

# Redefining Modernism

An exhibition of  
American Modernist art  
from the 1940s - 1970s

Addison Rowe Gallery 

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Three Groups of artists epitomized the style of American Abstraction that emerged in the 1950s. These are, The American Abstract Artists (AAA), the Bay Area Abstract Expressionists, and the Taos Moderns. Although the artists in these groups lived and worked in different cities, they began their respective journeys studying at the same schools, under the tutelage of the same teachers who taught them the same Modernist philosophies which ultimately shaped their individual visions.

The artists who remained in New York City and San Francisco enjoyed greater commercial success than their Taos counterparts. In contrast, those who made their homes in Taos enjoyed far greater inspiration from their environment which beautifully permeated their aesthetic vision.

Life as a painter in New Mexico, while endlessly inspirational, also meant a life of economic struggle – often painters barely made enough to survive. Painting in New Mexico also restricted the artists' renown to a small community. That said, life in such an abundantly beautiful landscape coupled with the unbelievably rich light that bathes New Mexico impacted these artists and their work in a positive way.

The Transcendental Painting Group (a precursor to the Taos Moderns) believed that through the act of painting an artist could make the world a better place regardless of whether or not anyone actually saw the art. This philosophy permeated the artistic pursuit of the Taos Moderns. The geographic differences between the Taos painters and their East Coast counterparts in no way impeded their creative achievements. The Taos artists often taught and exhibited their work alongside their east and west coast peers. The difference is that by moving to New Mexico they gradually faded out of the spotlight, whereas those who remained behind in public view were elevated to an iconic status. Their work, however, remains among the greatest produced by American artists in the mid-20th century.

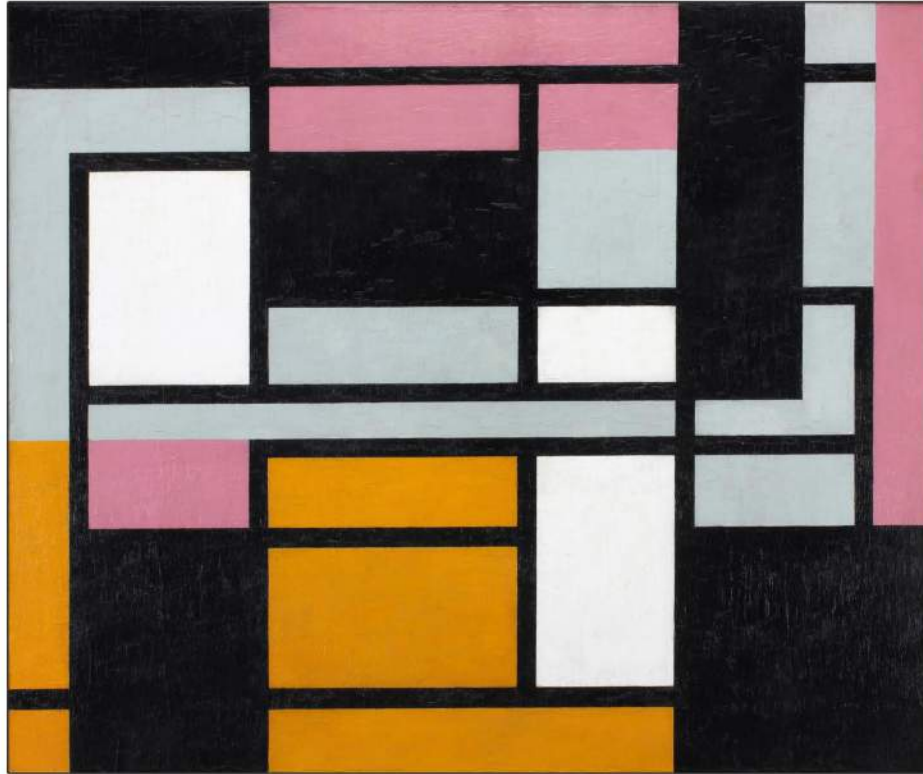
Throughout this catalog we have included details about the artists to help readers recognize the connections between these individuals.

Louis Ribak (1902-1979)



*Canyon Series #17*. Acrylic on canvas. 23 3/4" x 35 1/2". Signed: lower right  
Studied at the Art Students League with John Sloan. Founder of the Taos Valley Art School . WPA member.  
Taos Modern.

Edward Corbett (1919 - 1971)



*Untitled*, 1947. Oil on canvas mounted on board. 30" x 36"

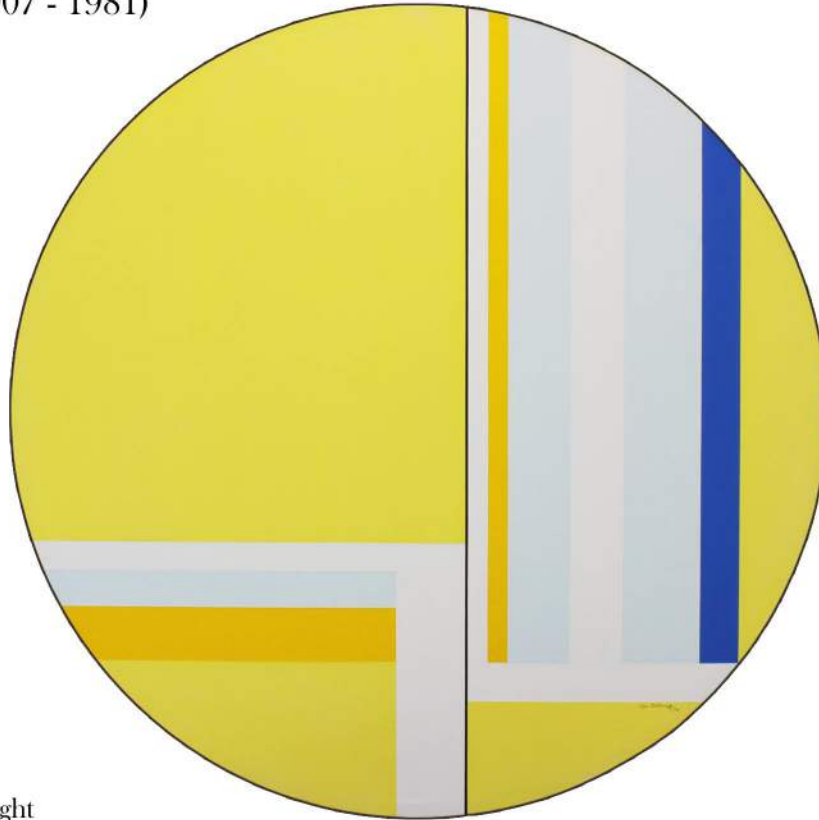
Member of the AAA (American Abstract Artists). Taught at the California School of Fine Art (CSFA).  
Student At Ribak's School. Taos Modern

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Of the great number of interactions between artists among the American schools, several stand out. Eugene Gallatin and Andrew Dasburg both studied under Robert Henri. John Sloan instructed Louis Ribak, Herman Trunk, Rolph Scarlett, and George LK Morris. Thomas Hart Benton was Jackson Pollock's favorite teacher at the Art Student League and he left the school when Sloan took over. Clay Spohn, Edward Corbett, Rickard Diebenkorn, Mark Rothko, and Clyfford Still were all faculty members at the California School of Fine Arts at the same time. Joseph Albers taught Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly, and Oli Sihvonen at the Black Mountain College, where Cliff Harmon attended from 1949 – 1950. Ilya Bolotowsky replaced Albers as the head of the Black Mountain College from 1946 – 1948 and later became an adjunct professor at the University of New Mexico in the 1960s. Diebenkorn also attended UNM, graduating with his MFA, and stayed on to teach. Of course Raymond Jonson was the head of the UNM art department at the time. In addition, Ed Corbett, Oli Sihvonen, and Louis Catusco all studied at Ribak and Mandelman's Taos Valley Art School.

The connection between the east and west coast artists of the mid 20th century and the New Mexico artists is in the quality of the artwork they produced during this era, "The Art of the New." The modernists of New Mexico bridged the gap between the two major art centers of New York and San Francisco to collectively create one voice of American Modernism.

Ilya Bolotowsky (1907 - 1981)



*Yellow Tondo*, 1973.  
Acrylic on canvas.  
39" diameter.  
Signed and dated: lower right

Part of The 10. Founding member of the AAA. Teacher at the Black Mountain College. Worked for the WPA. Teacher at UNM



Robert Ray (1924 - 2002)



*Untitled Abstraction*, 1958. Oil on canvas. 40" x 24"  
Signed and dated: lower right.  
Taos Modern

Louis Catusco (1927 - 1995)



*American Series #5*. Oil on board. 47" x 34"  
Signed: middle right  
Student at the Brooklyn Museum Art School and Ribak's school

Ward Lockwood (1894 - 1963)



*Rainbow Bridge*. Watercolor on paper. 20 3/8" x 28 1/2". Signed: lower right  
Exhibited with the Bay Area Abstract Expressionist group. Worked for the FAP. Taos Modern

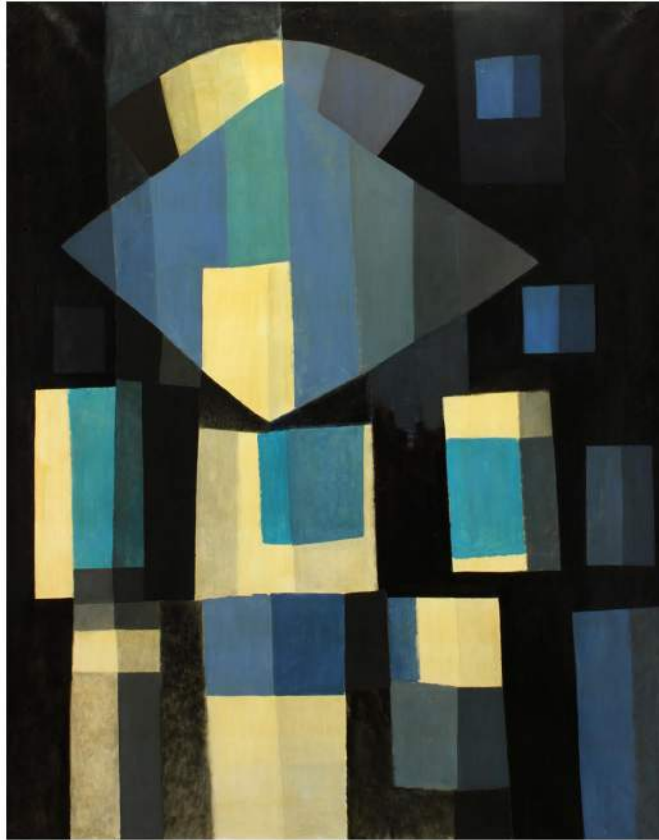


Clay Spohn (1898 - 1977)



*Untitled Landscape*, 1952. Oil on canvas. 26" x 38". Signed and dated: verso  
Worked for the WPA. Taught at the CSFA. Studied at the Art Students League in NY. Taos Modern

Robert Wolff (1905-1978)



*The Stranger*, 1958. Oil on canvas. 52" x 40". Signed and dated: verso

Studied at the Chicago Art Institute and Yale. Founded the Institute of Design in Chicago. Member of the AAA.

Herman Trunk (1899-1963)



*Untitled*, c.1920's-1930's. Watercolor on paper, 12" x 11" sight. Signed: lower left  
Student at the Art Students League with John Sloan. Exhibited w/ Stuart Davis, Joseph Stella,  
Charles Demuth, Arthur Dove, John Marin.

Beatrice Mandelman  
(1912 - 1998)



*Yellow Sun*. Oil on canvas. 31 ½" x 23 ½". Signed: lower right

Student at the Art Students League, NYC. Worked for the WPA. Founded the Taos Valley Art School.

Albert Gallatin (1881 - 1952)



*Untitled*, 1938. Oil on canvas. 20" x 24". Signed and dated: verso  
Park Avenue Cubist. Founding member of the AAA. Studied under Robert Henri.



Werner Drewes (1899 - 1985)



Vertical Formation, 1973. Oil on canvas. 22" x 36". Signed and dated: lower left & right

Student of Klee at the Bauhaus school in Weimar. Took private lessons with Kandinsky. Taught at the Brooklyn Museum School and Columbia University. Founding member of the AAA. Worked for the WPA. Taught at the Institute of Design in Chicago.

Andrew Dasburg (1887 - 1979)



*Ranchos Looking North*. 17" x 24". Pastel on paper. Signed & dated: lower left  
Student of Robert Henri at the Art students League, NYC. Invited to Taos by Mabel Dodge Luhan.  
Shown in the 1913 Armory show. Taos Modernist.

George L.K. Morris (1905 - 1975)



*Study in Mauve and Green*, 1941. Gouach and collage on paper. 17 ¼" x 13 ½". Signed and dated: lower right  
Studied at Yale University. Student of John Sloan at the Art Students League. Park Avenue Cubist. Founding member of the AAA.

John De Puy (born 1927)



*Monoliths #2*, 1958. Oil on canvas. 47" x 47". Signed and dated: verso

Studied at Columbia University. Student of Vaclav Vytlačil at the Art Students League. Studied at Hans Hoffman's School. Taos Modern.

Cliff Harmon (born 1923)



Interior #7, 1949. Oil on board. 20" x 15". Signed and Dated: lower right  
Studied at the Bistram School, Ribak's School, and the Black Mountain College. Taos Modern.



Hilaire Hiler (1898 - 1966)



*Gray Shadow Series: Run*, 1956. Oil on board. 11  $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 16". Signed and Dated: lower right  
Worked for the FAP and the WPA. Founded the Fremont College in LA and the Hiler College (of art) in Santa Fe

Thomas Benrimo (1887 - 1958)



*Monolith*, 1954. Oil on masonite. 29 ½ x 40 inches. Signed: lower left  
Studied at the Art Students League, NYC. Taught camouflage design during WW2. Taos Modern.

Rolph Scarlett (1889 - 1984)



*Abstraction.* Gouache on paperboard. 4" x 4 1/4". Signed: lower right  
Student of John Sloan at the Art Students League. The first American artist selected to provide paintings alongside Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Rudolf Bauer for the Museum of Non-objective Art (the Guggenheim).

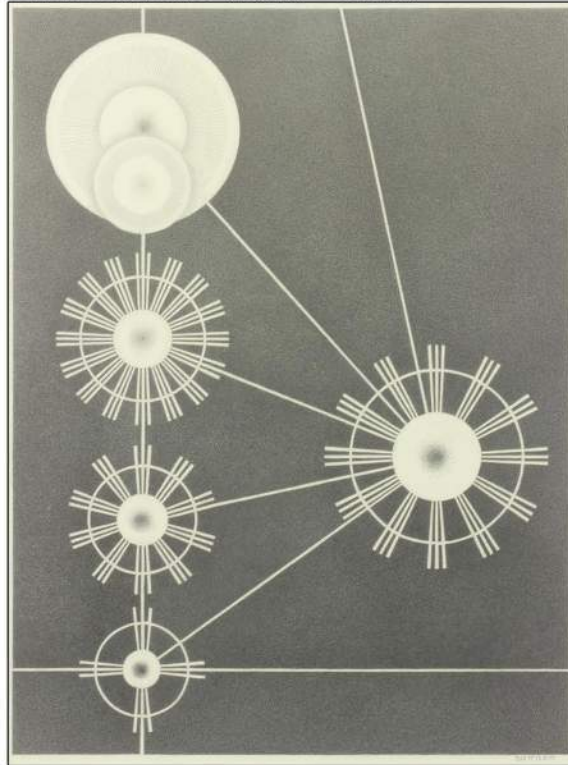
Earl Stroh (1924 - 2005)



Paradigm, 1964. Oil on canvas. 14" x 17". Signed: verso  
Studied at the Art Students League, NYC. Studied at UNM. Taos Modern.



Emil Bisttram (1895 - 1976)

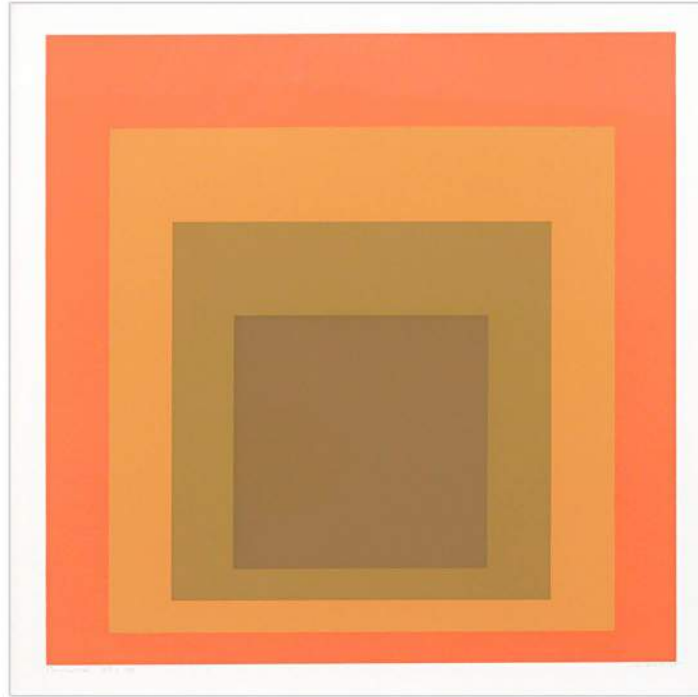


*Psychic Energy Centered.* Pencil on paper. 18 x 13 ½ inches. Signed: lower right

Taught At Roerich's Master Institute, NYC. Awarded Guggenheim to Study with Diego Rivera. Opened the Heptagon Gallery and the Bisttram School of FA in Taos. Co-founded the Transcendental Painting Group 1938. Taos Modern.

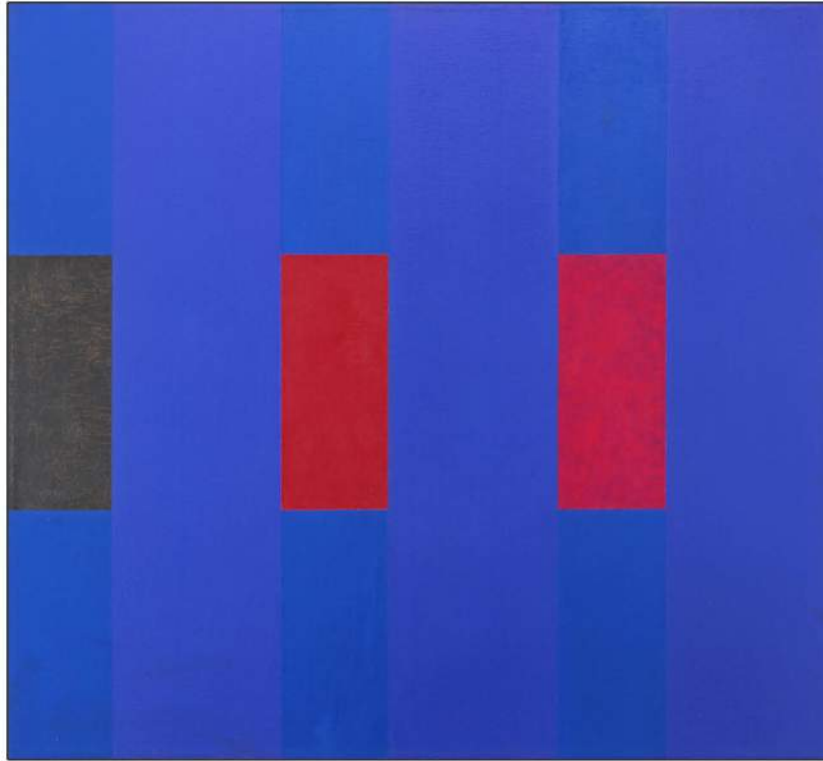


Josef Albers (1888 - 1976)



*Concord*. 11" x 11" sight. Signed 'Albers '65' lower right and titled and numbered '88/120' lower left  
Studied and taught at the Bauhaus school in Weimar with Klee and Kandinsky. Taught at the Black Mountain College and Yale University.

Oli Sihvonen (1921-1991)



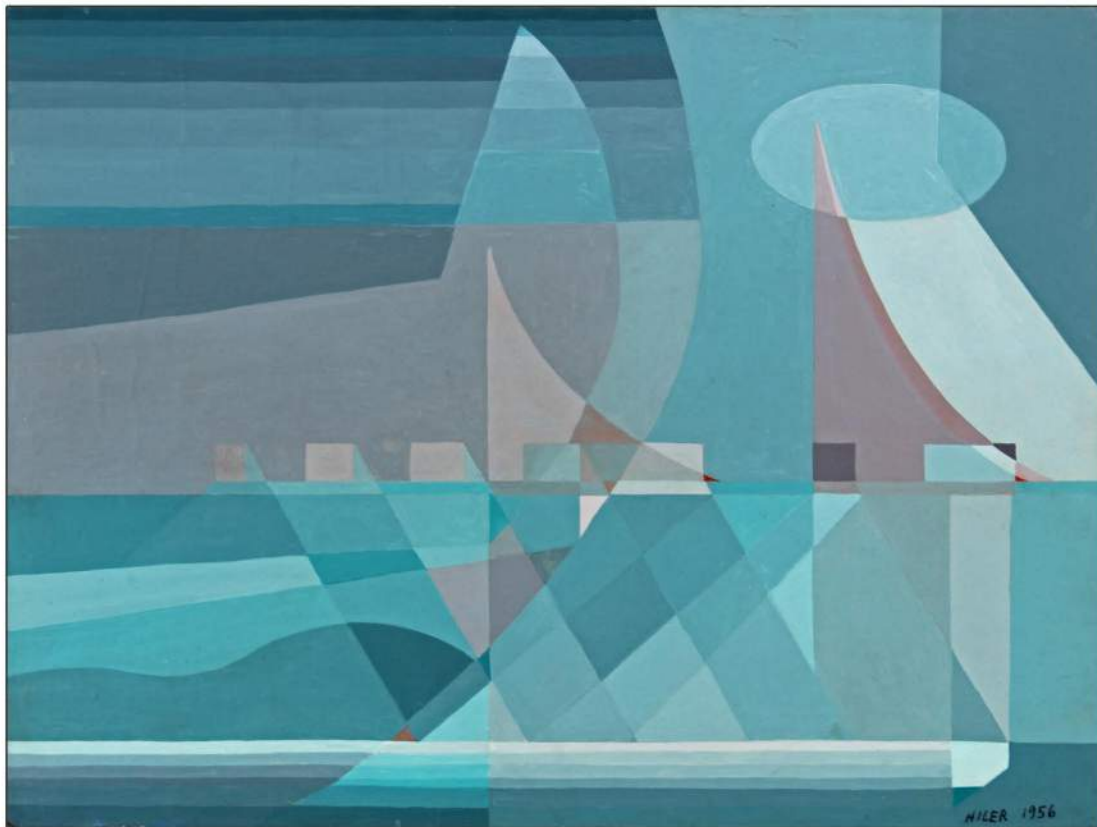
*3 x 3 (Variant) 3 on Blues*, c. 1970's. Oil on masonite. 28" x 30 1/4". Signed: verso  
Studied at the Black Mountain College and was very influenced by his mentor Joseph Albers.  
Studied at Ribak's School. Taos Modern.

Raymond Jonson (1891 - 1982)



*Watercolor No. 17, 1950.* Watercolor on board. 21" x 27 ¼". Signed, titled & dated: verso  
Studied at the Chicago Academy of Fine Art and the Art Institute of Chicago. BJO Nordfeldt was his mentor.  
Co-founded Transcendental Painting Group. Taught at UNM.

Hilaire Hiler (1898 - 1966)



*Red and Green Complementary Harmony*, 1956. Oil on paper. 11 1/2" x 15 1/2". Signed and dated: lower right.

Werner Drewes (1899 - 1985)



*Untitled*, 1947. Oil on canvasboard. 18" x 24". Signed and dated: lower right



# Addison Rowe Gallery, LLC

229 East Marcy Street, Santa Fe, NM 87501

This exhibition is designed to celebrate the importance of the post WWII modern artists from Taos. These individuals were dubbed the “Taos Moderns” by their peers in 1956. This show highlights their work, historic significance, artistic expression, and determination as artists to remain true to their modernist approach. It illustrates the connection to their exceptional teachers and fellow artists on both coasts.

Initially, I had no idea how big a project this was and I feel I have only scratched the surface. I hope the ideas in this catalogue create a spark of interest within its readers to learn more about this overshadowed group of artists.

VAR

Cliff Harmon (born 1923)  
*Sol #9 (escarpment #3)*, 1969  
Acrylic on canvas  
30” x 18”  
Signed: lower right



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