Peter Haden

1939–1997

Almost Forgotten

Gavin Watkins

COVER IMAGE Batman bronze on marble base h: 20,5 cm 10/10 private Collection

PAGE I IMAGE Mother and Child bronze on wooden base h: 72 cm $_{2/10}$ private collection

BACK COVER Installation view of *Title Unknown (Standing Figure)* photograph by egon guenther



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Introduction

Given the evident quality and uniqueness of Peter Haden's sculptures, it is disappointing that he has had so little recognition in South Africa. This can probably be explained by the relatively short time he was active as an artist in his country of birth.

In Europe, where he exhibited regularly, he is hardly more well known. This may be in part because most of his works are in museums, public institutions and private collections, and very few of his sculptures have ever appeared on the secondary market or been sold at auction. Hopefully these exhibitions, hosted by Strauss & Co in South Africa, will raise awareness of Haden's beautiful and often 'quirky' sculptures and establish his reputation as a unique and gifted South African and International artist. I am sure Egon Guenther would approve.

Gavin Watkins, Sydney, May 2019



Portraits of Peter Haden, 1960s PHOTOGRAPHS BY EGON GUENTHER



Mother and Child bronze on wooden base h: 72 cm 2/10 PRIVATE COLLECTION



Title Unknown (Reclining Figure) bronze on marble base 15 by 52 by 20 cm 10/10 PRIVATE COLLECTION



On the record

Peter Haden was one of the prestigious group of artists mentored and promoted by gallerist Egon Guenther. Along with Edoardo Villa, Cecil Skotnes, Sydney Kumalo, Ezrom Legae, Hannes Harrs, Giuseppe Cattaneo and Cecily Sash, Haden benefited from Guenther's tutelage and the exposure that high-profile exhibitions at Guenther's Linksfield gallery afforded.

Despite the high quality of his works, very little is known or has been written about Peter Haden. There is no reference to him in Frieda Harmsen's *Looking at South African Art* (Van Schaik, 1985), in Grania Ogilvie's *The Dictionary of South African Painters and Sculptors* (Everard Read, 1988) or in Elizabeth Rankin's *Images of Metal* (Witwatersrand University Press, 1994). There is a brief reference to Peter Haden in Esmé Berman's *Art and Artists of South Africa* (Balkema, 1983, p. 32):

Guenther, meanwhile, had drawn three further artists, Peter Hayden (sic), Hannes Harrs and Ezrom Legae, into his stable, his intention being to re-establish the Group as 'Amadlozi 69' or '70' for renewed exhibition activity on the international scene.

Berman repeats this passage in her revised 1996 edition, but unfortunately again incorrectly refers to 'Hayden' rather than 'Haden', an error that regrettably reoccurs on the rare occasions Haden's work appears on the secondary market in South Africa.

A few articles relating to Haden appeared in *Artlook* magazine in the 1960s: a short piece on his new work in 'Around the Studios' ('Peter Haden', *Artlook* 8, July 1967, p. 12); a review on the first exhibition at the art school he established in Craighall, Johannesburg (Shirley Eskapa, 'Student Exhibition at the Academy', *Artlook* 26, January 1969, pp. 6–7) and a double-page illustrated spread on the artist and his work (Shirley Eskapa, 'Peter Haden', *Artlook* 27, February 1969, pp. 24–25).

Egon Guenther at the entrance to his Linksfield Gallery, c. 1961 PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL VINK

Outline of an artist

The bare bones of Haden's biography give little away: He was born on 30 April 1939 in Johannesburg. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of the Witwatersrand and studied Physics at the University of Oxford in England from 1960 to 1962. He died on 20 December 1997, in Geneva, Switzerland, and is survived by his wife Angela (née Goldman) and their children Sarah, Georgina and Eva.

It was while he was studying at Oxford that Haden realised he was 'out of depth' in a field that wasn't his own and embarked on a new course:

He met a Catholic priest who was doing medicine, who painted for relaxation and who one day said 'Come on, you paint a picture'. From then on, the young South African was enthralled and utterly seduced by the outlet it gave him and the 'fantastic magic' of colours. 'I couldn't stop' he says. Along the line, however, he did slow down and to all intents stopped painting as sculpture overtook him. (Marshall Lee, 'In Search of his Art Soul, Peter Haden Leaves S.A. Backwater', *The Star*, 24 April 1971).

Shirley Eskapa writes that:

Peter Haden thus became a sculptor without the benefits or defects of any formal training. His sculpture reflects his multi-dimensional vision of life ... He believes that art is 'an inborn instinct' and said 'when I make a piece of sculpture, I love it without sentiment. Suddenly a sculptural solution presents itself – in a haptic fashion which I call instinct – that line has to be changed to go to another point and suddenly the whole thing works – often I am really surprised at the result. Some people call it inspiration but that reeks of some sort of sentiment – it is in fact instinct'.

(Shirley Eskapa, 'Peter Haden', Artlook 27, February 1969, p. 24).

After returning to South Africa, Haden established an art school in Craighall, Johannesburg, that he hoped would 'fill a wider and more important need. He had hoped that 'The Academy' would be a meeting-place for artists – a place where art and its problems would find free discussion': A dramatic evolution of the Johannesburg art scene is distinctly at odds with the Department of Fine Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand. Sculpture is excluded as a major (lack of facilities?) and painting triumphs on a solitary pedestal. But Johannesburg, as in its mining camp day, accommodates its necessities, and there are several private art schools. Amongst them is 'The Academy' ... The principal is the sculptor, Peter Haden. Doctors, lawyers,

matriculation and University students and grandmothers are among his pupils.

(Shirley Eskapa, 'Student Exhibition at the Academy,' *Artlook* 26 , January 1969, pp. 6–7).

Students at 'The Academy' included Wopko Jensma, Cyril Kumalo, Julian Motau, Stanley Nkosi, Naomi Press and Wendy Vincent. Although Haden curated a successful joint exhibition at the school in 1968, he felt that the venture was yet to achieve his wider ambitions.



Den Egon: It was a gelet word vriendelik uitgenooi word vriendelik uitgenooi om 'n uitstelling by te woon van die werke van and youn wellection, en cecil skotnes op dindag, 21 oktober 1969 vanaa form tot 9 nm of later volgens afspraak tel. 45-7455 by deal al geter haden og dindag, 21 oktober 1969 og dindag, 21 oktober 1969 of later volgens afspraak tel. 45-7455 by egon guenther se private galery kransstraat 4 inksfield johannesburg

you and your friends are cordially invited to see an exhibition of work by peter haden and cecil skotnes on tuesday, 21 october 1969 from 10 am to 9 pm or afterwards by appointment phone 45-7455 at egon guenther's private gallery 4, krans street linksfield johannesburg

Invitation to the exhibition Cecil Skotnes (Woodcuts): Peter Haden (Sculpture), Egon Guenther Gallery, Johannesburg, showing *Mother and Child*, 1969, right, signed by the famous American author Irving Stone (*The Agony and the Ecstacy*; *Lust for Life*) who bought some of Haden's works from the exhibition.

On show – Exhibiting in South Africa, 1968 to 1971

Haden's first solo exhibition took place at the Lidchi Gallery in Johannesburg in 1965, with paintings and sculpture on show. His first exhibition at the Egon Guenther Gallery was 'Peter Haden, Hannes Harrs, Sydney Kumalo, Ezrom Legae, Edoardo Villa and the Unknown Masters of Africa', which opened on 12 November 1968. He exhibited a number of small bronzes including *Sittingfoot* (6.3cm high), *Ball-foot* (11.5cm high) and *Rider* (15cm high). The small sculptures were originally made in terracotta and plaster of Paris before being cast in bronze. Haden commented that there seemed 'no really good reason to make enormous things if one could say the same thing in a smaller size':

Some of his pieces are small enough to fit into a match box. And yet looking at them this seems somehow beyond the imagination because in his smallest pieces he achieves monumentality. South Africa, fraught though it is, throws up its own innovation. You might say that Peter Haden is an innovation.

(Eskapa, 'Student Exhibition at the Academy', *Artlook 26*, January 1969, pp. 6–7).

In 1969, Haden took part in the Transvaal Academy's exhibition 'African Sculpture', which took place in the gardens of the Johannesburg Municipal Library. His entry *Torso*, in plaster of Paris (exhibit number 101), was available in a bronze cast for R1 400. Sydney Kumalo and Ezrom Legae were fellow exhibitors. To put the price of Haden's sculpture into perspective Kumalo's fabulous large sculpture *The Listener* was priced at R1 800 while Legae's *Young Man* cost only R500!

Haden iconic *Rain King* and *Rain Queen* were also conceived in 1969 and *Rain Queen* was displayed in the Egon Guenther Gallery:

Art lovers bought all of the numbered bronze casts within three days. 'Nothing like that has ever happened before, in my 24 years of running art galleries' says Mr Egon Guenther ... There was no formal exhibition. 'The first visitor who arrived singled it out, said 'I like that' and bought it' said Mr. Guenther 'after that, whoever walked in bought one, until in three days all 10 casts were sold'. The price of a cast was R240.

('10 Sculptures go in 3 Days', The Star, July 1969).

Haden was one of the artists chosen for the 'Transvaal Artists '69' exhibition at the Durban Art Gallery. He exhibited *Rain King* (cat 7), *Rain Queen* (cat 8) and *Mother and Child* (cat 9). The exhibition featured 38 works by 13 Transvaal artists and ran from 3 to 19 October.

Haden's second exhibition at the Egon Guenther Gallery was a two-man show with Cecil Skotnes (Woodcuts), which opened on 21 October 1969. The exhibition was highly successful, not least because the famous American novelist Irving Stone (author of *The Agony and the Ecstasy* and *Lust for Life*) attended the exhibition and purchased two of Haden's bronzes of the *Rain Queen*:

Stone is reputed to be a collector of Impressionist and pre-Columbian sculpture and apart from those of Barbara Hepworth, Kenneth Armitage and Henry Moore, has never bought any contemporary sculptures.

('Stone Buys Bronzes', The Star, 22 October 1969).

Reviewing the same exhibition, Richard Cheales wrote:

With a 'rain king' and a 'rain queen' setting the theme in his small exhibition, Peter Haden stresses elongated vertical shapes in a section of his latest sculpture.

In the rain 'duo' he gives a more dramatic interpretation of the small, chunky pieces that were such a feature in his last show, with monolithic shapes soaring upwards from the (in contrast) solid bases of the compositions. This style (with its suggestion of 'roots' in past, ancient times) has a strikingly decorative quality, faintly Egyptian, faintly primitive, the seated figures are conceived in a wholly abstract way – symbolic but, at the same time, aesthetically arresting.

The other vertical pieces are more tenuous and delicate, giving an insect appearance to the just-whispered suggestion of African figures and features.

A selection of work (in the study) shows the artist modelling with more vigour, and with an eye to his ability to mould chunky, broadly abstract shapes into compositions of greater intricacy, that are visually more instantly pleasing. Here realism is often emphasized, but in a very simplified way, to give some of the pieces a sting of tribal life.

The Verdigris green of 'eroded' metal against copper, heightens both the decorative impact and the feeling of age.

The exhibition illustrates far greater freedom in Haden's work. The artist evolves his pieces with intuitive sensitivity, so that some of the most simplified shapes have a willowy grace and rhythm rather amazing in such simplification.

At present the different approaches show the growing desire to expand his talent to encompass a far greater variety of subjects and styles.

('African Life in Haden', *The Star*, 23 October 1969).

The other Johannesburg daily newspaper also featured an article on Haden's latest exhibition:

Peter Haden's willowy bronzes are, I suppose, a logical development from those attractive little 'paper weight' figures with which he first attracted attention. These latest sensitive, almost Nordic inspired pieces are vigorous and sensitive to a degree.

A departure from the usually elongated vertical shapes is 'The Golden Calf' which I found especially attractive and interesting. (H. E. Winder (HEW), 'Select Selection', *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 October 1969).

STUDENT Exhibition At the Academy

by SHIRLEY ESKAPA Photographs by Struan Robertion





Above: Life drawings by Joyce Harris from a rehearsal of Rosencrant: and Guildenstern.

Left: Sculptor and principal Peter Haden between paintings by Wendy Vincent and his own tinted plaster of Paris.

d dramatic evolution of the lohannesburg art scene is distinctly at down with the Department of fine arts at the University of the Mitwaterrand. Scalpture is excluded as a major (lack of facilitiest) is familing-tamp days, accommodates its necessities, and thus a fis mining-tamp days, accommodates its necessities, and thus A recent cehibition of the works of the students of The Academy dede yet another dimension to the Johannesburg world of Art, here principal is the scalptor, Peter Haden. Dotter, lawyord anticipal and aniversity students and grandmothers are among alloty-ment those whose work did not qualify for students of a latent at cellers.

This exhibition clearly demonstrated that technical guidance is the instructional emphasis. Classes were conducted backstage at losencrantz and Guildenstern and at Marcel Marceau. Visiting worset exhibitions at 11 the adlactics is obligatory.

Julian Motau, Staniey Nikosi and Cyril Kumalo have been amongsz eterer Haden's students: yet, incredibly, Mr. Haden feels that lithough the exhibition was successful, The Academy has been allore since it does not as yet fill a wider and more important need, the had hoped that The Academy would be a mosting-place for fiscassion.

ARTLOOK, January, 1969 6

Artlook 26 January 1969



Peter Haden working on *Rider*, 1968



Rider bronze on wooden base h: 15 cm 1/10 PRIVATE COLLECTION



Sitting-foot bronze on wooden base h: 6,3 cm 2/10 PRIVATE COLLECTION

Sculptures produced by Peter Haden in and for South Africa, 1968 to 1974

Haden's period with Guenther, from 1968 to 1971 when he left South Africa, was short but productive. He conceived 40 sculptures (6 which were 'withdrawn' prior to production) from which a total of 182 bronze casts were made. Since 1990, a total of only 14 of Haden's sculptures have been sold on auction in South Africa.

1968

Rider; *Flower Form*; *Fear*; *Ball-foot*; *Aloe-foot*; *Bent over Figure*; *Sitting-foot*; *Headache*

1969

Rain Queen; Rain King; Mother and Child; Standing Figure, Relief I; Twins; Torso I; Magic Staff I; Magic Staff II; Elongated Figure I; Medusa; Levitation (Relief); The Golden Calf; Thought; Suspended Figure; Reclining Figure

1970

Peter Pan; Reclining Torso; Running Bird; Batman; Birdman; Standing Figure I; Protector; Lovers I Reclining; Riders; Dancer; Lovers II.

1974

While living in Europe, Haden was one of six sculptors invited to submit a design for a stainless steel sculpture to be the focal point of the new Anglo-American Properties development, Transvaal House, in Pretoria. The prize was R8 000. He produced a 2-metre-high maquette for a proposed 5-metre-high sculpture titled *Inox*. The maquettes were on view at the International Building Exhibition at the Milner Park showgrounds, Johannesburg, from 1 August 1974. Rain Queen bronze on wooden base h: 72,5 cm 5/10 PRIVATE COLLECTION

Rain King bronze on wooden base h: 73 cm 7/10 PRIVATE COLLECTION

PAGES 16 AND 17 Installation views of *Rain Queen* and *Rain King*, 1960s PHOTOGRAPHS BY EGON GUENTHER















pages 18 and 19 Installation view of *The Golden Calf*, 1960s photograph by egon guenther







Standing Figure, Relief I bronze on wooden base h: 44,6 cm I/10 PRIVATE COLLECTION (two views)





Installation view of *Batman*, 1960s PHOTOGRAPH BY EGON GUENTHER



Batman bronze on marble base h: 20,5 cm 10/10 PRIVATE COLLECTION



Title Unknown (Standing Figure with Hand on Hip) bronze on wooden base h: 36,4 cm 2/10 PRIVATE COLLECTION



Title Unknown (Standing Figure) bronze on wooden base h: 77 cm I/I0 PRIVATE COLLECTION

New territory – Switzerland, 1971 to 1997

Despite his growing reputation in South Africa, Haden decided to leave South Africa for Europe in 1971, and settled in Switzerland. Marshall Lee wrote of the decision:

There is a South African tradition that sends South African sons away: to search, as Antony Delius has written, 'other countries for their cause or soul'. They leave our 'cruel glaring sun and savage weathers to bask, reflect in other people's glory'. Peter Haden, sculptor, is one of those who suits the syndrome, who has found the South African way of life wanting. Or at least, the urge to return to the warp and woof of Western Art too strong. He left yesterday for Europe and a full-fling at his ambitions. For fame and fortune and fulfilment of his art soul. Possibly forever.

If Haden does feel all this, and to some extent he does, he is not the first to do so. Still, this is not to say the art movement in this country is completely stagnant. After all, if it were, we would hardly throw up talent and Peter Haden himself would not be a sculptor. As it is, Haden's home-grown work reflects a reaching for real maturity. It has already won recognition overseas and he leaves in the security that he is 'very good' and that he can only gain by the experiment.

The ironic thing is that Haden at 32, is something of a late starter ... By 1965 his work had reached the critics and one suggested his paintings were more acceptable than his bronze figurines, which in their bumpiness were inclined to crudity. He soon ironed out a lot of the bumps with their literal overtones and moved steadily into more abstract concepts. Largely selftaught, Haden has absorbed the influences around him, and his development shows an increasing confidence, not simply in the techniques of sculpting, but in his own values and his own rather sensual and sensitive personality. From his 'paper-weight' figures (as one critic called them), he escalated into willowy bronzes, elongated verticals, delicate and vigorous. At the same time his more solid compositions took on an airier aspect while he dipped into the problems of using space to create the illusion of volume. An example of this is his 'Double Heads' – a bronze work crammed full of space which he will exhibit at the Redfern Gallery's 'Summer Show' in London in June. The opportunity to feature in this leading gallery (along with types such as Picasso and Miro) is a factor in his decision to leave South Africa and as soon as he gets to Geneva – his first base – he will be preparing for this exhibition. And those that are to follow ...

Haden has no illusions about his move. He knows full well there is a struggle ahead, but he is fortified by his talent and the remarkable art consciousness of Europe generally. There one is not treated as a 'crazy kook doing something bizarre'. Besides there is this huge market which provides the financial attraction.

For Haden the meaningful thing about Europe is the environment. It might mean, as someone has already suggested, that he will lose the African quality of his work. ('In Search of his Art Soul, Peter Haden Leaves S.A. Backwater', *The Star*, 24 April 1971).

Guenther had huge misgivings about Haden moving overseas and is undoubtedly the 'someone' referred to in the quote above. On 5 January 1976, Guenther returned all remaining casts of the sculptures still in his possession to Haden's mother Sybil and ceased to act as his agent after that date.



Variations on Two Forms II stainless steel height and edition number not available PRIVATE COLLECTION

Exhibiting internationally – Europe, 1971 to 1997

In the first few years, it seemed that Haden's move to Geneva had been inspired as he exhibited regularly:

1971

Redfern Gallery, London, exhibited Double Heads.

1972

Galerie Motte, Geneva, 3 to 20 October.

1973

La Galerie Motte, Paris, exhibited jewellery in gold and copper and 14 sculptures in bronze, including *Relief Allongé (Elongated Relief)* from the South African period, 27 February to 16 March. Palais de l'Athénée, Geneva, 22 May to 22 June 1973.

1975

Ville de Carouge, Geneva, exhibited *Le jeu* (stainless steel) (produced jointly with Hank Ketcham) for the American Club of Geneva's celebration of the bicentenary of the declaration of independence of the United States of America.

1976

Haden became interested in the art of calligraphy and began making sculptures of the Greek and Latin alphabets. He began the Hebrew alphabet project with 'reading and drawing and the making of trial sculpture'.

Galerie Arta and Galerie Didale, Geneva, two-man show with Louis Soutter.

Galerie 40, Geneva, exhibited and authored a book titled '*Peter Haden – Sculpture: The Variations on Two Forms*'. Haden designed about 20 small sculptures and a few very large ones based on variations on two forms.

1980

Achim Moeller, London. The sculpture featured on the exhibition



Invitation to the exhibition *Peter Haden: Sculpture*, Achim Moeller Ltd, Basel, showing *The Protector*, 1970

invitation is *The Protector*, designed and first cast in 1970 before Haden left South Africa.

Galerie Patrick Cramer, Geneva, published the book 'Elementary Knowledge – A Story of the Creation of the Hebrew Alphabet'. In the Preface Haden states:

I have been concerned about the problem facing some people when they find themselves confronted with Abstract Art. I tried to look at the problem from a number of aspects as I searched for a vehicle similar to the novel in literature, which would allow various depths of expression whilst retaining some straightforward interpretation of the work.

Somewhere I read that God gave the letters the power to excite anyone who ever had anything to do with them. As multiple interpretations abound, and there are the obvious ones like the excitement of learning through the use of letters, actually doing the project has been enormously exciting and fulfilling.



Variations on Two Forms I bronze height and edition number not available PRIVATE COLLECTION

For each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, Haden designed a sculpture produced in bronze in an edition of 10 numbered casts. The sculptures ranged in size from 15 to 29 cm in height and bore no resemblance to the sculptures that Haden had produced in South Africa from 1965 to 1971.

1981

Atelier Kurt Meier, Basel, produced 23 colour lithographs as part of the Hebrew alphabet project.

1982

Galerie Patrick Cramer, Geneva, published 'Elementary Knowledge – A Story of the Arabic Alphabet'. Haden produced 24 sculptures and over 100 drawings, exhibited from 22 April to 21 May. The exhibition was featured in the Visual Arts monthly *Les Cimaises Romandes* No 3, May 1982.

1985

Villa Bryn Bella 'Musée de l'horlogerie et de l'émaillerie', Geneva, exhibited 5 innovative sculptures (designed in 1983 and 1984) and presented a lecture titled: 'Inedite de l'heure' (*Profiles of Time*, 14 February to 14 March). The curator of the exhibition, Fabienne Sturm, wrote:

He has chosen to use sculpture as a way of fusing beauty and function by employing the intrinsically aesthetic quality of the art object as a messenger to carry human knowledge. In 1977, his work led him to the art of calligraphy and he subsequently made a series of bronze sculptures based on the Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Arabic alphabets, expressing the full cultural wealth of these cultural civilisations. He has thus restored to the commonplace letter, or 'character', its historical and philosophical heritage as a symbol of man's communication.

At the same time, Peter Haden had the idea of making sculpture that measured time. His object was to give both sculpture and clock a new meaning by fusing the dyadic languages of time and art in a new and original way.

The Horology and Enamel Museum of Geneva is pleased to present this 'new way of telling the time', without a dial or hands, where the movement of the sculpture alone provides the essential guide to the minute and hour. The degree of innovation required to make the clocks is demonstrated in the technical information:

The mechanical and quartz movements have been specially adapted to carry the parts of the sculpture which indicate the time. This adaptation is required because the weight of the sculpture is far greater than that of usual clock hands. The invention is patented. Each piece is made by hand. The editions are limited, numbered and signed by the artist.

One of the sculptures from the exhibition, *Sails of Time*, was included in the publication Musée d'art et d'histoire Genéve (février – mai 1985, no 3).

European Watch, Clock and Jewellery Fair, Basel, Antiquorum Auctioneers, an international firm specialising in rare and antique time-pieces, introduced Haden's clock sculptures, 11 to 18 April 1985.

Ancienne Collection, Geneva, donated a sculpture titled *Pendule de table* to the collection.

1995

World Athletics Championship in Gothenburg, president of the International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF), Premio Nebiolo, donated *The High-jumper* (steel and aluminium, 2.3 x I m) to the Olympic Museum. The sculpture was shown at the exhibition '*The Many Faces of Athletics*'.

1996

World Economic Forum, Davos, exhibited *The Athletes*, 1 to 6 February:

The essentials of a personal calligraphy are evident too in 'The Athletes', a sculpture which attempts to capture the spirit of movement using a non-racial, apolitical morphology'.

1997

Geneva Clock Museum, donated clock sculpture titled *The Fisherman* to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the museum. The clock featured on the front cover of *'Swiss Style Lakeside'*, the largest English language circulation journal in Switzerland.



Performing Time (Clock Sculpture) brass h: 31 cm



Sails of Time (Clock Sculpture) brass h: 37 cm



Another Dance to the Music of Time (Clock Sculpture) brass h: 31 cm



Cronos and Demeter (Clock Sculpture) brass or silver plate h: 22 cm



Title Unknown (Upright Figure) bronze on wooden base h: 41 cm I/10 PRIVATE COLLECTION



4/10





The Dancer bronze on bronze base h: 109 cm 6/10 PRIVATE COLLECTION

Acknowledgements

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