

JULY 14, 2023

# FOR MUHARRAM, THE FIRST MONTH OF THE ISLAMIC NEW YEAR

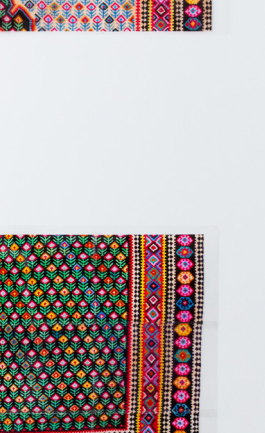
## 9 COMMENTARIES ON ARTISTS TO WATCH

*Based on the lunar Hijri calendar, Muharram is a holy month (second only to Ramadan in significance). In its honour, we asked Jamelie Hassan, artist, curator, and recipient of a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts in 2001, to introduce us to groundbreaking talents of Muslim heritage.*



Sara Angel

Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute



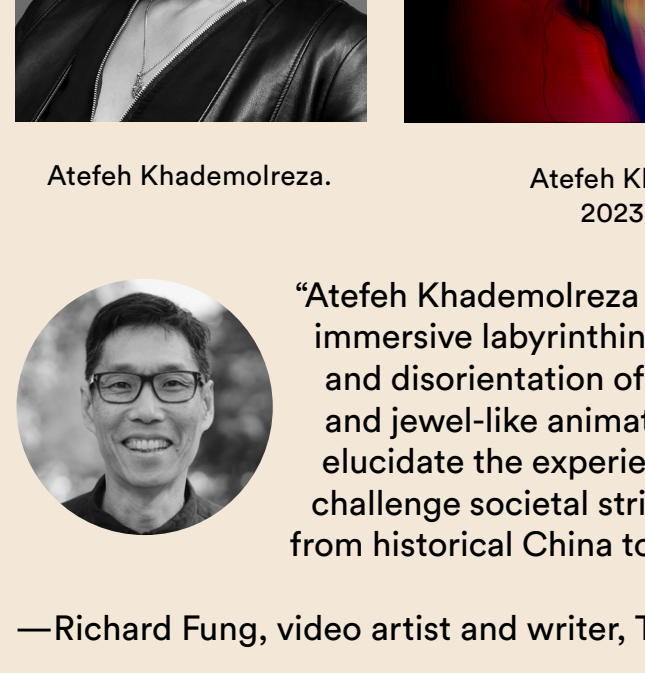
Jamelie Hassan

Celebrated for nearly 1,500 years by Muslims around the world, the Hijri New Year marks the start of the Islamic lunar calendar. In recognition of this occasion, which begins next Wednesday, July 19, the Art Canada Institute invited London, Ontario-based artist, activist, and curator Jamelie Hassan to guest edit this week's newsletter. Since the 1970s, Hassan, who is of Arab Canadian descent, has explored issues surrounding human rights, social activism, and cultural displacement in her work, which is currently on view in the exhibition *Being and Belonging: Contemporary Women Artists from the Islamic World and Beyond* at Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum.

In creating this newsletter, Hassan turned to her peers and asked contributors from within and beyond Canada's Muslim communities to tell us about the country's emerging visual arts talents with an Islamic background whose work should be on your radar.

## SUKAINA KUBBA

*Sukaina Kubba is a Toronto-based artist. She has shown work in Toronto at the Next Contemporary, the plumb, the Aga Khan Museum and the Art Gallery of Ontario; in Glasgow at Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow International and Kendall Koppe; and in several other cities. Residencies include the International Studio & Curatorial Program, Brooklyn, and La Wayaka Current, Chile. Kubba is Seasonal Lecturer in Visual Studies at Daniels Faculty, University of Toronto. From 2013 to 2018 Kubba was Lecturer and Curator at the Glasgow School of Art.*



Sukaina Kubba.



Sukaina Kubba, 1970.302.8, 2022, courtesy of Sukaina Kubba.

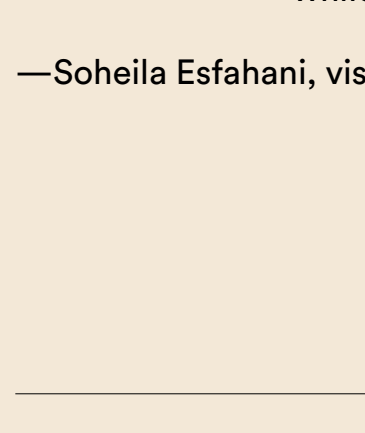


"Sukaina Kubba is an Iraqi Canadian multidisciplinary artist living in Toronto. Her work is rooted in material and cultural research, story-telling, and drawing. She works with materials ranging from industrial materials, like rubber and latex, to packing materials and textiles, all of which contain indices as travelling objects. In particular, she has been mapping rugs as peripatetic units of architecture rolled and unfurled by nomads and migrants, and laid over sand, rocks, floors, and walls to de-mark a re-location."

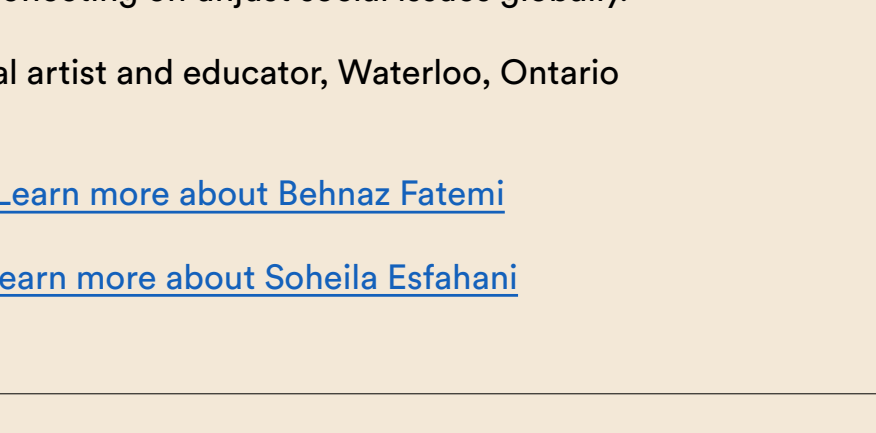
—Swapna Tamhane, artist, writer, and curator, Tiohtiá:ke (Montreal)

## ATEFEH KHADEMOLREZA

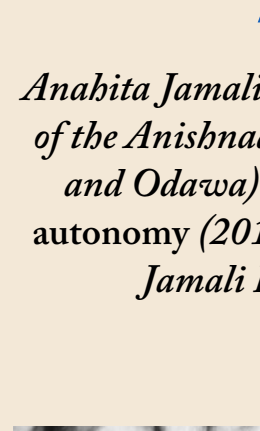
*Atefeh Khademolreza is an award-winning writer and filmmaker born in Iran and living in Toronto. She holds an MFA in Film Production from York University. Her films have been exhibited in festivals internationally and in Canada at the Netflix-BANFF Diversity of Voices Pitch Program, Khademolreza is an alumna of the Berlinale Talent Campus, Asian Film Academy, Serbia Interaction, and Reelworld E20 film programs. She was the TIFF Micki Moore Resident for 2021–22 and is a member of the Writers Guild of Canada.*



Atefeh Khademolreza.



Atefeh Khademolreza, still from the film Meteor, 2023, courtesy of Atefeh Khademolreza.

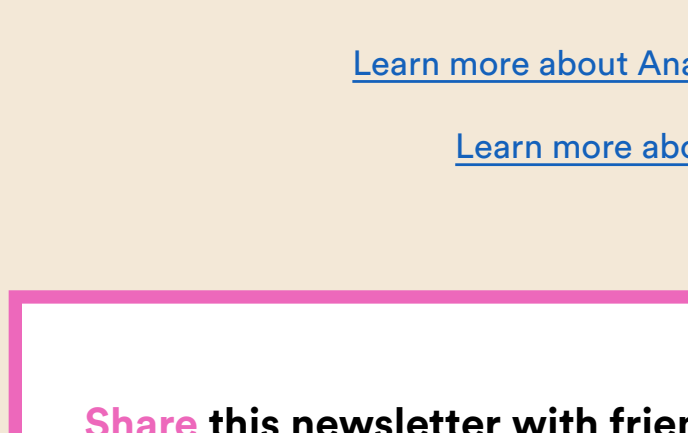


"Atefeh Khademolreza melts and reworks time and space into immersive labyrinthine puzzles, mirroring the displacement and disorientation of her characters. In drama, documentary, and jewel-like animation, Khademolreza's compelling films elucidate the experiences of migrants and refugees and challenge societal strictures around gender and sexuality, from historical China to contemporary Iran."

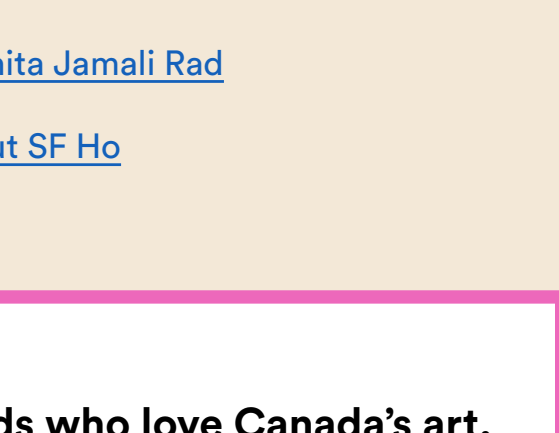
—Richard Fung, video artist and writer, Toronto

## BEHNAZ FATEMI

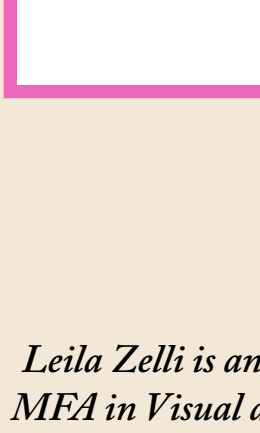
*Behnaz Fatemi is an Iranian interdisciplinary artist based in the Kitchener-Waterloo region. Currently an MFA candidate at the University of Waterloo, Fatemi was the 2020–21 Kitchener Artist in Residence, a member of the ArtSPay Artist in Incubator Program, and the recipient of an Emerging Artist Award at the 2020 Arts Awards Waterloo Region. Her work is currently on view in the 2023 CAFKA Biennial.*



Behnaz Fatemi.



Behnaz Fatemi, The Voices of a Revolution, 2023, courtesy of Behnaz Fatemi.

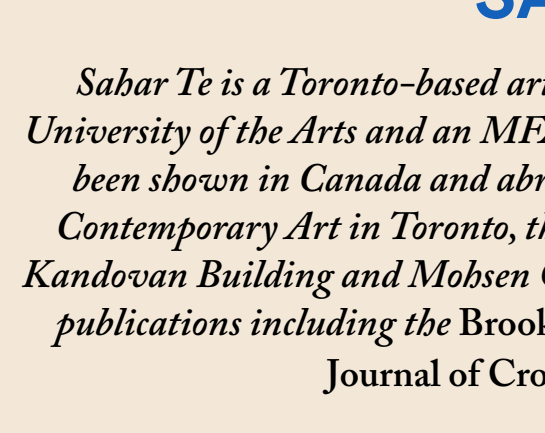


"Behnaz Fatemi's experience of living in both Iranian and Canadian society informs her art practice, exploring the challenges of diaspora, where local and global issues are negotiated. *The Voices of a Revolution*, Fatemi's interactive sound installation, invites audiences to immerse themselves in the experience of Iranian protesters' fight for human rights while reflecting on unjust social issues globally."

—Soheila Eshfahani, visual artist and educator, Waterloo, Ontario

## ANAHITA JAMALI RAD

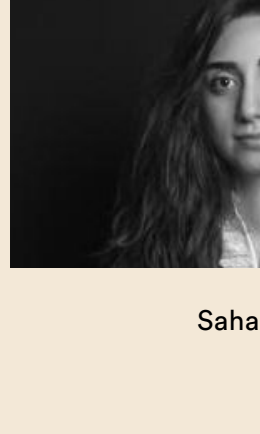
*Anahita Jamali Rad is a writer, poet, and artist based on the traditional territory of the Anishnaabeg people of the Three Fires Confederacy (Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa). They have published two full-length poetry books, for love and autonomy (2016) and still (2021), in addition to a number of shorter collections. Jamali Rad co-founded the journal About a Bicycle and the small poetry publishing house House House Press.*



Anahita Jamali Rad.



Anahita Jamali Rad, The Subject of Negotiation, 2022, courtesy of Anahita Jamali Rad.

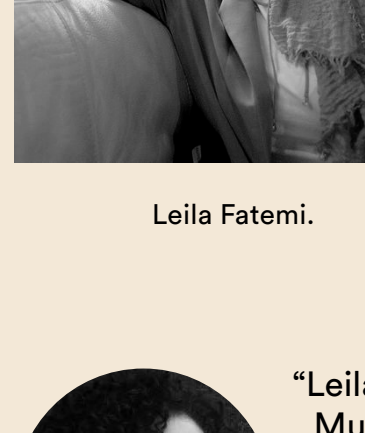


"Moving across and between the textual and material, Anahita Jamali Rad's interdisciplinary practice seeks to name or un-name the uneasy position of the diasporic body as it sits within commodity culture. There is a clarity to their work that eschews complacent engagement and instead demands attention to the gaps, contradictions, and quiet moments wrought by history and capital."

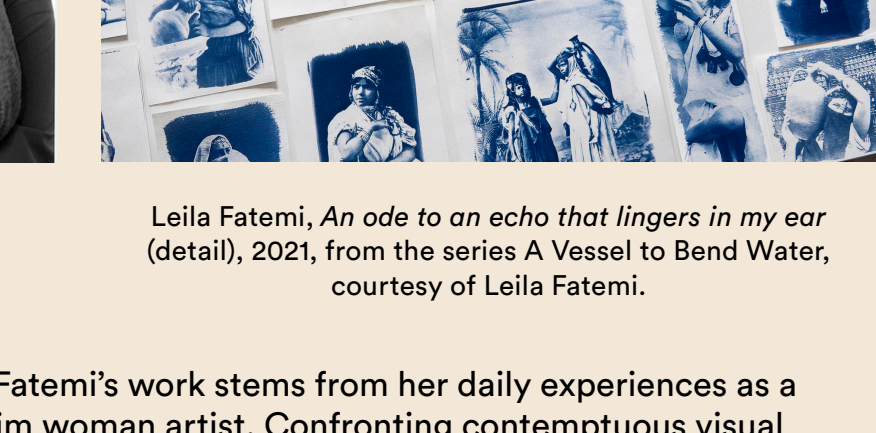
—SF Ho, artist, writer, and independent curator, unceded x'məḡk'wəy'm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səllwəlat (Tsleil-Waututh) territories

## LEILA FATEMI

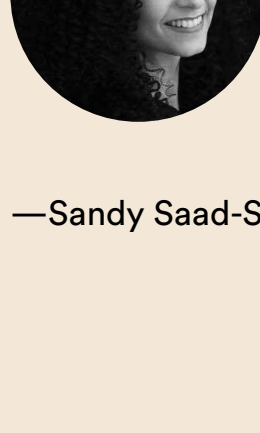
*Leila Zelli is an Iranian Canadian artist based in Montreal. She holds a BFA and MFA in Visual and Media Arts from Université du Québec, Montreal, and was the 2021 winner of the Claudine and Stephen Bronfman Fellowship in Contemporary Art. Zelli's work has been exhibited internationally and her works are part of the collections of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec.*



Leila Zelli.



Leila Zelli (with Guillaume Pascale), still from the video Substitute (La Remplaçante), 2019, courtesy of Leila Zelli.

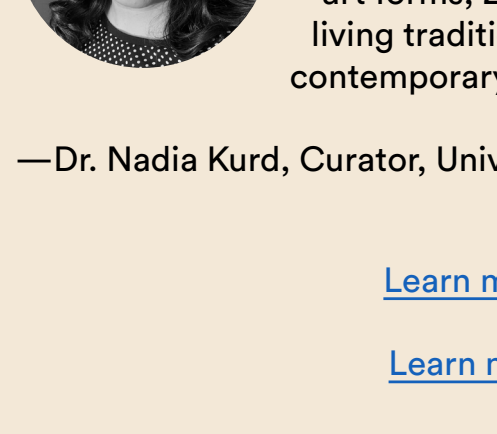


"Firmly anchored in today's world, where cultural and geographical boundaries are being constantly tested, Leila Zelli captures in images, whether moving or still, our perpetual angst for belonging and social justice. The way the artist, born and raised in Tehran, positions herself—neither here nor there, but in-between—makes her activism unique, poignant, and fierce, yet always suffused by a graceful and poetic enchantment."

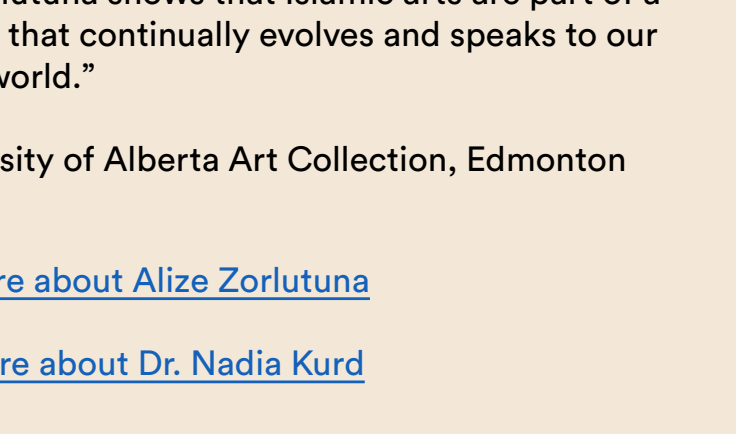
—Dr. Laura Vigo, Curator of Asian Art, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

## SAHAR TE

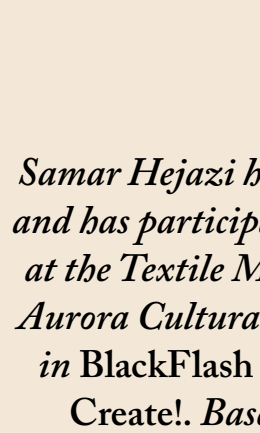
*Sahar Te is a Toronto-based artist and writer with a BFA from the Alberta University of the Arts and an MFA from the University of Toronto. Her work has been shown in Canada and abroad at institutions including the Museum of Contemporary Art in Toronto, the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, and the Kandovan Building and Moben Gallery in Tehran. Her writing has appeared in publications including the Brooklyn Rail, Sociology Lens, and Imaginations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies.*



Sahar Te.



Sahar Te, still from the video Chapter II: Kus Everli, 2023, from the ongoing series A Symbiosis to Ode, courtesy of Sahar Te.

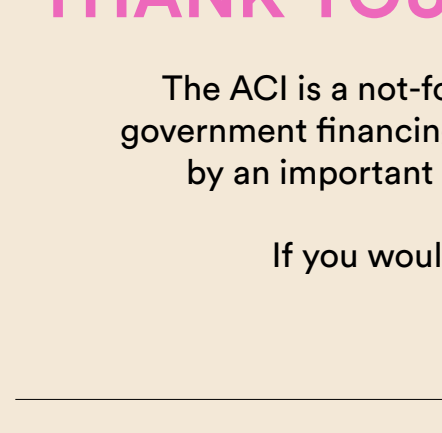


"Sahar Te challenges conventional understandings of Southwest Asia and its diverse cultures. In this work, a chapter in a larger project, she aims to create an alternative history for the region. Exploring the symbolic associations of birds, particularly in Islamic Sufi traditions, Te is also interested in relations between human and non-human companions, and their unique coexistence in Turkic and Persian artistic imagination and spatial practices. Partly informed by the medieval poem *The Conference of the Birds (Mantiq al-Tayr)* by Aṭṭār, the work equally invokes birds as allegories of political messages, especially in places where critical voices are persecuted."

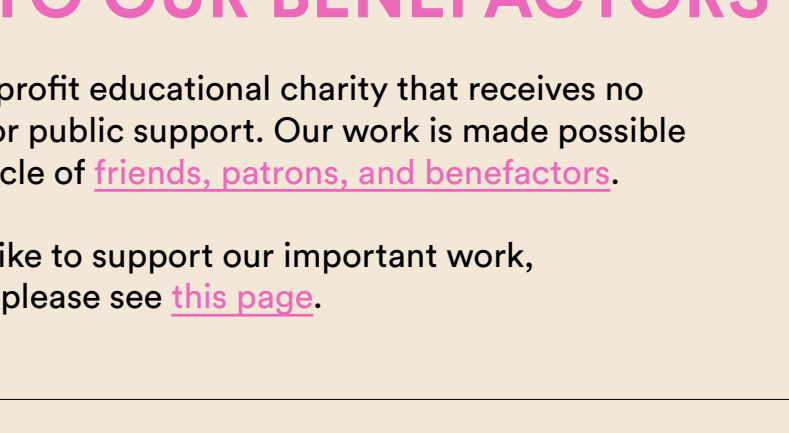
—Dr. Amin Alsaden, curator, writer, and educator, Toronto

## LEILA FATEMI

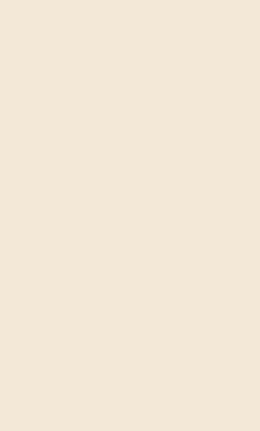
*Leila Fatemi is an artist and community arts worker based in Toronto. She holds a BFA in Photography Studies from Toronto Metropolitan University and her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally including at Gulf Photo Plus, Dubai; Sicily Photobook Festival; and Shubak Festival, London. Fatemi is the recipient of the Clyde & Co. Art Award, a finalist for the Toronto Arts Foundation Emerging Artist Award, and currently the 2022–23 BIPOC Artist-in-Residence at Open Studio.*



Leila Fatemi.



Leila Fatemi, An ode to an echo that lingers in my ear (detail), 2021, from the series A Vessel to Bend Water, courtesy of Leila Fatemi.



"Leila Fatemi's work stems from her daily experiences as a Muslim woman artist. Confronting contemptuous visual histories, Fatemi sources images found in Orientalist digital archives and unpacks their reductive narratives. Her work combats the affliction of symbolism used to disempower the agency of women from the Middle East and North Africa region over their bodies."

—Sandy Saad-Smith, Curator, Doris McCarthy Gallery, University of Toronto

## ALIZE ZORLUTUNA

*Alize Zorlutuna earned a degree in International Development Studies at Dalhousie University (2005), a BFA in Sculpture Installation at OCAD University (2010), and an MFA from the School for Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University (2013). She grew up spending summers in Turkey where she was immersed in language and material culture. Zorlutuna lives in Tkaronto (Toronto).*



Alize Zorlutuna.



Alize Zorlutuna, Becoming Disloyal, 2023, from the series Ebru: Paper works, courtesy of Alize Zorlutuna.



"Alize Zorlutuna's ability to weave together materials, histories and techniques poetically reveals the tensions within the world of Islamic arts. From questions about the personal, gendered roles of artists to the reinvention of traditional art forms, Zorlutuna shows that Islamic arts are part of a living tradition that continually evolves and speaks to our contemporary world."

—Dr. Nadia Kurd, Curator, University of Alberta Art Collection, Edmonton

## SAMAR HEJAZI

*Samar Hejazi holds a BFA in New Media from Toronto Metropolitan University and has participated in group exhibitions at Warehouse 421, Abu Dhabi, as well as at the Textile Museum of Canada, the plumb, Open Studio Project Space, and the Aurora Cultural Centre. Her work has been collected internationally and featured in BlackFlash and Studio magazines, as well as in the Summer 2023 edition of Create!. Based in Toronto, Samar will be participating in Ghostly Makers, a group exhibition at the Burnaby Art Gallery opening today.*



Samar Hejazi.



Samar Hejazi, Transgressed Boundaries I, 2020, courtesy of Samar Hejazi.



"Samar Hejazi deconstructs materials to construct, using traditional crafts techniques she grew up with. Her work addresses ideas of identity, boundaries, and how perception largely depends on one's perspective. Hejazi works with threads and textiles using motifs taken from traditional Palestinian embroideries. By sewing threads together without using any ground fabric, her work highlights the enduring nature of cultural traditions and values across time and geographical distance."

—Bitia Pourvash, Associate Curator, Aga Khan Museum, Toronto

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