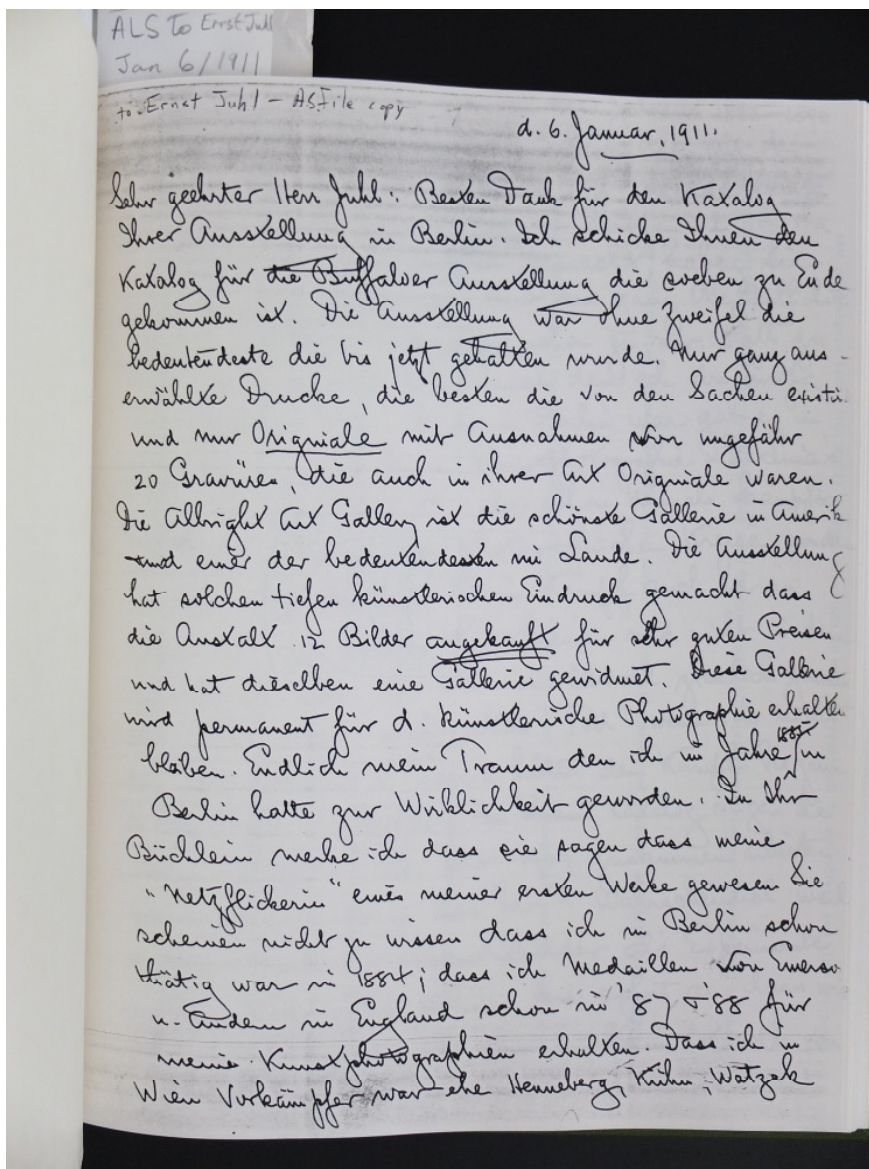


Christian Joschke

Ernst Juhl and Alfred Stieglitz: The Friendship That Never Was

Lecture on November 22, 2013 on the occasion of the symposium
“Inspirations – Interactions: Pictorialism Reconsidered”



Ill. 1

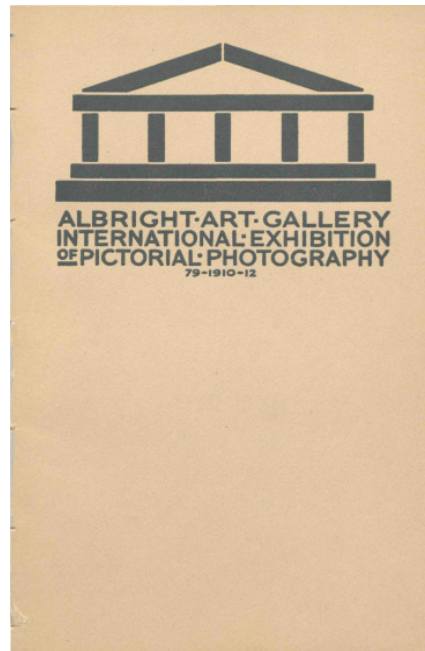
In what seems to be Alfred Stieglitz’s last letter to Ernst Juhl, sent January 6, 1911, the author responds with faint gratitude and true irritation.¹ (Ill. 1 Letter) In a previous letter, Juhl had sent the catalogue from the exhibition of his private collection of pictorial photography,

¹ Letter from Alfred Stieglitz to Ernst Juhl, January 6, 1911. Yale University, Beinecke Rare Books Library. All translations are by the author, unless otherwise noted.

shown at the Kunstgewerbe Museum Berlin from May 8 until June 30, 1910.² (Ill. 2 Cat. 1910) At the same time, Stieglitz had presented his own collection at the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo; it was the biggest and most famous exhibition of art photography in the US before World War I, after which the gallery decided to buy twelve photographs from his collection and to open a section for art photography.³ (Ill. 3 Expo. Albright) With a competitive edge to his words, Stieglitz's letter compared the two events in Berlin and Buffalo, underlining the quality of his own collection and recalling his memories about his accomplishments in the field of art photography. Thus, after nearly 25 years of work in the field of photography, Stieglitz and Juhl reminisced over their past battles.



Ill. 2



Ill. 3

In recounting the history of art photography, Juhl's catalogue did not stress the role of Stieglitz more than others, such as Hugo Henneberg, Heinrich Kühn, or the brothers Theodor and Oscar Hofmeister. This crime of *lèse-majesté* irritated Stieglitz, who was featured more prominently in the Albright catalogue than in the Berlin publication. Stieglitz reproached Juhl for writing that his first photograph was the *Net Mender* (Ill. 4 Net Mender), shown by Juhl in Hamburg in 1893. Juhl had neglected to mention that Stieglitz's career as a photographer in Berlin had begun as early as 1883, before anyone could even speak about art photography. In the years between 1883 and 1890, the date of his return to the US, Stieglitz had participated in several exhibitions and publications. He made his first photographs in 1884 and won his first medals in England in competitions organized by Peter Henry Emerson and his circle in 1887. Last but not least, Stieglitz's letter stressed his role in the battle of art photography: (Ill. 5. Camera Work) "*Camera Work* is an enormous creation in and of itself; in Germany it would have been child's play for me, but here in America it is a miracle of all miracles to have created it."⁴

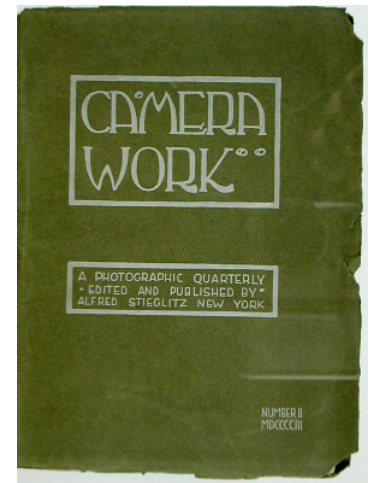
² Letter from Ernst Juhl to Alfred Stieglitz, June 30, 1910. Yale, Beinecke Rare Books Library. *Sammlung Ernst Juhl. Sonderausstellung Sammlung Ernst Juhl in Hamburg zur Geschichte der Künstlerischen Photographie*, Ernst Juhl (ed.), exh. cat., Königliches Kunstgewerbe-Museum Berlin, May 8–June 30, 1910 Berlin 1910.

³ *Catalogue of the International Exhibition, Pictorial Photography*, exh. cat., Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Albright Art Gallery, November 3, 1909–December 1, 1910, Buffalo 1910.

⁴ Letter from Alfred Stieglitz to Ernst Juhl, January 6, 1911. Yale, Beinecke Rare Books Library.



III. 4



III. 5



III. 6

Alfred Stieglitz seems to have parted ways with Ernst Juhl at this very moment. The partnership they had cultivated over twenty years had never in fact been intimate. The two men never met in person, and they were not very close one to another. In many ways, they were quite different from one another, but they had regularly corresponded. Stieglitz had participated in shows organized by Juhl in Hamburg, sending many pictures and selling some of them to Juhl for his own collection. The reason Stieglitz distanced himself from European art photography had to do not only with Stieglitz's strong character but also with his own artistic strategy after he launched the Photo-Secession, the journal *Camera Work*, and the Little Galleries. Taking the European Secessionist movement as a model, he worked to distinguish himself from other amateur photographers (especially from his rival,

F. Holland Day), accusing them of working in old-fashioned styles.⁵

On the other hand, however, we can assume that German art photography, which Stieglitz (in some ways wrongly) identified with Juhl and Fritz Matthies-Masuren, had taken a conservative turn at the beginning of the twentieth century, rejecting the vanguard in order to promote the rather rural, folkloric, and documentary elements of photography. This conservative position became hegemonic because of the bourgeois basis of photographic clubs. The influence of a broader readership – consisting of ordinary amateur photographers – on the photographic journals and exhibitions in German-speaking countries became a barrier to modern photographic movements.

Friendship and hobbies of two amateur photographers

Juhl and Stieglitz first began their acquaintance in 1893, during the International Exhibition of Amateur Photography organized by Juhl and Alfred Lichtwark at the Kunsthalle in Hamburg. Stieglitz sent his *Net Mender*, and Juhl decided to buy it for his own collection; the image appealed to the north German engineer born of Danish parents, especially as it resonated with Max Liebermann's picture (Ill. 6 Netzflickerinnen Liebermann). In 1896, Juhl reproduced this picture and showed it again in several exhibitions, creating a specific image of Stieglitz in Germany and putting more emphasis on his Pictorialist work than on his modern pictures. Stieglitz's picture obviously follows the Barbizon-inspired pictorial movement of the early 1890s and gives us a more static impression than Liebermann's picture. There is no doubt that this picture was not what Stieglitz wanted the American audience to know of his work.

The relationship between Juhl and Stieglitz was asymmetrical, not only because Stieglitz had a very high opinion of himself but also because Juhl didn't practice photography. He collected pictorial photography, organized exhibitions, and wrote many articles in photographic journals, but he abandoned photography very soon in his career as an amateur.⁶ After 1893, Juhl became the artistic director of the journal *Photographische Rundschau*, founded in Vienna in 1887 and published in Berlin, under the direction of the biologist and professor of medicine Richard Neuhauss, since 1891. Since Neuhauss had less artistic skill, he delegated the journal's pictorial side to Juhl. This was one reason why Juhl stayed in regular contact with Stieglitz. In 1896, he asked for permission to publish the *Net Mender*⁷; in 1897, Stieglitz participated in the important annual exhibition in Hamburg of the Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Amateur-Photographie (Society for the Advancement of Amateur Photography)⁸; and in September 1900, Juhl asked him to join the society as a foreign correspondent.⁹

Both Juhl and Stieglitz were very involved in the promotion of modern art photography, and in the first years, they had similar strategies. The scandal about the publication of Steichen's pictures in Germany is a striking and well-known episode that also shows how Juhl's and Stieglitz's attitudes differed regarding amateur clubs.¹⁰ Juhl discovered Steichen's work at

⁵ Ulrich Keller, "The Myth of Art Photography: a Sociological Analysis," *History of photography* 8: 4 (1984), pp. 249–275. For a sociological analysis of the Secessionist movement in Europe, see Michael Pollak, "Sociologie et utopie d'un art autonome," in: *Vienne: 1880-1938; l'apocalypse joyeuse*, Jean Clair (ed.), Paris 1986, pp. 398–411.

⁶ We know only one early photograph of Juhl's. See the article by Claudia Pfeiffer and Ulrich Rüter on the Pictorialism Portal.

⁷ Letter from Ernst Juhl to Alfred Stieglitz, November 23, 1896, Yale, Beinecke Rare Books Library.

⁸ *Jahresausstellung der Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Amateur-Photographie in der Kunsthalle zu Hamburg*, exh. cat. Kunsthalle, Hamburg 1897.

⁹ Letter from Ernst Juhl to Alfred Stieglitz, September 17, 1900, Yale, Beinecke Rare Books Library.

¹⁰ Ernst Juhl, "Edward Steichen," in *Photographische Rundschau* 16, July 7, 1902, pp. 127-128. Enno Kaufhold, "Edward Steichen und die deutsche Kunstfotografie," in: *Professional Camera*, 1112, 1979, pp. 2226. See also Christian Joschke, "Aux origines des usages sociaux de la photographie. La photographie amateur en

the same time as Stieglitz and admired him greatly. In January 1901, he published a series of Steichen's beautiful pictures, including *Rodin's portrait*, the *Self-Portrait as a painter*, and other portraits. This publication was one of the most beautiful series ever published in *Photographische Rundschau*.

According to Neuhauss's short article in the next issue of the journal, the response of the readers was strong.¹¹ They called for a change in the "artistic direction" of the journal. Ernst Juhl resigned from his functions as artistic director. He pursued the battle on another field, launching the new journal *Jahrbuch für Kunstphotographie*. In August 1901, Juhl asked for Stieglitz's support, not knowing about Stieglitz's own plans to create a new journal named *Camera Work*. Stieglitz's answer came very quickly, replying with the same request: he needed Juhl's support for *Camera Work*. This was the beginning of a partnership between both men, which lasted until 1904. Stieglitz sent pictures for the exhibition in Hamburg in September 1903, which Juhl admired. Some of them were sold despite their high prices.¹²

The missed opportunity

Their relationship became more distant after 1904. In summer 1904, Stieglitz planned a trip to Europe. Hearing about this trip from Stieglitz himself, Juhl tried to meet him, first inviting him to Hamburg, then proposing to come to Berlin, and, finally, planning a visit to an important art exhibition in Dresden, to which Stieglitz had sent several pictures. But Juhl had to cancel his trip to Dresden, so the two men missed the only opportunity to meet each other face to face. They never met. During this trip, Stieglitz felt deceived by the marginal role given to photography at the exhibition in Dresden, which was a testimony to official institutions' lack of recognition of art photography: "In the exhibition proper had been gathered together no end of beautiful paintings, statuary – in fact all forms of art except photography, which Cinderella-like was left by itself in the cold."¹³

After this visit to Europe, Stieglitz distanced himself from Juhl, who was himself becoming more isolated. Stieglitz began contacting Fritz Matthies-Masuren, who organized photographic exhibitions in Munich in collaboration with the Secession. This proximity with secessionist artists, coupled with the fact that Matthies-Masuren was himself an artist, might have seduced Stieglitz who, as Ulrich Keller has previously argued in a seminal article,¹⁴ copied his own strategy from the secessionist groups of the German-speaking countries. On the contrary, the photographic scene in Hamburg was still marked by a bourgeois and Biedermeier spirit. Even if there were some connections with Jugendstil artists like Arthur Illies, their members were too far removed from modern artists to achieve a real fusion of art and photography. Stieglitz's interest in promoting his gallery meant that he was increasingly interested in contacting artists.¹⁵

Juhl expressed his disappointment in a letter of August 15, 1904, writing that Stieglitz now preferred to collaborate with Matthies-Masuren than with him. Juhl knew he was losing his central position in German art photography. "Nor have I received a letter from M. M. [Matthies-Masuren]. I have been completely out of touch with the gentleman for many years. My experiences with him much resemble your experiences with Sad. Hartm. [Sadakichi

Allemagne entre 1890 et 1910," in: *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 154, September 2004, pp. 53–66. Christian Joschke, *Les Yeux de la nation. Photographie amateur et société dans l'Allemagne de Guillaume II. 1888–1914*, Dijon, Les presses du réel, 2013, pp. 255–258.

¹¹ Richard Neuhauss, "An unsere Leser," in: *Photographische Rundschau* 16, August 8, 1902, p. 163.

¹² Letter from Ernst Juhl to Alfred Stieglitz, November 18, 1903, Yale, Beinecke Rare Books Library.

¹³ *Camera Work* 8, 1904, p. 35.

¹⁴ Keller (as note 5).

¹⁵ Françoise Heilbrun and Danielle Tilkin, *New York et l'art moderne. Alfred Stieglitz et son cercle*, exh. cat. Musée d'Orsay, Paris 2005.

Hartmann].”¹⁶ After this moment, the two men seemed to have lost contact until 1910.¹⁷

The relationship between the two men had suffered from the divisions of the photographic scene and from the conservative turn of amateur clubs. On one hand, Juhl and the Hamburg-Berlin connection were losing their influence over art photography, while Matthies-Masuren and Viennese art photographers organized ambitious exhibitions, like the exhibition of 1906 in Munich. Juhl himself admitted his distance from German art photography: “After all of these cheerless experiences, I have withdrawn myself more and more.”¹⁸

On the other hand, the clubs of amateur photography with which Juhl had been involved for nearly twenty years were achieving broader membership and broader audience, and, as a consequence, became less elitist than before. The middle class involved in these photographic clubs turned its back to art photography in favor of a rather documentary use of photography.¹⁹ These amateur photographers were not only collectors but also users of photography. More interested in local culture than in the international vanguard, they gave priority to documentary projects more than to Pictorialism. They were involved in local history and surveys of folkloric culture in order to document regional identity.²⁰



III. 7

The best example for this folkloric turn of amateur photography was the international exhibition in Dresden in 1909.²¹ (III. 7 Ausstellungspalast Dresden) This was also the last collaboration between Stieglitz and European art photography. The exhibition had been planned in 1906 by one of the leaders of the federation of the photographic industry, Karl Schwier. The event was first meant to celebrate the vitality of the photographic industry. But

¹⁶ Letter from Ernst Juhl to Alfred Stieglitz, August 15, 1904. Yale, Beinecke Rare Books Library.

¹⁷ Letter from Ernst Juhl to Alfred Stieglitz, August 15, 1904. Yale, Beinecke Rare Books Library.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ I have defended this thesis in my book *Les Yeux de la nation. Photographie amateur et société dans l'Allemagne de Guillaume II. 1888–1914*, Dijon 2013.

²⁰ Elizabeth Edwards, *The Camera as Historian: Amateur Photographers and Historical Imagination, 1885–1918*, Durham, NC 2012.

²¹ Christian Joschke, *Les Yeux de la nation*, chapter 9; Franziska Brons, “Photographie als Weltanschauung. Die Internationale Photographische Ausstellung Dresden 1909,” *Fotogeschichte* 29: 112, 2009, pp. 15-30; Vanessa Rocco, “Pictorialism and Modernism at the Dresden *Internationale Photographische Ausstellung*,” in: *History of Photography* 33: 4, 2009, pp. 383-402.

in early 1907, Karl Schwier was strongly criticized by one of the leaders of the club of amateur photography in Dresden, Gustav Kuhfahl. The conflict threatened the exhibition, so Schwier resigned as main curator of the exhibition and was replaced by two amateurs: Oscar Seyffert and Gustav Kuhfahl. They involved many prominent amateur photographers in the organization of the exhibition (among them Richard Neuhaus, Ernst Juhl, Alfred Stieglitz, and Fritz Matthies-Masuren) in order to give some room to scientific photography as much as to artistic photography. Alfred Stieglitz sent twelve photographs.



III. 8

But the main intention of the exhibition lay elsewhere. Seyffert and Kuhfahl not only reintegrated art photography; they also dedicated a section to the land and the people ("*Land und Leute*"), in other words, to folkloric photography. (III. 8 Kuhfahl, Steinkreuz) Juhl was first contacted because of his connections with Pictorialists and because of his important art photography collection. But he was also contacted a second time in order to curate commissioned photographs representing Hamburg and its region. The foreign office of the state of Saxony had written to the Hamburg senate in order to include the city-state of Hamburg in this exhibition. Ernst Juhl was appointed curator of this section. He enquired of the Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Amateur Photographie and commissioned many of its members to take the photographs. These were exhibited at the Dresden exhibition and later came to Hamburg, making up the first part of the Photographische Staatssammlung. After the Dresden exhibition of 1909, the Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte and the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe continued to commission documentary photographs of Hamburg

and the region of the Niederelbe.²² Unfortunately, many of them were destroyed in World War II, but the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe still owns a beautiful portfolio of heliogravures.²³

In an interview with Fritz Kempe, Gertrude Juhl, Ernst Juhl's great niece, recalled this episode and described his perplexed first reaction.²⁴ Juhl didn't understand the meaning of such a commission, which seemed to him less ambitious than any of the exhibitions he had curated during the past twenty years. But after a period of reflection, he accepted the job. He did it with such skill and competence that the city of Hamburg asked him to continue this work.

But when Stieglitz visited the exhibition in Dresden, he couldn't help feeling irritated. He came to Europe in order to visit many artists he would show in his gallery. He went to Auguste Rodin's studio, saw the work of Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, and Pablo Picasso at the Steins', and went to Marienbad, Munich, and Dresden. We can imagine his reaction to the exhibition, seeing this great mix of industry, science, and folklore. It seemed to Stieglitz that Juhl – who was then entering a retrospective phase, looking back on two decades of Pictorialism, and planning and exhibition of his own collection to be shown the next year at the Kunstgewerbe Museum in Berlin – had abandoned his ambitions for artistic photography. Indeed, it was during this time that the relationship between the two cooled considerably.

The letter Stieglitz sent to Juhl in 1910 signaled a point of no return. Coming back to the US, Stieglitz turned his back on European art photography and decided to emphasize avant-garde European painters instead. This divorce was perhaps the symptom of Stieglitz's new artistic strategies, oriented by the search for an American modernism.

Conclusion

The relationship between Alfred Stieglitz and German Pictorialism was a very tempestuous one. He had begun his "career" in photography within amateur circles, and after leaving Europe for the US, had maintained a relationship with his former colleagues. Even after having established the Photo-Secession, he kept sending photographs to the exhibitions and journals of pictorial photography.

In 1909, he participated in what would be his last collaboration with a European exhibition of amateur photographers: the *International Exhibition of Amateur Photographs* in Dresden. When he discovered the main theme of this exhibition – "*Land und Leute*" – and the secondary role he was to play within this rather "documentary" and "folkloric" show, he turned his back definitively on the European photographic scene. The reason for this divorce was not only Stieglitz's artistic strategies but also what we might call the "documentary turn" of amateur photographers at the end of the 1900s. Less interested in art photography, the amateurs began to document history, landscape, and the popular.

²² See Rüdiger Joppien, "'Eine schöne und auf dem Kontinent wohl einzige Sammlung': Die Sammlung Ernst Juhl," in *Kunstphotographie um 1900: Die Sammlung Ernst Juhl*, Claudia Gabriele Philipp (ed.), exh. cat. Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg 1989, pp. 24–25.

²³ *Hamburg, Land und Leute*, portfolio in the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg.

²⁴ Fritz Kempe's file, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg.

Illustrations

1. Letter from Alfred Stieglitz to Ernst Juhl, January 6, 1911. Yale, Beinecke Rare Books Library.
2. Front page from the catalogue *Sammlung Ernst Juhl. Sonderausstellung Sammlung Ernst Juhl in Hamburg zur Geschichte der Künstlerischen Photographie*, Exhibition Catalogue, Königliches Kunstgewerbe-Museum Berlin, May 8 – June 30 1910, edited by Ernst Juhl, Berlin, Otto von Holten, 1910.
3. Front page from the *Catalogue of the international exhibition, pictorial photography*, Exhibition catalogue, Buffalo Fine Arts Academy Albright Art Gallery, organized by Buffalo, The Academy, 1910.
4. Alfred Stieglitz, *The Net Mender*, 1894, carbon print, Art Institute of Chicago, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Chicago.
5. Front page of *Camera Work*.
6. Max Liebermann, *Die Netzflickerinnen*, 1887–1889, oil on canvas, 180.5 x 226 cm, Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle.
7. Ausstellungspalast in Dresden, in *Geschäftsordnung, Internationale Photographische Ausstellung zu Dresden 1909*, Landeshauptarchiv Dresden, 1908, Die photographische Weltausstellung in Dresden 1910, A XXIV 122 Bd. I, S. 131.
8. Gustav Kuhfahl, *Steinkreuz, Sandstein*, before 1928, 97 x 71 x 22 cm, Deutsche Fotothek, Dresden, inv. 198 009.

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