

A Perte de Vue
présente

POLLOCK & POLLOCK

un film d'Isabelle Rèbre

PRESS KIT

Avec Sylvia Winter Pollock, Alain Joyaux, Francesca McCoy Pollock, Jason Mac Coy, Helen Harrison, Peter Namuth, Terence Maloon.
Voix off Isabelle Rèbre & Rebecca Pauly. Voix lettres Dominic Gould

Auteure Réalisatrice **Isabelle Rèbre** Productrice déléguée **Colette Quesson** Compositeur **Olivier Mellano** Directeur de la photographie **Emilien Awada**
Son **Isabelle Rèbre** Chef monteuse **Margaux Serre** Chef monteur son mixeur **Jean-Marc Schick** Etalonneur **Alexandre Lelaure** Secrétaire de production **Inès Lumeau**

Produit par **A PERTE DE VUE / Colette Quesson**

En coproduction avec / **BIP TV** Sophie Cazé / **le Fresnoy**, studio national des arts contemporains / **Proarti**, fonds de dotation pour la création artistique et la diversité culturelle en France et en Europe, /
Avec le soutien de / **Région Bretagne / Ciclic / Procirep** - Société des Producteurs & **Angoa / SACEM** pour la création de musique originale / **Archives Charles Pollock** /
Brouillon d'un Rêve de la **Scam** et **La Culture avec la Copie Privée**. Avec la participation du **CNC**

Développé dans le cadre de la formation **Eurodoc** / Ce film a bénéficié d'un temps de montage à **Périphérie**, Centre de création cinématographique

A PERTE DE VUE



SYNOPSIS

The film tells the story of two brothers, the American painters Charles and Jackson Pollock, with a broad slice of American history as a backdrop. Even though the nature of their personalities and their work separated them, the Pollocks were bounded both by a name and by brotherhood. Jackson, the youngest brother, discovered painting through Charles, who became a guiding light during his formative years. Once Jackson was in the spotlight, Charles became “the brother of” and had to deal with that weight. The dazzling trajectory of the iconic Pollock, held up as a myth of the self-made man, came to a brutal end in a car accident at the age of 44. As for Charles, he freely pursued his work all his life, at a distance from the art market. It is only today that his work is being taken out of storage and shown. Through the paths of these two painters, the film tells a story of light and shadow.

POLLOCK & POLLOCK by Isabelle Rèbre

Feature Documentary- 2020 - 82' - A Perte de Vue

With Sylvia Winter Pollock, Jason Mac Coy, Helen Harrison,
Francesca Pollock, Alain Joyaux, Peter Namuth, Terence Maloon



Charles and Jackson Pollock, New York 1930

Festivals selections :

FIPADOC 2021 / Les Remarqués

FILAF Perpignan 2021

Rencontres du film d'art Saint Gaudens 2021

Samedis d'ADDOC 2021

Contemporary Arts category, Master of Arts
Sofia 2022.

Award :

Best documentary production and special
award to the artists, ANSFF Buenos Aires 2021



East Hampton in *Pollock & Pollock* by Isabelle Rèbre © A Perte de Vue

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Discovering the letters

In the spring of 2009, I discovered *The American Letters*, a hundred letters collected from the correspondence of the Pollock family between 1929 and the late 1940s. Behind the name Jackson Pollock was a family of five brothers, all involved in art and politics. These letters moved me by their humanity and the way in which they tackled the issues of their time. Through them, I discovered a little-known part of American history, the existence of a lively left-wing movement and a tradition of politically active artists. I made a radio documentary for France Culture about the reasons why an entire artistic community had become depoliticized at the end of the war. Through the letters, I also discovered an unknown painter: Charles Pollock. His paintings, which I had the chance to see in two exhibitions, moved me. What pushed me, however, to make this film was the enigma of a man who remained in the shadows. Why had his paintings hardly ever been seen? Who was he? A recently published monograph made me think that perhaps he had chosen the shadows as a place of shelter.

Light and shadow

The film evokes the trajectories of two painters who embody two radically different ways of being an artist. Trajectories in which questions of recognition, of status (in art history), and of the relationship to life are seen through two different points of view. Jackson never ceased to move towards the light, to the point of overexposure. For better or worse, he became an icon, a myth, and a market value. He wanted to revolutionize painting and to be recognized at all costs. He did everything to achieve that goal—and he doubtlessly paid for it with his life. As for Charles, he remained within the mortal realm. He believed that art was the best way to change the world, he was politically engaged, and put his talent at the service of the common good; he had children, taught at university, and never stopped passing on his knowledge—all the while building a body of work that remained hidden up until the Peggy Guggenheim Collection retrospective in Venice in 2015, thirty years after his death. My intention was never to compare the work of the two brothers: Jackson definitively left his mark on the history of art by inventing a new form of abstraction and by redefining the conventional rules of composition through the *all over*, paintings without limits or edges. But the fact remains that Charles' work, like that of many so-called minor artists, has disappeared. Of what, of whom, is the History of Art made?

The film introduces the perspective of a photographer character who serves as an additional link between the trajectories of the two brothers. It is Hans Namuth, a young photographer working for the fashionable magazine *Harper's Baazar*. In 1950, he took a series of photos of Jackson in action and then made a film, both of which quickly became essential elements in the recognition of his work. Jackson offered himself to the camera without restraint and fell apart after the shoot. Had he not revealed to the eyes of all what was most intimate to him—the gestures and approach central to his work as a painter? Thirty years later, the same Hans Namuth proposed to film Charles in his studio and to make a film about him and his brother called *Pollock & Pollock*. Charles refused. Two decades later, I brought this project to life, doubtlessly in a very different way. But it was inevitable that my film would be preoccupied by the way in which a filmic gesture can bring something out of the shadows.

Through these singular and tragic destinies, self-exposure and its cost are central stakes of the film. Exposure is to offer oneself to the eyes of others but also to put oneself in danger. In the 1950s, advertising and consumer society blossomed in the United States. Charles, a graphic design professor at the University of Michigan, had perceived all of its dangers. He did not want his students to adapt to the market. Today, this has reached a breaking point: Facebook or Instagram are filled with selfies, narcissistic display *ad nauseam*. At a time when "existing to be seen" is a categorical imperative, everyone is concerned by these issues of image and self-representation. And when putting oneself on display becomes a necessity to earn a living, the risk of losing oneself becomes critical. Charles's choice to remain far from the spotlight touches me by its determination. Yet one doesn't settle in the shadows without impunity: as a condition for reclaiming oneself, the shadows exert a poetic power over those who inhabit them; they are once reassuring and distressing, protective and threatening. Charles lived the last fifteen years of his life in Paris and his entire body of work is stored on Rue de Bagnole, in the place where his wife, Sylvia Winter Pollock, lives today. That is where she created, with her daughter Francesca, the *Charles Pollock Archives*. The 2015 Venice exhibition that gathered the works of the two brothers was an opportunity to take the paintings out of storage, to frame them, and to stir up all these memories. I dove into the immense family correspondence and witnessed dozens of works being brought into the light to depart for Italy.

Political landscape

"You can't just look at a painting out of context," said Willem de Kooning. You have to reconstruct its history, talk about it hours on end; it is a piece of an artist's life. Behind the Pollocks' work, an entire slice of American history unravels before your eyes: the Great Depression and its shockwaves, a history little-known by many Americans, which contrasts with the national narrative of a victorious America. These highly politicized youths belonged to a complex and active left-wing movement that questioned the capitalist system. They were determined to bring about radical political change through art. The WPA (*Work Progress Administration*) set up by Roosevelt in the early 1930s had created the conditions, through its public commissions, for the constitution of an important and dynamic artistic community in New York. Evolving outside of the laws of the market, this community took the path of a new abstraction. The Mexican revolutionary Rivera affirmed that even when it was abstract, art remained political. The real had lost its value and its weight. In 1936, the two brothers' paths diverged: Jackson was changing radically, while Charles, who had gone to Washington, D.C., thus far from THE city, remained faithful to realism.

Gradually, the art world had become depoliticized, so much so that during the Cold War, in Truman's America, with its need for typically American figures, avant-garde artists came to represent liberal America. Thus, in 1949, Jackson Pollock posed for *Life*, embodying an exemplary capitalist entrepreneur. Avant-garde art became the symbol of the new America: abstract expressionism had symbolically won out and the center of the art market had moved from Paris to New York. The artistic milieu had become totally atomized. Artists were confronted with a new reality, alone in the face of a private market. In 1956, Jackson Pollock killed himself, De Staël committed suicide, and Rothko ended his life in 1970. While it is not our role to interpret these individual acts, one can see that the movement of market domination over all areas of life, which began in the middle of the last century, had already produced devastating effects at that time.

Filming painting

Making a film about painting is perhaps one of the most difficult things of all and it raises a myriad of questions. In painting, the viewer gazes into the infinite; how could cinema compete with its power? The film is set in the city of New York that, in 1928, Paul Morand had already described in his electric prose as enormous, uncontrollable, and generating an energy like no other: "Manhattan occupies the limelight, shines, seduces, offers its pleasures, puts money into circulation; it sells, consumes, uses with brilliance." How do you film this city, which has been seen over and over again in movies? While scouting, I discovered *News from Home* (1979) by Chantal Akerman. In this film, entirely shot in New York,

the filmmaker revolutionizes our vision of the city. The photographic, blue-tinged frames shot by her cinematographer Babette Mangolte put the city in a radically new light, like a waking dream. The city with its inexhaustible energy appears as an imaginary city suspended in time. With my director of photography Emilien Awada, we chose to work on the plasticity of the image by creating "tableau shots." Their fixity calls attention to the frame and makes us feel like an observant spectator in the middle of the crowd. Through this quality of the image, I wanted to step away from a realistic vision of the city and produce a strangeness that becomes timeless. The sequence shots create a sense of duration favorable to the work of the imagination.

From realism to Technicolor

The fundamental choice of visual plasticity connects the film to those painters whose strength is to make us see the world in a radically new light. This distance from reality, which is ultimately a way of questioning it, is simultaneously held up as a documentary approach. I wanted to start with the archives and the treasure trove of family letters. It was not a question of telling a story in their place, but of making them exist through their language and the deep interiority, the music that their words reveal. The other choice concerns the relationship to location: we built a map of the letters' intimate territory by finding the places where the brothers had lived, sixty or seventy years earlier. By putting my faith in chance, I was certain that the traces of this past would resurface if we took the time to patiently observe the present. It was not a question of illustrating, but of finding points of resonance, echoes between the present and the past, through details and significant elements. During editing, each letter was put in relation to the street on which it was written. Thus, the film evolves as the characters move from one place to another, and gradually describes territories rendered in a dominant color that constitutes their identity and participates in the evolution of the film's dramaturgy. Finally, the music is one of the essential components of the soundtrack. Unlike most films, the music—by Olivier Mellano, for piano and drums—was composed during the process of shooting. It was not a question of literally associating an instrument with each character, but rather of making them evolve between two different energies, two polarities: light and shadow, spontaneity and reason, movement and immobility, tension or calmness—moods between which unfolds the whole spectrum of the two instruments.

Isabelle Rèbre

If Jackson's spontaneity recalls Kerouac's writing
Charles' commitment brings him closer to Steinbeck.

*Olivier C  na - T  l  rama,
On Charles Pollock' exhibition in Paris Oct. and Nov. 2019 (Galerie ETC).*



New York in *Pollock & Pollock* by Isabelle R  bre    A Perte de Vue

ARTISTICAL AND TECHNICAL TEAM

Author & Director / **Isabelle Rèbre**

Letter's reader voice over / **Dominic Gould** (US)

Voice over/ **Isabelle Rèbre** (FR) / **Rebecca Pauly** (US)

Composer / **Olivier Mellano**

Director of photography / **Emilien Awada**

Additional pictures / **Isabelle Rèbre**

Sound / **Isabelle Rèbre**

Editors / **Margaux Serre & Marie-Pomme Carteret**

Sound design / **Jean-Marc Schick**

Color grading / **Alexandre Lelaure**

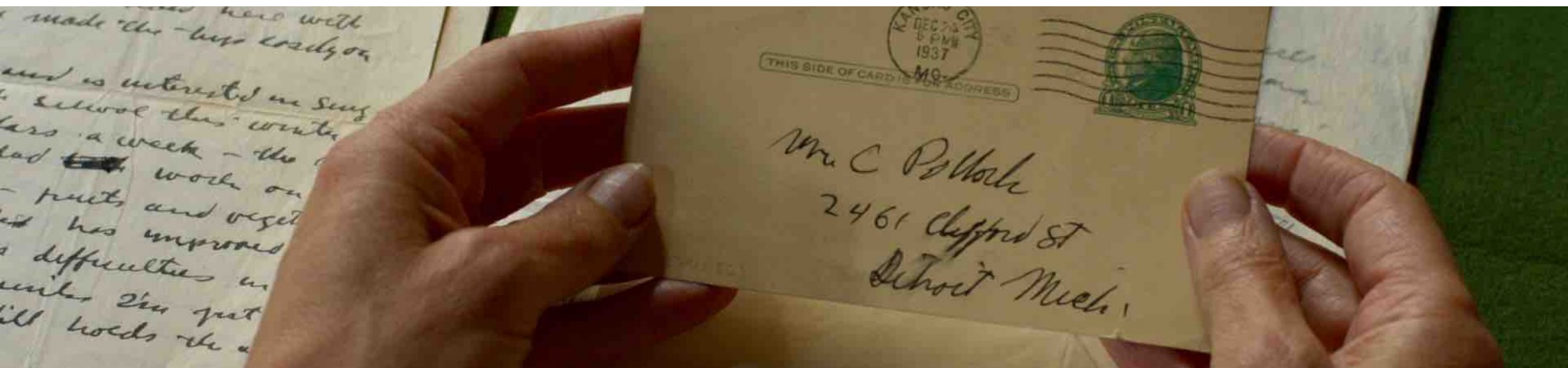
Production Assistant/ **Inès Lumeau**

Produced by **A PERTE DE VUE** / **Colette Quesson**

Co-produced with / **BIP TV** Sophie Cazé / le **Fresnoy**, **studio national des arts contemporains** / **Proarti**, *endowment fund for artistic creation and cultural diversity in France and Europe* /

With the support of / **Région Bretagne** / **Ciclic** / **Procirep** – Société des Producteurs & **Angoa** / **SACEM** for the creation of original music / **Archives Charles Pollock** / *Brouillon d'un rêve* from la **Scam** and **La Culture avec la Copie Privée**. With the participation of the **CNC**

Developed within the framework of the **Eurodoc** training/ This film benefited from an editing time at **Périphérie**, *Centre de création cinématographique within the framework of its partnership with the Department of Seine-Saint-Denis.*



BIO & FILMOGRAPHY OF THE DIRECTOR

Isabelle Rèbre directs documentaries, mainly portraits, including several portraits of artists. These include *Charles Rojzmann, thérapeute social* (Arte) in 2001, and, in 2003, a portrait of the filmmaker *André S. Labarthe de la tête au pied* (Ciné-Cinéma and États Généraux de Lussas). In 2006, she directed *La peinture de Jean Rustin* and *Après la colère* (Arte 2006), portraits of high school and university students fighting against the CPE (an abandoned reform project weakening job security for young people), and in 2013, *Ricardo Cavallo ou le rêve de l'épervier*. In 2020, she completed *Pollock&Pollock*.

Isabelle Rèbre has also written several plays. *Fin*, inspired by the last years of Ingmar Bergman, was staged by Bernard Bloch (Réseau Théâtre) in 2014. Echoing this play, she wrote an essay: *La dernière photographie*. Sarabande, by Ingmar Bergman (La Lettre volée, 2017).

For the public radio station France Culture, she wrote *Ton 8 mai 1945 et le mien*, broadcast in two-parts in 2001 with Maurice Garrel and Evelyne Didi. The text was published in a literary version by François Bon on Publie.net. Her first play *Moi quelqu'un* was staged in Paris (Théâtre de l'Atalante in 1998) and published by Actes Sud Papier.

Since 1993, Isabelle Rèbre has produced some thirty radio documentaries for France Culture (*Nuits magnétiques*, *Surpris par la nuit*), mostly related to art and literature (*À la recherche d'Unica Zürn*, *Des écrivains en exil*, *Kateb Yacine*, *Après la dernière bande*, *Les frères Pollock*, etc.)

She also teaches documentary film at Paris 8, where she completed a PhD in 2021.



IsabelleRèbre © Lois Le Houerf

Pollock & Pollock - documentary - 82' - 2020.

Quelques jours avec nous - documentary - 40' - 2015

Ricardo Cavallo ou le rêve de l'épervier - documentary - 52' - 2013

Lehaïm – A la vie ! - documentary - 35' - 2008

La peinture de Jean Rustin - documentary - 61' - 2007

Après la colère - documentary - 52' - 2006.

L'eau du bain - documentary - 52' - 2004.

André S. Labarthe. De la tête aux pieds - documentary - 43' - 2003

Charles Rojzmann, un thérapeute social - documentary - 26' - 2001.

Parlez-moi d'amour - documentary - 46' - 1992

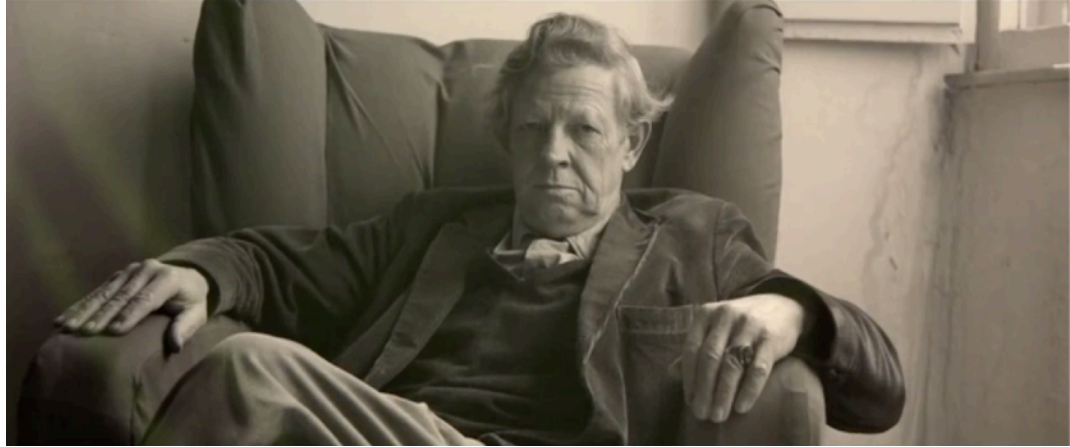
La correspondance Strauss-Hofmannsthal - documentary - 26' - 1991.

L'histoire des pompes avant qu'elles ne soient funèbres - fiction - 10' - 1993



Charles Pollock's Archives in *Pollock & Pollock* by Isabelle Rèbre © A Perte de Vue

CHARLES POLLOCK



Charles Cecil Pollock was born on December 25, 1902 in Denver, Colorado. The eldest of five brothers, he spent his childhood between Colorado, Wyoming, Arizona, and California. He moved to Los Angeles in 1922, where he worked for the Los Angeles Times while attending classes at the Otis Art Institute. In the early 1920s he developed a taste for Mexican art, particularly the mural work of Orozco and Rivera. Moving from Los Angeles to New York in 1926, he studied with Thomas Hart Benton at the *Art Students League*. In 1930, he persuaded his brother Jackson to leave California and move to New York to study with Benton. In 1935, convinced that art could contribute to social emancipation, he went to work in Washington for the *Resettlement Administration* and collaborated on Charles Seeger's song score project. Two years later, he moved to Detroit, Michigan, and became a political cartoonist for the *United Automobile Workers'* union newspaper. From 1938 to 1942, Charles was Supervisor of Murals and Graphic Arts at the *Federal Art Project* (WPA). After working on a mural painting commissioned by *Michigan State College* (later *Michigan State University*), he joined the Michigan State College Art Department, where he taught printmaking, calligraphy, and graphic design for over twenty years. In 1945, he spent three months painting and drawing in the Arizona desert. This experience marked a turning point in his career: he abandoned Social Realism and committed himself to abstraction. From 1955 to 1956, he took a sabbatical year on the shores of Lake Chapala in Mexico. He married Sylvia Winter in 1957. In 1962, on his second sabbatical, the couple traveled throughout Europe before settling in Rome. After Charles retired from teaching in 1967, the family moved to New York, where Charles had a studio on the Bowery. He moved with his wife and daughter to Paris in 1971, where he spent the last seventeen years of his life. Charles Pollock died on May 8, 1988 in Paris.

Numerous works of Charles Pollock are available on : <http://www.charlespollockarchives.com>

JACKSON POLLOCK



Jackson Pollock (born on January 28, 1912 in Cody, Wyoming, and died on August 11, 1956 in Springs, New York) was an American abstract expressionist painter, known worldwide during his lifetime. He produced more than 700 works, including finished paintings, painted or sculpted preparatory works and drawings, as well as a few engravings. He had decisive influence on the course of contemporary art.

The practice of all-over as well as "*dripping*," which he used extensively from 1947 to 1950, made him famous thanks to Hans Namuth's photos and films, shot more or less in the heat of the moment

His late recognition, after a lifetime of deprivation, coincided with the emergence of New York as the new cultural capital of the world, shortly after World War II, between 1948 and 1950. Pollock was the first of the third wave of American abstract artists to finally gain recognition, the first to "break the ice" (as Willem de Kooning put it) and clear a path into the collecting world for other artists of the New York School.

In 1945, Pollock married the painter Lee Krasner, who had a decisive influence on his career and on the recognition of his work. Jackson Pollock is a world-renowned artist and one of the major figures in the history of art. His work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions throughout the world. There is a substantial secondary literature, in both English and French, dedicated to his life and work.

Jackson Pollock represented the United States at the Venice Biennale in 1950. The New York MOMA has dedicated numerous exhibitions to him since the first major retrospective in 1957. In France, a major retrospective was held at the Centre Georges Pompidou from January to April 1982. More recently, in 2008, the Pinacothèque in Paris dedicated an exhibition to him, as well as the Musée des Beaux Arts of Lyon the same year.

His works are part of the permanent collections of the MOMA, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice.

THE PRODUCTION COMPANY

Founded in 2011 by Colette Quesson, **A PERTE DE VUE** produces short and feature films in the fields of fiction, documentary, and animation. We love to produce films that broaden horizons, affirm unique styles, and stir viewers! Our vocation is to support projects from development to screening and broadcast... We are convinced of the benefits of inter-regional and international co-production in order to work in a complementary manner and to ensure the feasibility of ambitious projects.

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Original version in English and French

Subtitled in English and French

2020 / 84' / 4K Color / 1:85 / 25 frame/sec / Sound 5.1

Broadcast features / DCP & APR

ISAN : 0000-0003-C8E2-0000-D-0000-0000-Z

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