory. The systematic repetition of photographs, reminiscent of a contact sheet, alludes to the ritualistic character of archiving: each repeated frame is another attempt to hold onto a moment before it dissolves.

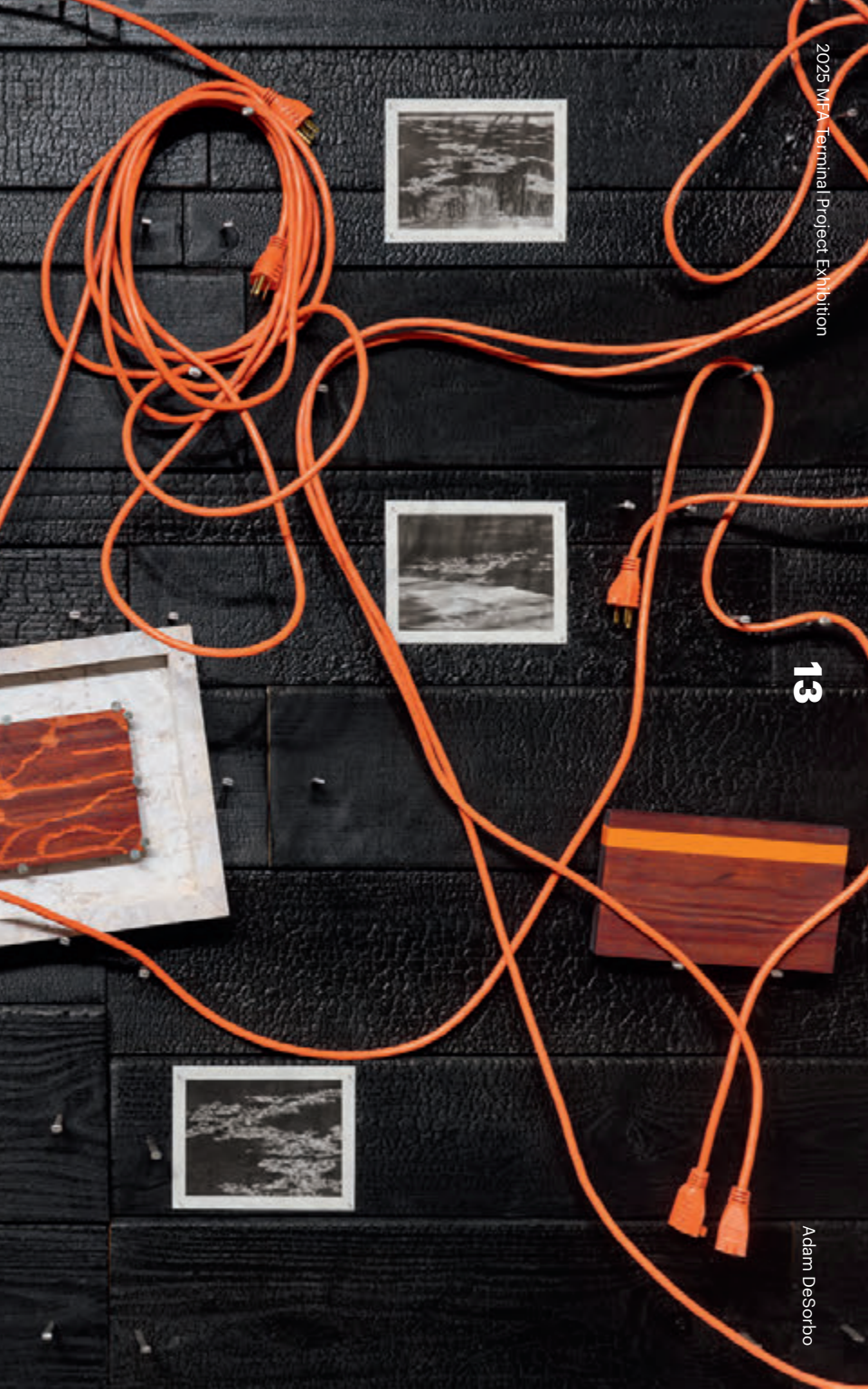
Scattered throughout the compartments are handwritten notes, pinned scraps, and collaged fragments that are both personal and provisional. They function as reminders that every act of collecting and archiving is, at heart, selective and interpretive. The presence of color-blocked panels—vibrant fields of orange, green, or red—punctuates the otherwise subdued palette. The color fields can be read as acts of intervention, symbols of our very human desire to mark and shape the world, even as we attempt to record it.

Ultimately, *Building Blocks of an Altered Earth* refuses to resolve the tension between preservation and loss, offering instead a dynamic, open-ended constellation of materials and gestures. By placing ephemeral, naturally decaying objects alongside repeated attempts at photographic capture, the piece makes visible our contradictory impulses: we attempt to fix time, yet we are forever confronted by its transience. In this way, the work suggests that the true value of an archive lies not in its power to definitively preserve, but in its capacity to engage us in an ongoing dialogue with the impermanent nature of our experiences.





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Xinyu Liu (born 1996, Hangzhou, China) is a visual artist and photographer currently based in Eugene, Oregon. He is interested in the social function of urban landscape and visibility of architecture's power implications. His work also concerns the conflicts between personal memories and overarching narratives of history. In his practice, Xinyu reconstructs psychological landscapes that transform historically significant sites into narrative memories as a condition of retaining the past. Through this process, he not only traces his own resonance within modern infrastructure but also reveals the interconnected structures that lie beneath the façade of democracy.

He is currently a MFA candidate at the University of Oregon, winner of Urbanautica Institute Award 2023, Jan Zach Memorial Scholarship, Joe and Alona Fischer Scholarship Fund Award, and recipient of Nature Art Post-85s Young Photographers Foundation Award. In the past year, his works has been shown in gallery in Portland, Fukuoka, Athens, Eugene and Shanghai.





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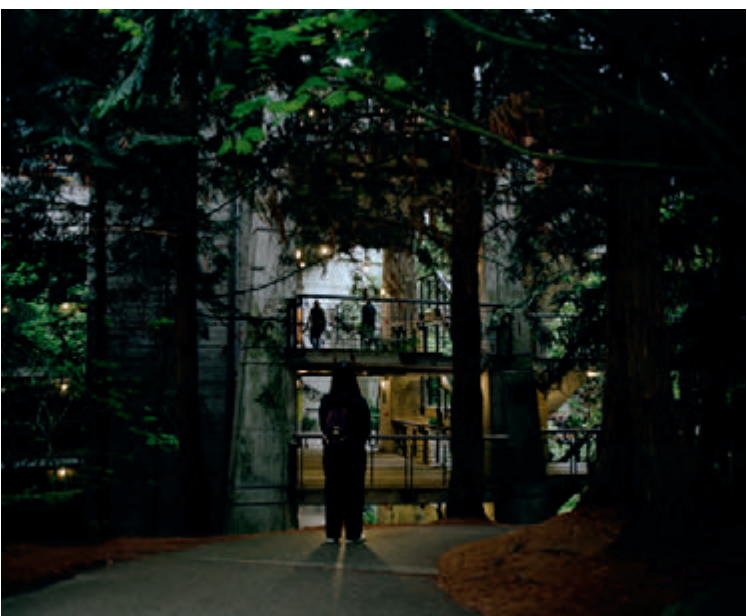


Through the Revolving Door (2022 - Ongoing)

My photographic project *Through the Revolving Door* stems from my fugitive desire to navigate “semi-public” spaces such as hotel lobbies, airport lounges, and shopping mall atriums — venues that appear accessible yet impose invisible constraints. Echoing the concerns articulated by urbanist theorists like Michael Sorkin, who highlight the diminishing presence of true public spaces and its repercussions on social dynamics amid pervasive privatization, my project aims to transgress the thresholds of these institutional spaces and unravel the spatial logic embedded within them.

The series begins by scrutinizing the facade, whether manifested through doors or windows, as a symbolic gateway subjected to monitoring and mediation by the overseeing institution. This scrutiny extends to the determination of opaque accessibility to resources, unraveling the spatial utility of these entry points as sites of engagement and communication. Through my lens, the revolving door becomes a metaphorical threshold. Incorporating Situationist’s practice of “psychogeography,” the project aims to capture not only physical barriers but also the “optical unconscious” that Walter Benjamin describes — those hidden, often unseen forces shaping our interaction with these spaces.

Through the Revolving Door acknowledges the semiotics and vantage points established by architecture photography, yet subverts audiences’ expectations in its representational form. Conceptually, I draw on Henri Lefebvre’s concept of “spatial triad,” recognizing the layers of “conceived space”(architecture studio shots that indicate its intended functions before occupation) and “perceived space”(the timeless, romanticized view of architecture) as the premise, but choose to further emphasize the “lived space” where everyday social interactions occur. Formally, my photographs counterpose transient human presences against concrete urban landscapes, creating tensions and micro-narratives that remain intentionally unresolved, evoking the layered ambiguity inherent in semi-public spaces with narrative suspension. Instead of capturing architecture as passive backdrops, my photos become illuminated windows into psychological landscapes actively produced by social practices, economic forces, and power dynamics, suggesting a world beyond the frame.

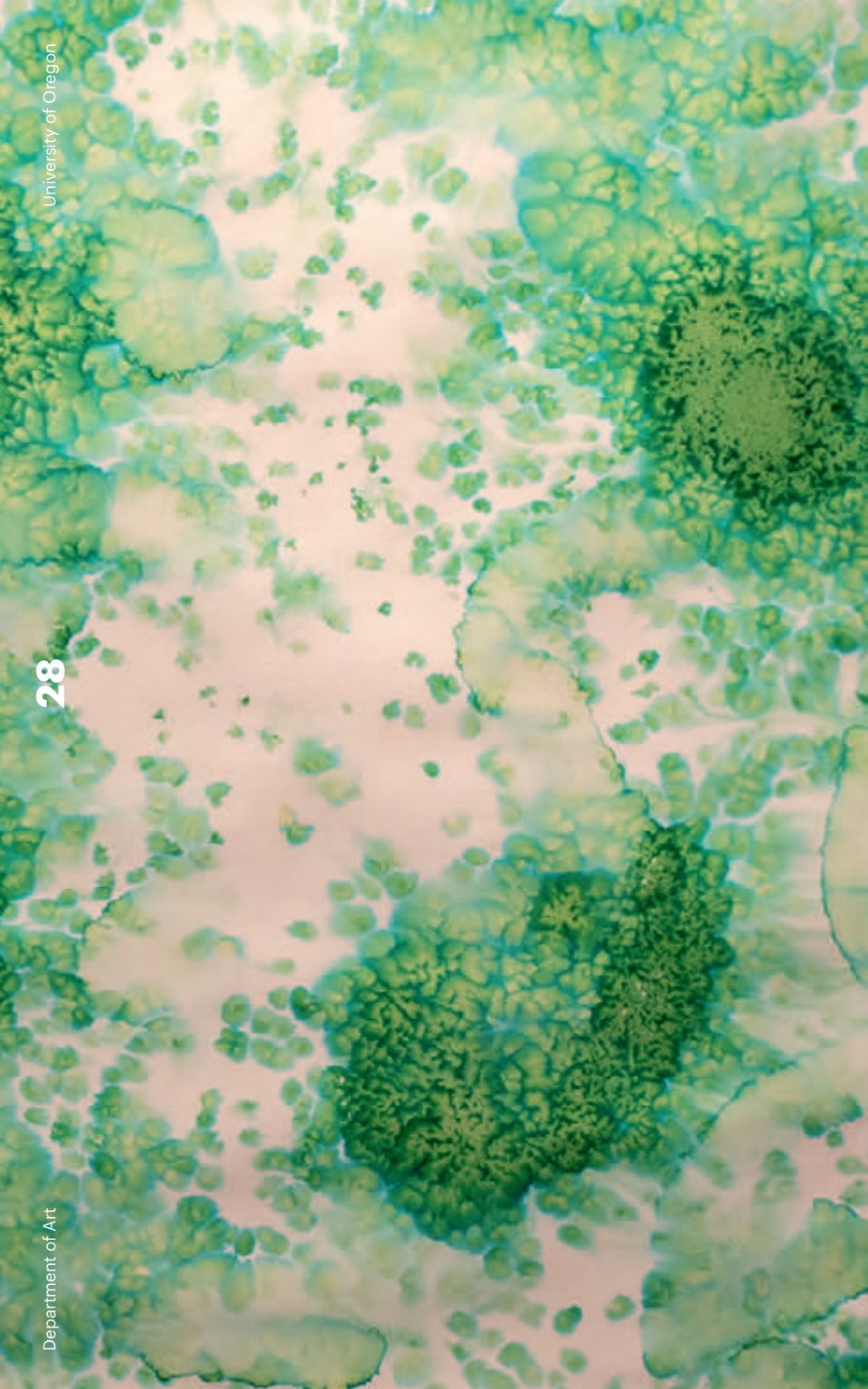




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KATE MONTGOMERY

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Kate Montgomery (b.1986) is an interdisciplinary artist investigating death, grief, and the interdependence of the material world through installation, sound, and light. Her work engages microscopy and archival strategies to explore what remains of a life beyond the lifespan. Through an archaeological excavation of personal loss, Kate attempts to measure how far we can trace the redistribution of our biology beyond the burial environment and, in turn, better understand our place in the Cosmos.

Kate was raised in the South Wales Valleys where her early education was conducted entirely through the Welsh language. She later attained a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art with honors from the University of Wales. In 2019, Kate completed a Curatorial Internship in Painting and Sculpture at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), where she worked on Diego Rivera's *America*, a major exhibition of Rivera's work from the 1920s to the mid-1940s, with a specific focus on the monumental *Pan American Unity* mural.









My work emerges from a liminal space that bridges death and the living world. It is an archival endeavor rooted in ontological inquiry that seeks to preserve, comprehend, and reorganize traces of existence, from the minuscule to the macrocosmic. The material realm of my practice explores various forms of drawing, often through the careful reconstruction of fragmented natural materials encased in thin layers of ceramic slip. The original objects are cremated, leaving only traces and dust behind. I arrange these delicate remains into dimensional drawings in undulating layers, through which I explore a visual language inspired by the fluidity of matter in the material Cosmos. I draw with the bone-like fragments and impressions, forming complex fossils, each shard gravitationally bound to the next, suspended in the slow process of accretion. The immaterial realm of my practice centers experimentation with microscopes, light, refraction, poetry, sound, and traditional Celtic song to create archives of existence that transform empty spaces into microcosms of remembrance and lament.

*Death indeed destroys things,
but does not annihilate atoms;
For it but severs their union,
and joins them anew with each other.¹*

Beyond death, your body will slowly erode back to dust, taking a million splintered journeys into unknown futures. So it goes...² How do we talk about what has already disappeared? I trace the lines around what I remember of you with my fingers, knowing how quickly the wind will blow it all away³. I try to hold on to what is left and amplify it out into the Cosmos. We are both here somewhere, we are on a continuum. I run my fingers over the ridges of your voice, etched precisely into a shimmering surface. You are here, rendered permanent on a new tablet of hieroglyphs that pulls you out of the cosmic fugue and into a continuous present.

Here, you can still teach me things. We are reaching back towards each other across time.

Rough surfaces undulate against my hands, resembling shell and stone, Cretaceous. I feel the hardened clay split in two, once sandwiching a thin relic that has now disappeared in fire. I find ways to enter the space between, this void - a delicate slice of nothingness, paper thin and barely perceivable. Like a curious animal, I am compelled to pull it apart, to see what imprints were left behind, to study what remains. Each piece is a brittle clamshell that I must destroy, little by little, to encourage the work to emerge, to grant it visibility. The clay bends and cracks, it fragments, revealing a material archive of the effects of time, pressure, heat, intention, hope. It harbors traces and processes; it holds my ideas so tightly I have to pry it open to find them again. Sometimes I surprise myself.



This is a geological endeavor. This is field work.
I am digging to the other side of the Earth.
I am trying to find you.

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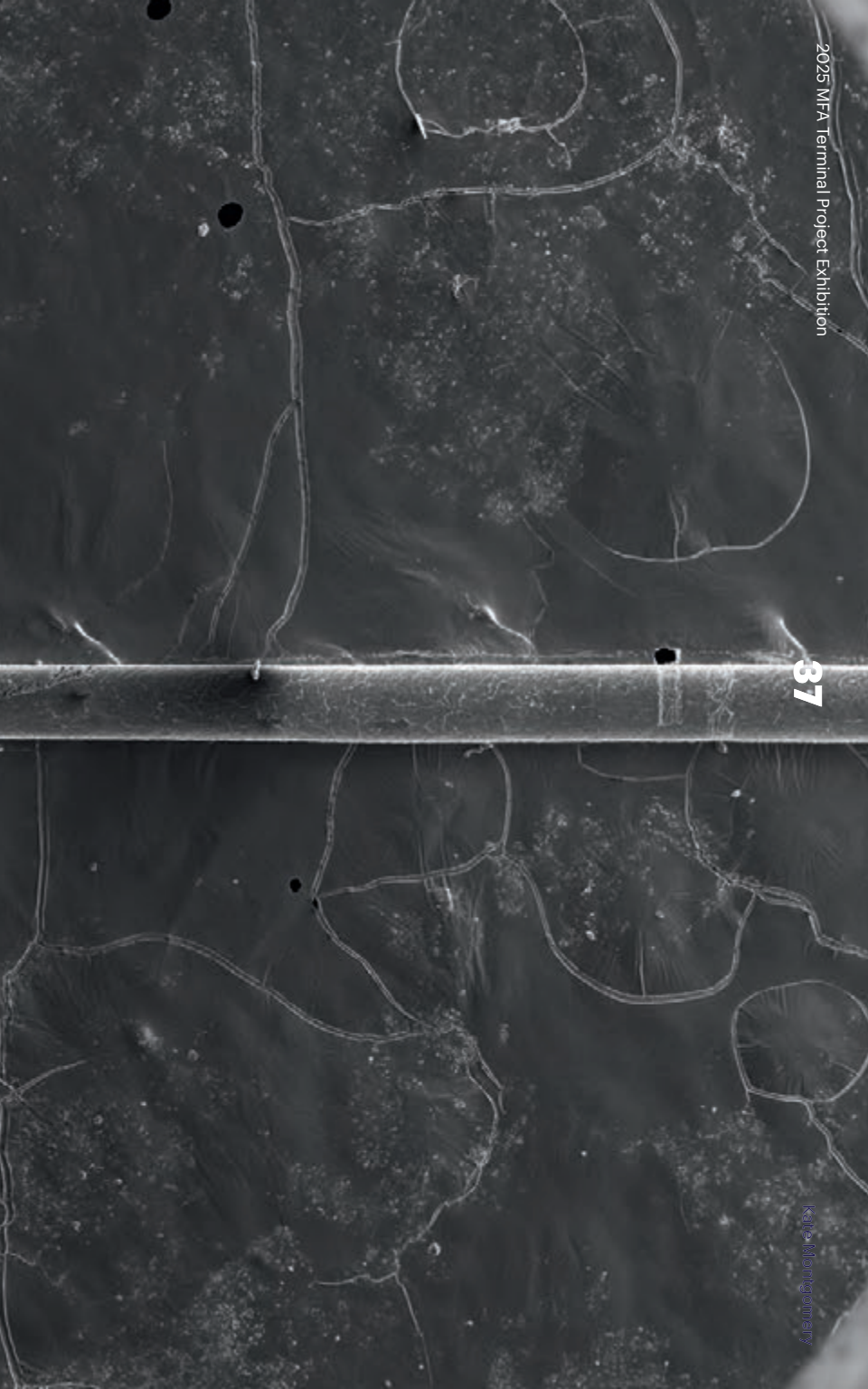
¹ Lucretius. *On the Nature of Things*. Translated by W. H. D. Rouse. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924.

² Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse Five*. New York: Dell Pub, 1969.

³ Brautigan, Richard. *So the Wind Won't Blow It All Away*. New York, N.Y.: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1982.











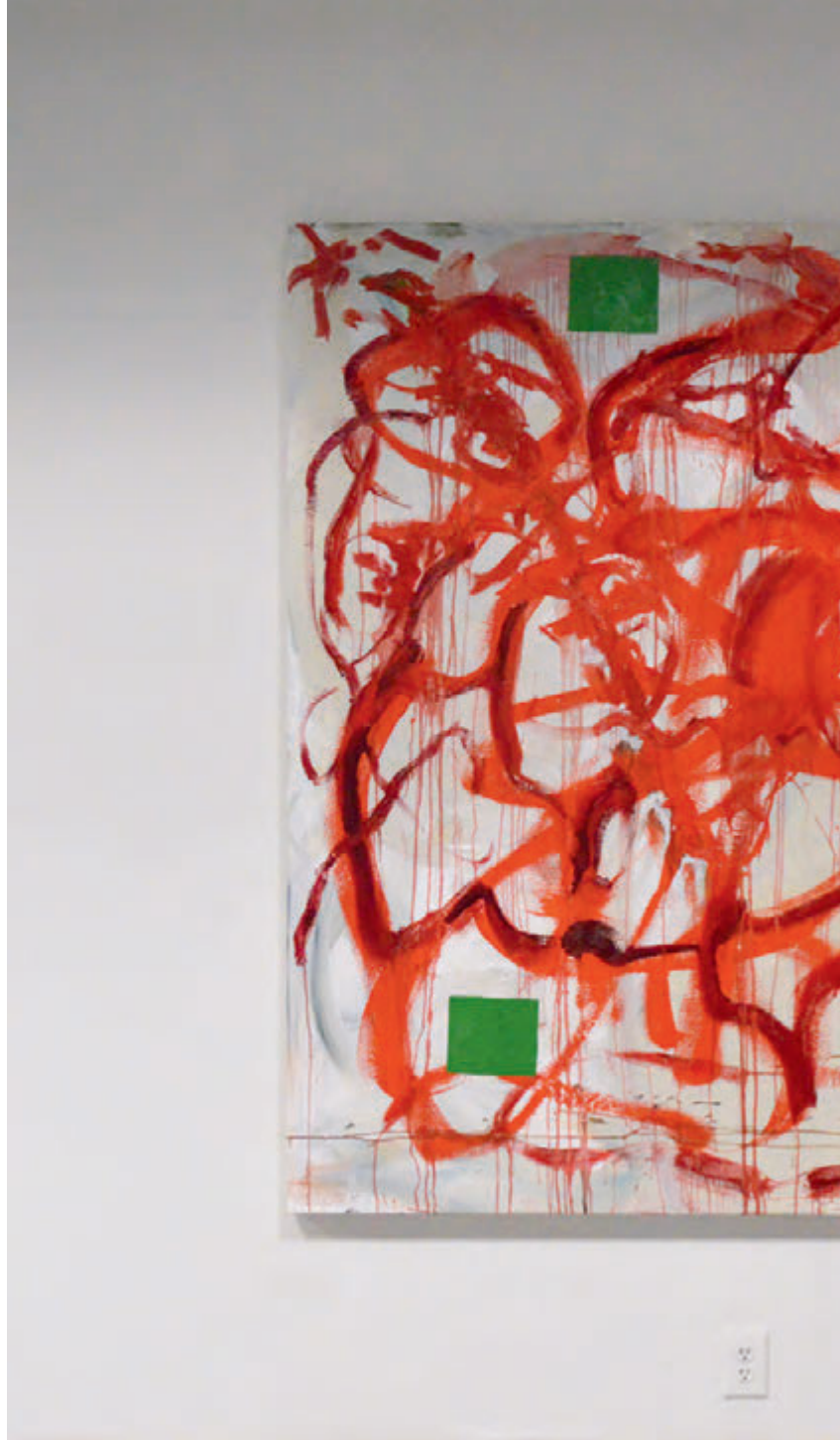
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An abstract painting featuring a central vertical line. The left side is dominated by thick, expressive orange brushstrokes over a background of white, yellow, and blue. The right side is more complex, with white, red, and blue brushstrokes, and a prominent red circular shape near the top. A black pound sterling symbol (£) is centered on the vertical line.

JENS PETTERSEN

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Jens Pettersen is a painter born in Arendal, Norway. His work responds and engages with the semiotics of contemporary painting. Working primarily in the vernacular of painterly abstraction his work reflects on painting's function as a stand-in or body double – and how gestural marks generate an inaccessible language which incite an analysis of painting's play with hidden bonuses, idiosyncrasy of articulation and unresolved, yet unrelenting production and inquiry.





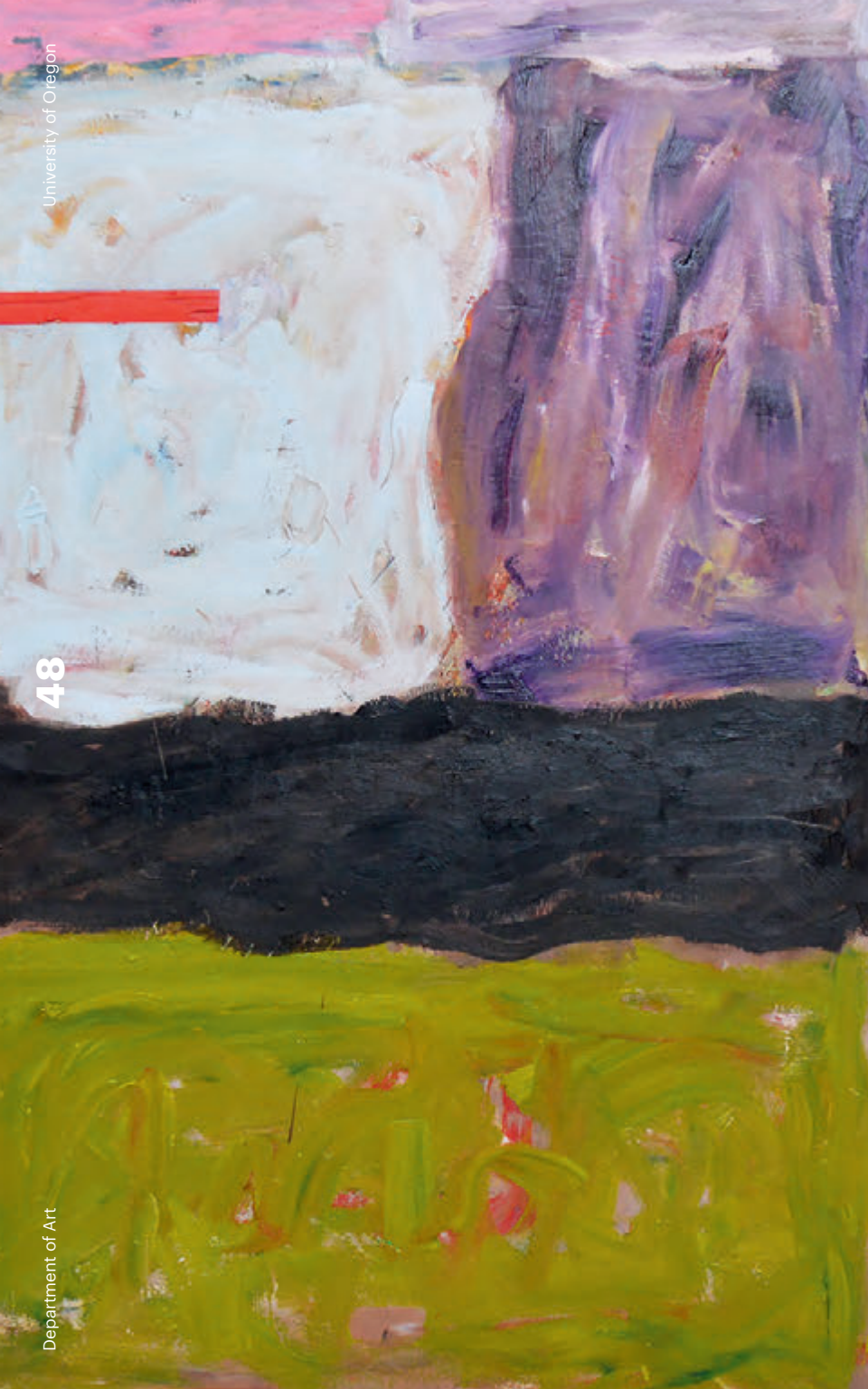




Painter Merlin Carpenter in conversation with Isabelle Graw, the Frankfurt based art theorist and critic, proclaimed quite accurately that the painting is a 'readymade' object — a commercial, mass-producible, ordinarily recognizable object that through context and intention is described as art. Carpenter argues that the recognizability of the object that is canvas stretched over a wooden bars is at this point a clear cliché — a commodity based on its form in history, its economic value and signifier of status. The same can be said for painterly gestures or tools, he also states 'A drip is a readymade'. A *current* drip is a form of trick or signifier — referencing action painting of the late 40's, 50's and 60's, where energy, bravery and risk is translated from the painter to the canvas inhabited by a post war ethos of progressive advancement, now, in the current moment, a reference to these strategies fall under scrutiny because of their conservativeness, lack of problematization and general acceptance and historical privilege. Painting finds itself now in what art theorist Rosalind Krauss described as a *Post Medium Condition* in her essay *A Voyage on the North Sea*. She argues that the medium specificity of modernism has become obsolete to describe the art of today and that instead of searching for purity of medium, we must rather investigate the purity of the general art itself.

Painting, in its simplest way, still holds its value in its activation of the body, akin to dance or song. Your senses are activated as you move your arms, jump around the studio to articulate a mark, inhale the smell of walnut oil, paint thinner, and varnish. Holding a tube of oil paint in your hand is as writer Susan Sontag would describe it — an erotics of art. The heavy, strangely cold tube sits in your hand, then you perversely squeeze its contents out, dragging the paint with your brush, pallet knife or hands across the canvas. There is in this relationship a closeness between you and the object. Smell, touch and physical sensation is critical to engage with the artwork as something other than merely an object intended for display. This engagement of smell and touch, alongside painting's historical steadfastness turns the painting into the status of a quasi-person, an avatar thinking and acting on its own terms. Smell, texture and touch — body odor almost, creates an assertiveness of the otherwise 'dead' objecthood or commodity of an artwork. The relationship between investigative criticality and analysis of objects can in this way be flipped. A painting can in this configuration of quasi personhood be the one who is critical, the one who is judging, the one who knows more than you do.









GRACIE ROTHERING

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Gracie Rothering is a Latinx, Indigenous, and Black artist currently living in Oregon with her beloved dog, Oscar. Rothering's practice focuses on race, identity, visibility, and adopted life through photography. Rothering was born in Bogota, Colombia, in 2000 and was adopted that same year. She was raised in a small town called Cochrane in Wisconsin. Rothering is the recipient of the Harold Spitznagel Medal for Achievement in Art that she received at Augustana University in 2022. She is an MFA candidate at the University of Oregon.

www.graciannamae.com

2/2/1966

Habría querido pasar donde las actividades culturales y propiciarlas. Muchas cosas entre ellas el por qué pocas cosas en un momento. No quiere que pasara que fue por que en la época anterior lo hizo por una por que le interesaba un mejor momento y futuro mejor pero que deseara en todo lo que yo no puedo decirte que en un momento que también estaba solo y yo estaba con la ayuda de la parte que sepa comprender mis motivos.

También por estos días, se está haciendo del ocio. He querido con temas de arte y de humanista hablar con los años de cuando que desde una muy buena idea, como de modelos y que en un solo día que viviste el 22 de marzo del 2000. Los 10.00 por un tiempo en el capital sin embargo. Creer que como mucho al que dicen que nos podemos inventar. Esto está se lo quise.

Mucho espero que de cuando muy bien me las cosas adelante sean las cosas para ti y de cuando adelante de cuando como por ellos. Y que por medio de sus costumbres actuales y en algunas cosas una idea de bien. El cual fue poder se sentir agusto de lo como yo. El solo echo de cuando durante nueve meses. Por para me en aquella muy grande.

Siempre de vez en cuando en momentos y cuando de cuando la mejor en la vida de cuando mucho. De cuando y que siempre bien lo he para ti donde que en un momento y que siempre a Dios. Yo que es un momento que sea cuando sea adelante en después con momento.

Como:
YAHIRI ANDREA GARCIA

Holoi:

- Algunos padres adoptivos espere que se encuentren bien de salud lo siguiente es por ustedes que quisiera que misiera leyera la carta y que tambien sepan que los quiero mucho por su modo de vivir que les gusta muy bien al vivo que esto va ha estar con una buena familia que va ha estar rodeado de amigos para misiera vivir que tendra lo que yo misiera parte hacer y que ustedes siempre estaran dispuestos a brindarle en momentos mejor y un hogar estable para que misiera se sienta mal y crezca orgullosa de los padres que tiene que siempre estaran con ellos en las buenas y malas. Ojala que misiera de sus aparceros para brindarle todo esto por que yo se que sera la mejor y la mas feliz que pueda ser en su vida y se sienta orgullosa de ustedes como yo me siento sintiendo ahora el saber que este familia unos padres buenos y dedicados a lo que es oportunidad que Dios le dio de adoptar con vida como familia.

No me acuerdo palabras para escribir lo que ustedes como con todo amor me como aparceros el que le voy brindando una oportunidad de vivir mejor una presente buena y linda.

Se despues de ustedes.

YRENE ANDELA GARCIA ES.





As a transracial adoptee, my work explores the intersections of memory, identity, and race through photography. My practice is deeply rooted in my lived experience, growing up in a white family while navigating the complexities of my Colombian heritage. Through a combination of analog and digital techniques, I construct images that reflect the fragmentation and dissonance inherent in adoptive life.

Some of my most cherished memories took place at my grandparents' house. They were warm, loving people. My grandmother was my best friend, and the moments I shared with her and my grandfather remain deeply special. It wasn't until I began exploring themes of race and identity that I learned my grandparents initially resisted my parents' decision to adopt children of color. They worried about societal judgments and, fueled by their biases, urged my parents to consider other options. However, their perspective shifted when they met my brother, and they embraced us unconditionally. This revelation was shocking and illuminating, reinforcing how social and historical perceptions of race influence personal relationships.

These moments of belonging and alienation have shaped my work which examines how identity is formed through fragmented memories and cultural disconnection. I am interested in how people are seen—or unseen—by others. One recurring phrase I have encountered is, "I don't see color." While often intended as a statement of love and acceptance, this notion can feel dismissive of the lived realities tied to race. It raises questions about visibility and belonging that remain central to my practice.

Photography became my chosen medium because of its ability to preserve what is visible yet inaccessible. I work with in-camera collage, projection, and layered textures to create depth and abstraction, mirroring the complexity of identity and adopted life. Inspired by artists like LaToya Ruby Frazier, Joel Sternfeld, and Aaron Turner, I document personal and historical narratives that reflect individual and collective experiences. By projecting images into physical spaces, I disrupt the boundaries of traditional photography, emphasizing the layered and elusive nature of memory. I transform three-dimensional spaces into two-dimensional images by capturing these projections as photographs. This 2D perspective acts as both a window and a wall: a window into my emotional connection with the materials and a wall that prevents deeper access to the

memories themselves. The flattened perspective underscores how I am forced to engage with specific memories—not as lived experiences, but as fragmented remnants viewed from a distance.

A significant element of this exploration is a letter from my birth mother—a rare and precious artifact in the adoption experience.

In this letter, she explained the difficult decision to give me up, expressing love and hope that I would have a life free from poverty and uncertainty. While this letter provided clarity, it did not resolve the lingering questions about my identity or the cultural dissonance I continue to navigate. I incorporate this letter into my work, layering its words within my photographic compositions to symbolize the duality of knowing and unknowing, presence and absence. I also present the original documents I received at birth, allowing viewers to engage with the tangible information I grapple with.

Ultimately, my work is an ongoing dialogue between past and present, personal history and broader societal narratives. Through photography, I seek to create a space for reflection—for myself and others who grapple with fragmentation, belonging, and self-discovery.







Hello,

Mr. and Mrs. Adoptive Parents I hope that you find yourselves well in health (you are well). The following is to tell you that I would like Daniela to read the letter and also know that I thank you very much for your act of love. I feel very good knowing that she is going to be with a good family and that she is going to be surrounded by a lot, a really lot of love, that she will have what I never was able to have and that you will always be able to provide her with a better tomorrow (future) and a stable home so that she never feels bad and she grows up proud of the parents she has—that she can always count on you in the good times and bad. Believe me that I don't doubt your capacity to bring her/bless her with all this because I know that you will be the best and the most beautiful thing that Daniela will have in her life and she will feel proud of you like I am feeling now. Knowing that she will have sweet/tender, dedicated parents through the great opportunity that God has given you to adopt a little girl like Daniela. I can't find the words to describe what you are doing with so much love nor how to thank you for bringing the opportunity for such a sweet, little beautiful person to live a better life. I say goodbye to you.

Yazmin Andrea Gómez

Top of letter indicates 21/3/2000 (21/March/2000)

Hello Daniela. When you read this letter you will be understanding and asking yourself many things. Among them, why were you given in adoption. I don't want you to think that it was because I don't/didn't love you—on the contrary I did it out of love so that you would have a better well-being (life, upbringing) and a better future so that you could grow up with everything that I couldn't give you. I want you to understand that also I am alone and that I can't count on the help of your father. I hope you understand my motives.

Daniela: On this date March 21 of 2000, I am ___ (21? 20?) years old and your dear sister is 6 years old. I tell you that you have a very good grandma We are from Medellin and I want you to know that you were born the 11 of March 2000 at 10:00 p.m. in Bogota in the hospital San Ignacio. Believe me that (I want it) very much that one day we be able to find each other/meet. Of course if that's what you want.

Baby: I hope that you are well that your adoptive parents are the best for you and that you feel surrounded by much love for them and that through your customs (habits/behavior), virtues and teachings (education) that you will be a good little girl which your parents will be proud of like I am. The fact of having you for nine months was for me a very proud (I was very proud to have you (as mine) for nine months.) Always I am going to carry you in my heart and mind. I wish you the best in life. I love you very much. Your mom. And may the light always shine wherever you are and may you always have God (God be there for you). Now He is the only one to help us go forward. I say goodbye with much affection/caring.

Yazmin Andrea Gómez





2025 MFA Terminal Project Exhibition

Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR
Exhibition on view from May 17th — June 16th, 2025, with an opening
reception on May 16th

Department of Art Faculty + Staff

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