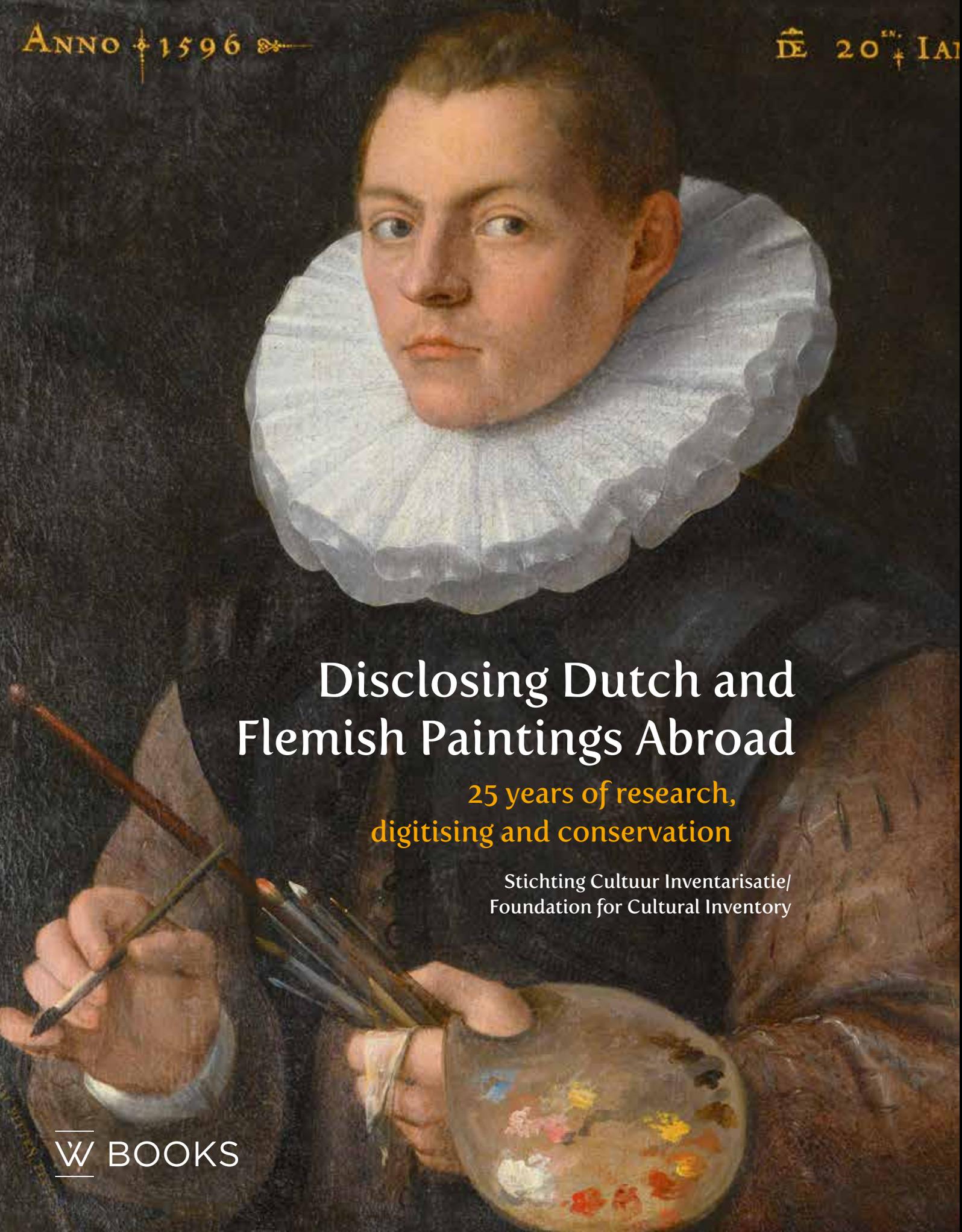


ANNO † 1596 †

DE 20th IA



Disclosing Dutch and Flemish Paintings Abroad

25 years of research,
digitising and conservation

Stichting Cultuur Inventarisatie/
Foundation for Cultural Inventory

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Foreword

For more than 25 years, the Foundation for Cultural Inventory (SCI) has been locating, researching, and publishing extraordinary Dutch and Flemish artworks in collections around the world. This has been the initiative of our director, Lia Gorter, who recently received the Frans Banninck Cocq medal from the municipality of Amsterdam in recognition of her service.

This anniversary book gives a glimpse into the distribution of Netherlandish cultural heritage abroad. There is a heavy concentration of 17th-century Netherlandish artwork in Russia, where a great deal has been collected, but Dutch and Flemish paintings can also be found in countries as far-flung as India, Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Belarus, South Africa, and Cuba. Unfortunately, there is not always enough awareness, interest, or money to adequately manage and preserve this common heritage.

SCI is keen to fill this gap. It is actively tracing Dutch cultural heritage abroad, as well as offering conservation and management advice to under-resourced foreign museums. SCI has also worked to make its discoveries available digitally, giving curators, art historians, and the wider public access to otherwise unknown artworks.

SCI is warmly welcomed abroad. We are offered generous access to foreign collections because our foundation operates on a non-profit basis, is independent, and does not serve political interests. We also contribute to the management and preservation of foreign museum collections, and we offer master classes on the latest restoration techniques to conservators abroad.

Numerous collections have been inventoried, restored, and exhibited, thanks to the work of our numerous volunteers, as well as the financial support of our friends and our sponsors, including the Prince Bernhard Cultural Fund, the Cultural Heritage Agency, and local Dutch embassies. We're especially indebted to the Dutch embassy in Moscow which took on part of the costs of this commemorative publication.

We would like to continue our work. Dutch cultural heritage is scattered throughout the world. It deserves to be known and preserved. We would even argue that the SCI is carrying out a governmental responsibility – and performing it successfully. Lia Gorter would like to hand over the baton to a new director, but this requires financial support, as does the further digitisation of artworks in foreign collections. SCI will therefore appeal for structural funding from the Dutch government and – with deepest gratitude – from you, our faithful supporters.

We're grateful to the numerous people who contributed and assisted to the realisation of this anniversary book, and we hope it will give you a good impression of what SCI is all about.

Teun van Hellenberg Hubar

Chairman

Stichting Cultuur Inventarisatie / Foundation for Cultural Inventory

Anonymous (ca. 1600)

Kitchen Interior

Kitchen interiors became a genre around the middle of the 16th century. They fell into three broad categories. Works by painters such as Pieter Aertsen (ca. 1508-1575) in Amsterdam and Joachim Beuckelaer (ca. 1533-1574/5) in Antwerp featured large figures in the foreground, surrounded by still lifes of vegetables, meat and/or fish, often with biblical scenes in the background. The architecture, figures, and foods put wealth on display. Then there were works by Antwerp painters such as Maarten Van Cleve (1527-1577/81) and Peeter Baltens (1527/8-1584), which, following the model of Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1526/30-1569), featured more modest peasant scenes: smaller figures in humble kitchen interiors with fewer still life elements. A third group, to which the Ostankino painting belongs, emphasized the kitchen itself: its space, furniture, equipment, and the work being performed there.

Several paintings of the third group have been attributed to Maarten van Cleve. There was also a fine example by Ludger tom Ring the Younger (1522-1584), signed and dated 1562, which was destroyed at the end of World War II in Berlin. Ring came from Germany but worked in Antwerp from 1553 to 1568. Another painting from around 1570, questionably attributed to Ring, has features of the Ostankino painting: while her husband enjoys leisure time with other men, the lady of the house works with her servants in a kitchen filled with

pottery and pewter dishes, pets and a parrot, the head of a calf, a towel rack, a lavabo with pewter tank and bowl, etc.

The Ostankino painting dates from around 1600, well after the passing of Van Cleve and Ring. It shares a similar primitivism with works by those artists, but it is so rich in detail, it is a treasure trove for anyone interested in domestic and costume history. For example, the rattle held by the young boy in the background (it is a boy because he is wearing a boy's cap) is identifiable. One might even be able to identify the prints that the men at the table are looking at – if one only had some clues where to look. For the 'Dream of Jacob' painting above their heads, the painter may have used a print by Adriaen Collaert after Hans Bol, and the mountainous background might have been inspired by another print from the same series, ca.1582-86. To the right of the painting is a cupboard full of glass. Above the door are two bronze candle holders with a Nuremberg brass alms dish with fish bladder decoration as a reflector behind them. A salmon steak and two so-called 'Jan Steen pitchers' hang on the shelves. The lady of the house, who is cleaning parsnips, wears a loose gown – the so-called 'vlieger' that was typical for married women. The woman seen from her back wears a closed bodice, typical for unmarried women. The maid wears a red wool underskirt (actually, a middle skirt) and a



Pewter brandy bowl, found in Hulst (one ear missing) and damaged Westerwald Jug from the Rijksmuseum

Jan Steen Pitcher, detail from engraving by Theodor Matham from the Rijksmuseum



Kitchen Interior, ca. 1600

Oil on panel, 71 x 60 cm,
Moscow, Ostankino Estate Museum, inv. 413

blue working apron, as was custom. But her expensive cap and ruff are out of character. Nor would the lady of the house have been dressed in her best clothes while cleaning parsnips. So, the painter allowed himself some liberties, probably to show off his skills in meticulous renderings.

All in all, the painting is profoundly endearing, not only due to its wealth of domestic details, but also because of the warm bonds between the

various figures – and even their dogs. Despite its exceptional character, it has not been possible to find a plausible attribution for the painting, nor to find works that seem to be by the same hand. Not even the painting's place of origin is clear. The scene is certainly Netherlandish – but north or south? Or could it have been made by a refugee living and working in Germany? Let's hope that one day, the mystery will be solved.

Greta Koppel

Curator of Dutch and
Flemish Art

Kadriorg Art
Museum of Estonia

Jacob Gerritsz. Cuyp (Dordrecht 1594-1652)

A Girl with Rooster & Boy with a Goose

Dordrecht painter Jacob Gerritsz. Cuyp painted both traditional as well as allegorical portraits, which garnered him considerable public success. Pictures of children with domestic animals were typical of his work. Some of these portraits depicted real people, while others were genre paintings often with hidden meanings. Cuyp also painted pairs of pictures of children with fowl. Among the best known are *Child with a Goose* and *Girl with a Basket of Eggs*, which hang at the Louvre in Paris.

The Kadriorg Art Museum's *A Girl with a Rooster* is considered a play on the "hennetaster" (hen-groper) motif, which typically features an unequal love affair. This motif was popular amongst certain artists, including Cuyp's probable teacher, Abraham Bloemaert. A painting on the theme attributed to Cuyp is also documented by the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD). If a 'hen-groper' was an older man who grabbed at young girls, the young girl holding the rooster in this painting seems to be the antithesis. Such pictorial puzzles were highly valued by educated people in the mid-17th century.

Deciphering the meaning behind *A Boy with a Goose* seems to be simpler. The boy holds a slip of paper inscribed with the artist's name as well as the following French text: *Mon-oÿe: faict toût*, the spelling of which allows for several interpretations. The text could mean 'my goose does everything'. In this case, the painting might depict the tale of the goose who lays golden eggs, which was a familiar one in the Netherlands at that time. Or the text could mean 'money achieves everything', in which case the picture could offer us a glimpse into the distorted values of an early capitalist society. A third possibility: In the middle of the 17th century, French was spoken as the language of culture in the Netherlands, but few people were familiar with the written language. Keeping this in mind, the text could be interpreted phonetically: 'My eye does it all'. This would seem to allude

to the illusory nature of the visible world and to the artist as a great illusionist.

Fred G. Meijer, a former curator and connoisseur of Dutch and Flemish 17th-century painting, dated the portraits to the later period of Cuyp's work, circa 1650. Meijer considers *A Boy with a Goose* to be Cuyp's own work but believes *A Girl with a Rooster* was produced in the studio. The boy's portrait certainly seems much livelier than its partner.

In the 19th century these paintings were housed at the von Krüdener manor house in Uue-Suislepa, Estonia, as can be seen in a painting by Anna Von Krüdener. One can detect *A Girl with a Rooster* on the wall, partially hidden by a Falconet Cupid figure. Nothing is known of the paintings' earlier provenance, although the letters DVS on the back of *A Boy with a Goose* may hint at a previous owner.



Anna von Krüdener, *Green Salon of the Uue-Suislepa Manor House*, 1887, Watercolour, Viljandi Museum

Photo: Kanut

The Cuyp paintings were acquired by the Art Museum of Estonia in 1940. They have been shown in several exhibitions, including the 1964 exhibition at the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, celebrating that museum's 200th anniversary. That exhibition included works from other member states of the Soviet Union to which Estonia was annexed in 1940.

A Girl with a Rooster, ca. 1650

Oil on panel, 55.4 x 45.2 cm

Not signed

Estonia, Kadriorg Art Museum

inv. EKM VM 108

Photo: Art Museum of Estonia
(Stanislav Stepashko)



A Boy with a Goose, ca. 1650

Oil on panel, 55 x 45.4 cm

Signature below left: J. G. Cuyt fecit

Estonia, Kadriorg Art Museum

inv. EKM VM 109

Photo: Art Museum of Estonia
(Stanislav Stepashko)



Jan Thomasz. van Kessel (Amsterdam 1641-1680)

Bleaching Linen near Haarlem

Sheets of linen laid out to bleach in the sun: a familiar motif, drawn by Dutch painters from impressions of real life. But this motif also had a concealed symbolic meaning. The Dutch Protestant poet Jan Luyken (1649-1712) wrote that linen bleached in sunlight resembles snow and calls to mind the Biblical description of the 'righteous' woman who was clothed in clean white linen (Revelation 19:8). This interpretation has been applied to Jacob van Ruisdael's views of the bleaching fields around Haarlem. Jan Thomasz. van Kessel's *Bleaching Linen near Haarlem* was undoubtedly inspired by Van Ruisdael's works and could evoke similar associations of meaning.

Jan van Kessel was the son of an Amsterdam frame maker named Thomas Jacobsz. van Kessel. He might have been a pupil of Jacob van Ruisdael (1628-1682) but was certainly influenced by him. In her 1992 monograph on van Kessel, art historian Alice Ingraham Davies, sees not only the influence of Van Ruisdael in the Pushkin painting, but also that of Jan Vermeer van Haarlem (1628-1691). She notes common features in the artistic evolution of Van Kessel and Vermeer in the 1670's: a shift towards a less varied colour range and less impasto brushwork. Based on these comparisons, as well as the outline of the signature on the painting, Davies dates *Bleaching Linen near Haarlem* to the final period of Van Kessel's career, between 1675 and 1680.

The two towers on the left at the horizon are identified by Davies, who references Seymour Slive's monograph on Jacob van Ruisdael, as the towers of Heemstede Castle, near Haarlem. The towers figure in works by Van Ruisdael and are also depicted in another Jan van Kessel painting, *A Bleaching Ground outside Haarlem*, which hangs in the National Trust Collection at Felbrigg Hall in Norfolk, England. Davies regards that work as closest to the Pushkin Museum painting in terms of pictorial treatment. There is a variation on much the same composition in the Hermitage

in St. Petersburg, as well as two additional versions of the motif from the late 1670's, now in the Kunstmuseum Basel and a private collection.

The Stichting Cultuur Inventarisatie (SCI) has enjoyed collaborative relations with the staff and management of the Pushkin Museum since the 1990's. During a conference in Moscow, I wanted to visit an exhibition at the Pushkin. Long lines of visitors snaked in front of the museum. I didn't have much time. I was a member of the Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV) and I had established contact with a Russian counterpart. I let slip that I was disappointed to not be able to visit the museum because of the long lines. My contact picked up the phone and told me that I could now go to the museum's staff entrance to be met by German-speaking curator Marina Senenko. Marina invited me to see Dutch pieces in storage. Viewing the paintings together created a bond for life.

At that time, Marina was Head of the Department of European and American Painting, and she was revising the museum's catalogue of Dutch art works. Back then, she had no Internet and little access to Dutch archives. She sent questions to the SCI by fax. Bernard Vermet and I answered them as best we could.

The Russian edition of the Pushkin Museum's *Collection of Dutch Paintings* was published in 2003. By then, it was possible for Marina to attend the annual conferences of the international network of curators of Dutch and Flemish art (CODART) and to do her own archival research at the Rijksmuseum and the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD). Unfortunately, the English-language edition of the Pushkin catalogue was delayed and could only be published after Marina's death in 2009. Marina's favourite painting was *Bleaching Linen near Haarlem*.



Bleaching Linen near Haarlem, ca. 1675-1680

Oil on canvas, 55.5 x 67.5 cm

Signed lower left: J van Kessel

Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Art, inv. 491

Colophon

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WBOOKS, Zwolle, The Netherlands
info@culturalinventory.nl
www.culturalinventory.nl

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SCI | Foundation for Cultural Inventory
info@culturalinventory.nl
www.culturalinventory.nl

Editor

Lia Gorter

Design

A10design

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For the past 25 years, the Foundation for Cultural Inventory (SCI) has been working to uncover lost and forgotten collections of Dutch and Flemish art works in museums around the globe.

In this book, we present some of our greatest discoveries: a life-sized van Dyck in Russia; two charming Cuyp portraits in Estonia; an enigmatic allegorical painting by de Lairese in Cuba; a delicate Walscapelle still life in India.

25 paintings, each with its own remarkable story.

We tell you about the far-flung museums we have visited. The inventories we have made. And the astonishing treasures we have found along the way. We reflect upon challenges that we have faced, including complicated issues of access and attribution. And we celebrate the collaborations we have fostered that support the preservation of Netherlandish art abroad as well as the management and (digital) access to otherwise out-of-reach collections.

SCI is equally proud of its ancillary activities—planning exhibitions, publishing books, and organizing international master classes that promote the latest research methodologies and conservation techniques.

It is with great joy that we celebrate 25 years of investigative work with 25 truly remarkable—and nearly forgotten—works of Netherlandish art.



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