

# THE ART *of* HEALING

AUSTRALIAN  
INDIGENOUS  
BUSH MEDICINE

15 May – 28 June 2019 | Monday – Friday 12.00 – 19.00  
Arcade at Bush House, South Wing, Strand WC2B 4PJ  
**Free Admission**

KING'S  
*College*  
LONDON

PRESENTED BY  
MENZIES AUSTRALIA  
INSTITUTE

TREAHNA HAMM (b.1965), *DHUNGALA COOL BURN*, 2017



*The Art of Healing: Australian Indigenous Bush Medicine* depicts traditional Indigenous healing practices as existing simultaneously in the past, present and future, in accordance with the principles of Tjukurrpa (dreaming). These healing practices, here represented through contemporary art, belong to distinct and varied Indigenous communities from all over Australia. Traditional Indigenous healing is a current practice informed by the past, and an intrinsic part of the life of Indigenous people in Australia. As such, healing forms part of 'Indigenous Knowledge', a term that refers to the world view of First Nations peoples.



**KITTEY NGYALGARRI MALARVIE (b. 1938)**

**Skin:** Nawoola

**Language:** Jaru

**Country:** Sturt Creek, Western Australia

**Artist location:** Kununurra, Western Australia

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*Luga*, 2016

natural pigments on canvas

60 x 60 cm

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**'Luga (pronounced 'looka') is the name we call the dried mudflats on Sturt River. In the wet seasons and after a big tide, the white waters of the river would rise up on the mudflats. Then when it dried out it would turn to crystal, like salt. Old people used to eat that salt and the mud too; it is a bush medicine, used for gut-ache (diarrhoea).'**

Kittey Ngyalgarrri Malarvie was born near Halls Creek and grew up at the Ord River Station. In the 1970s her family went to Kununurra, she learnt from her parents to make artefacts to sell to tourists.



**PEGGY MADIJARROONG GRIFFITHS (b. 1941)**

**Skin:** Namij

**Language:** Miriwoong

**Country:** Keep River, Northern Territory

**Artist location:** Kununurra, Western Australia

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**Larrgen – Spinifex and water**, 2016

natural pigment on canvas

60 x 60 cm

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**Griffiths learnt from the old people the sources of food and medicines. Some of the *Gajarrang* (Spinifex) that grows here is boiled like a tea and used as a form of contraception.**

Peggy Madjarroong Griffiths comments: 'I grew up on Newry Station and learnt my culture from the old people. I saw my old people being taken away from the camp with chains around their necks and I was hidden once when Welfare came so that they would not take me away. I learned to dance all the traditional dances and I have taught all my children and grandchildren these dances.'



**JUDY MENGIL (1954–2017)**

**Skin:** Nangari

**Language:** Mirriwoong

**Country:** Binjin

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**Dimalan leaves**, 2016

natural pigments on canvas

60 x 60 cm

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**'I bath in this all the time. It is like an antiseptic and keeps the mosquitoes away.'**

**Judy Mengil has painted bush fruits and bush Dimalan leaf. The fruits are called *Midgidien* – Black Berry, *Daloong* – Small Green Plum, Bush Orange, Gooseberries and *Wooloo-wooleng* – White Berries. The *Dimalan* leaves are plucked from the tree from which they grow and boiled in water.**

Judy Mengil produced works that allude to explanations for natural phenomena, the presence of Dreamings, and the creation of geological landforms. These themes are balanced with intricate details suggesting moving water, the delicacy of lush and shady waterholes





**SHIRLEY PURDIE (b. 1947)**

**Skin:** Nangari

**Language:** Gija/Kimberley Kriol

**Country:** Gilburn (Mabel Downs Station)

**Artist location:** Warmun, Western Australia

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*Thalngarrji/Snappy Gum/Eucalyptus brevifolia*, 2016  
natural ochre and pigments on canvas  
45 x 45 cm

***Thalngarrji (Snappy Gum or Eucalyptus brevifolia)* is boiled into a tea or made into a rubbing cream for sore throats and chest colds.**

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*Biriyal/Conkerberry/Carissa lanceolata*, 2016  
natural ochre and pigments on canvas  
45 x 45 cm, (not illustrated)

***Biriyal (Conkerberry or Carissa lanceolata)* is used for smoking people to get away bad spirits.**

Shirley Purdie was inspired to paint her country in the early 1990s by senior Warmun artists including her late mother (the great Madigan Thomas), Rover Thomas, Queenie McKenzie, and her uncle Jack Britten. She is a prominent community leader in Warmun, and an incisive cross-cultural communicator. Her paintings, characterised by a bold use of richly textured ochre, explore her mother and father's Country, as well as spirituality and the relationship between Catholicism and Gija conceptions of Ngarranggarni (Dreaming).



**MERVYN RUBUNTJA (b. 1958)**

**Skin:** Japanangka

**Language:** Arrernte

**Country:** Maduthara from father's side, Ntaria (Hermannsburg) from mother's side

**Artist location:** Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

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*Bush medicine in Jay Creek, NT (detail)*, 2017  
watercolour  
54 x 74 cm

**'I choose to paint the area of Jay Creek because it has all the traditional plants, bush medicine and bush tucker. *Urrarlpa* (Native Tomatoes) are found in hilly, rocky habitats. People smell or chew the leaves and it aids in cleansing the body.'**

Mervyn Rubuntja is a board member of Akuyulerre Inc. and a celebrated artist. Born at the Telegraph Station in Alice Springs; his mother was a Western Arrarnta woman and his father a senior law man and the first Aboriginal person in the Northern Territory to be given a state funeral. Mervyn Rubuntja has fought for Aboriginal rights and protection of the land.



**SIDNEY MOODY (b. 1947)**

**Skin:** Tjampitjin

**Language:** Kukatja

**Country:** Nyila

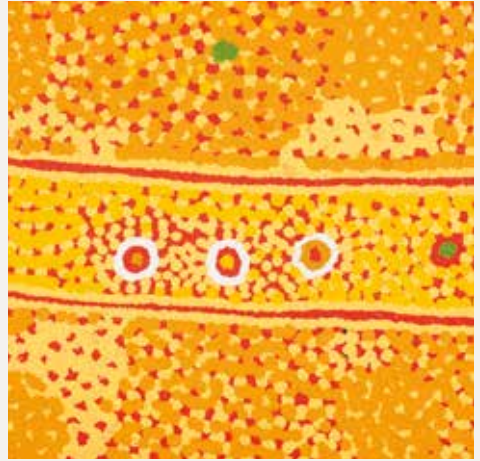
**Artist location:** Wirrimanu (Balgo),  
Western Australia

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*Birriwa tree leaves* (detail), 2013  
woodblock  
63 x 48 cm

**This print is about the leaves of the *Birriwa* tree. This tree is found throughout the desert. The leaves are put into a billy-can with a little water. Slow to boil, the leaves release a honey-type substance. Once boiled, the leaves are removed and people drink the remaining medicine, which is known to cure numerous ailments, including the flu and colds.**

Sidney Moody is an emerging Warlayirti artist who lives in *Wirrimanu* (Balgo) with his wife, artist Madeline Nowee, three daughters and many grandchildren. A respected community member, he is a great storyteller, of his Tjukurpa and his days as a stockman in the Kimberley.



**HELICOPTER TJUNGURRAYI (b. 1947)**

**Skin:** Tjungurrayi

**Language:** Kukatja

**Country:** Nynmi

**Artist location:** Wirrimanu (Balgo),  
Western Australia

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*Palyalarni* (detail), 2002  
acrylic on board  
45 x 60 cm

**'Palyalarni' ('Make me well'), the sick person asks the maparn, and the maparn cleans the inside of the person's body. In this case the person has a 'runny tummy' from eating too much bush food. The person has become well: *palyarringu*.**

Helicopter Tjungurrayi is one of Warlayirti Artists' leading artists. As a boy he became very sick and was brought into the old Balgo mission in a helicopter that had been doing mining exploration work. This was the first helicopter many of the people had seen and it is how he got his name. Helicopter is a *maparn* (traditional healer) and an active law man.



**MULKUN WIRRPANDA (b. 1946)**

**Language:** Dhudi-Djapu

**Country:** Dhudi-Djapu/Dha-malamirr

**Moiety:** Dhuwa

**Artist location:** Yirrkala, Northern Territory

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**Bundjunu** (detail), 2014  
woodblock  
81 x 57 cm

**'This is a bush plant named *Capparis umbonata*, also known as Bush Orange, Wild Orange, or *Bundjunu*. I have developed an interest in promoting plants that are no longer eaten widely. As a child I remember there were very many old people and that now there are so few. I blame the poor diet and the loss of knowledge of this and other such plants.'**

Mulkun Wirrpanda is the daughter of the great Yolgnu leader Dhakiyarr Wirrpanda. As the eldest and most knowledgeable among the Dhudi-Djapu clan from Dhuruputjpi, she is one of the few acknowledged Yolgnu women leaders.



**JUDY NAPANGARDI WATSON (c. 1925–2016)**

**Skin:** Napangardi

**Language:** Warlpiri

**Country:** Mina Mina and Yingipurlangu

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**Ngalyipi Jukurrrpa (Snake Vine Dreaming)**  
(detail), 2010  
etching  
49 x 38.5 cm

**In the Dreaming, women danced at Mina Mina and digging-sticks rose up out of the ground. *Ngalyipi*, or Snake Vine, a rope-like creeper is used as a ceremonial wrap. Aboriginal people crush sections of the Snake Vine and tie it around the head of someone with a bad headache.**

Judy Napangardi Watson was born at Yarungkanji (Mt Doreen Station), at the time when many Warlpiri and other Central and Western Desert peoples were living a traditional life. With her family Judy made many trips on foot to her Country and lived for long periods at her ancestral Country on the border of the Tanami and Gibson Deserts.



**MARGARET GILBERT (b. 1956)**

**Language:** Ngan'gikurunggurr

**Country:** Nemaarluk

**Artist location:** Nauiyu (Daly River),  
Northern Territory

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*Miwulngini – Red Lotus Lily* (detail), 2016  
etching  
32.7 x 24.6 cm

**This print shows the very beautiful *Miwulngini*, or Red Lotus Lily (*Nelumbo nucifera*), which is found in the many billabongs around the Daly River region. The large green seeds (actually fruit) may be eaten raw or lightly roasted over coals and are a rich and abundant food source for the Aboriginal (Ngan'gi) people of Daly River. They occur in large numbers in the mid-dry season. *Miwulngini* are also used as medicine to treat constipation.**

Margaret Gilbert is an artist who lives in Nauiyu Community, Daly River, Northern Territory. She was born in 1956. Her language group is Ngan'gikurunggurr and her traditional homeland is Nemaarluk.



**IRENE MUNGATOPI (b. 1969)**

**Skin:** Yarrinapila (Red Ochre)

**Language:** Tiwi

**Mother's country:** Rangini, Melville Island,  
Northern Territory

**Father's country:** Jurrupi (Jessie River),  
Melville Island, Northern Territory

**Artist location:** Pularumpi, Melville Island,  
Northern Territory

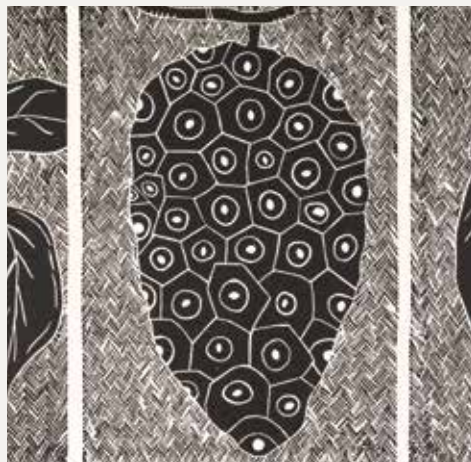
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*Yankumwani – Green Plum* (detail), 2016  
two plate etching and chine colle  
33 x 25 cm

**'It is called *Yankumwani* in my language. It grows in the bush on Tiwi Islands where I come from. We walk along the bush at the end of the dry season and we see those plums hanging down. We eat the flesh and throw the seed away. Used as a powerful medicine to treat toothaches, headaches, eczema and other skin disorders.'**

Irene Mungatopi is a Tiwi woman from Melville Island. Irene is an artist at Munupi Arts & Crafts on Melville Island. She incorporates traditional Tiwi ceremonial designs into her art. Irene has exhibited nationally and internationally since 1998.





**MATILDA MALUJEWEL (b. 1974)**

**Language:** Kala Lagaw Ya

**Country:** Badu

**Clan:** Tupmul (spiny ray)

**Artist location:** Badu Art Centre, Badu Island, Torres Strait, Queensland

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**Aubau (Noni Fruit)** (detail), 2015

linocut

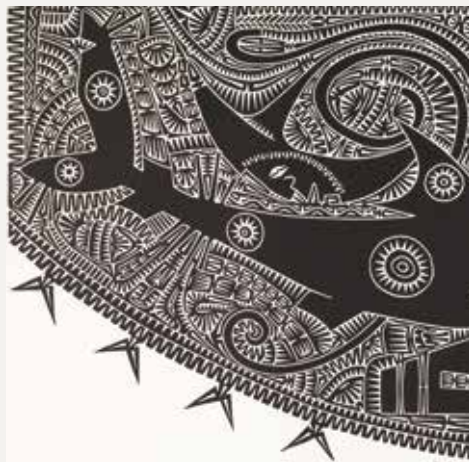
30 x 62 cm

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**'In the Torres Strait Islands, we use the *Aubau* (Noni Fruit) as traditional medicine. The leaves are used to treat diabetes and liver diseases, while the fruit is consumed to treat sore throat and flu. This print signifies the health and wellbeing of my people, and also represents cleansing of the body, soul and mind.'**

Matilda Malujewel Nona comments:

'I have just started putting my art expertise to work. I've always had an artistic mind but no time, being a single parent with four kids. I'm looking forward to experiment with different mediums, excited to be in the art industry and also working with other mjlocal artists from Badu Island.'



**BRIAN ROBINSON (b. 1973)**

**Language:** Kala Lagaw Ya/Torres Strait Creole (Ailan Tok or Yumplatok)

**Country:** Waiben (Thursday Island)/Moa/ Shelburne Bay, Cape York Peninsula

**Tribal groups:** Kaywalagal/Maluyilgal/Wuthathi

**Totem:** Stingray

**Artist location:** Cairns, Queensland

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**Baidam Thithuyil** (detail), 2010

linocut from one block

40 x 49.5 cm

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**'Everything under creation is represented in the sky. For this reason, astronomy plays a significant role in Torres Strait cultural traditions. Islanders pay close attention to the night sky, which enables them to determine the amount of moisture and turbulence in the atmosphere, thus allowing them to predict weather patterns and seasonal change.'**

Brian Robinson is a Cairns-based artist and curator. His practice includes painting, printmaking, sculpture and design. His graphic style combines his Torres Strait Islander heritage with experimentation in both theoretical approach and medium, and crosses boundaries between reality and fantasy. Robinson's art reflects the marine environment and Waiben (Thursday Island).





**TREAHNA HAMM (b. 1965)**

**Language:** Yorta Yorta

**Country:** Yorta Yorta

**Artist location:** Yarrowonga, Victoria

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*Dhungala cool burn*, 2017

acrylic paint, river sand, bark ink on canvas  
100.9 x 114 cm (one panel)

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**'This painting depicts traditional times of Yorta Yorta women and girls collecting bush foods and remedies, with their dilly-bags hung from their shoulders—after cool burning occurs. The figures stand in honour of ancestral knowledge along the bank of *dhungala* (the Murray River), which is symbolised by the hands of ancestors holding billabong sediment.'**

Trehna Hamm is an internationally renowned artist whose works are composed of stories garnered from her Yorta Yorta experiences of living by the Murray River. Her output includes printmaking, painting, photography, public art, sculpture, possum skin cloaks, murals and fibre weaving. She has exhibited extensively internationally and is represented in national and international collections.



**ROSIE NGWARRAYE ROSS (b. 1951)**

**Skin:** Ngwarraye

**Language:** Alyawarre

**Country:** Ampilatwatja

**Artist location:** Ampilatwatja,  
Northern Territory

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**Bush flowers and bush medicine plants**, 2015

acrylic on linen  
91 x 91 cm

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**'We look for these plants in rocky country, we can find a little purple plum that we use to clean the kidneys and sometimes for flu. The yellow flowers are used for scabies; we boil them and add water and wash our skin with it. The pink flowers we use for when we have sore eyes; we mix the flowers with water and the colour changes to a light green.'**

Rosie Ngwarraye Ross was born near Amaroo Station, in Alyawarr country. Her late mother was one of the original artists in the Utopian batik movement.



**JUDITH PUNGKARTA INKAMALA (b. 1948)**

**Skin:** Pungkarta

**Language:** Western Arrarnta

**Country:** Ntaria, Northern Territory

**Artist location:** Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory

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**Bush medicine**, 2017  
terracotta and underglaze  
43 x 31 x 31 cm

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**'Bush medicine has always been with Aboriginal people. It was before, and we will always be making bush medicine. There are all kinds of bush medicine and they grow all over. You'll find they're different in each place, and we have these ones that I've painted. There are many more than what you see here on this pot, but these ones, we use a lot. People are using these ones a lot these days.'**

Judith Pungkarta Inkamala joined the Hermannsburg Potters in 1993. Judith is a senior member of the Hermannsburg Potters, has worked in Indonesia and China, and is an inspiring and respected cultural leader in her community.



**ILAWANTI UNGKUTJURU KEN (b. 1944)**

**Language:** Pitjantjatjara

**Community/location:** Amata, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, South Australia

**Mother's country:** Arula

**Father's country:** Near/south of Wataru

**Artist location:** Ingkerreke Outstation, Rocket Bore, Northern Territory

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**Tjulpu wiltja: bird nest basket**, 2017  
tjanpi, wool, raffia, emu feathers, wire  
50 x 60 x 50 cm

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**'This is the story about the wedge-tailed eagle. This is my big sister's and my Tjukurpa. The wedge-tailed eagle soars a long way up in the air and can see everything. He can see all the food from up above, and all the living things are frightened of him. He cares for his little eaglets. He gives them food, proper bush tucker. We feel the same way about our family and care for them, too.'**

Ilawanti Ungkutjuru Ken is a senior Pitjantjatjara woman residing in Amata. She is a respected painter with Tjala Arts, an innovative Tjanpi fibre artist, a strong cultural leader, and a *ngangkari* (traditional healer).



**MARILYNE ELIZABETH NICHOLLS (b. 1957)**

**Language:** Dja Dja Wurrung/Yorta Yorta  
Baraba Baraba/Wadi Wadi/Jupagulk

**Country:** Murray River region

**Artist location:** Swan Hill, Victoria

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**Healing Basket, 2017**

Sedge grass, Eucalyptus leaves  
Coastal Rosemary, bark, ochre  
20.2 x 22 x 21 cm

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**'This basket is woven from Sedge plant fibre harvested from a freshwater lake near Swan Hill. The basket is painted with earth paint (ochre) from the local area of Swan Hill. Inside the basket are two medicine plants: a herb called Coastal Rosemary, and gum leaves. Both these plants are used for the purpose of healing ceremony. Both plants are used for smoking ceremonies to cleanse and heal.'**

Marilyne Elizabeth Nicholls has lived most of her life around the Murray (Milloo) River system and its waterways. Her weaving method combines the characteristics of the grasses with her knowledge and skilful technique.



**TREAHNA HAMM (b. 1965)**

**Language:** Yorta Yorta

**Country:** Yorta Yorta

**Artist location:** Yarrawonga, Victoria

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**A Yorta Yorta person's bush medicine first aid kit, 2017**

Paperbark, Kurrajong pods, Lomandra, She-Oak pods, bark ink, riverbed clay, charcoal, billabong sediment, raffia, Bottlebrush wood and bloom, ash, possum bone, mussel shell  
4 x 12 x 27 cm

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**'During the European settlement of Australia, the bushland, wetlands and waterways were seen as barren, and empty of medicinal knowledge and practices. But these environments were in fact a main part of the fragile balance between the lore, life and survival of Aboriginal people. This bush medicine first aid kit contains bush and river remedies that have been in use for many thousands of years.'**



## APPROACHING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AT KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

Indigenous Knowledge comprises a vast and diverse range of concepts, practices, technologies, laws, epistemologies, languages, pedagogies, and protocols for social and intellectual engagement, including cross-cultural engagement. In Australia the term encompasses knowledge produced, stored, disseminated and developed by Indigenous communities over at least 65,000 years. This unmatched record of sustainability is evinced also in the resilience of First Peoples, who have survived unprecedented direct and indirect attack on their persons and cultures over nearly two and a half centuries of colonisation.

A programme of events associated with the arrival of the exhibition in London has been organised by the Menzies Australia Institute, King's College London in partnership with the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health (Melbourne), University of Western Australia and the Medical History Museum, University of Melbourne. Find out more:

[kcl.ac.uk/australia](http://kcl.ac.uk/australia)

## ABOUT THE MENZIES AUSTRALIA INSTITUTE

The Menzies Australia Institute at King's College London seeks to deepen understanding of Australia through research, teaching and engagement. In 2019 the Menzies Australia Institute will be launching King's Indigenous, a project to develop indigenous led research, teaching and impact at King's College London. Find out more at [kcl.ac.uk/australia](http://kcl.ac.uk/australia) | [@KingsAusInst](https://twitter.com/KingsAusInst) #ArtofHealing

### In Partnership



This exhibition is a partnership between Menzies Australia Institute at King's College London, the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, the Medical History Museum, University of Melbourne and the London exhibition is supported by the university's Culture team.

The Arcade at Bush House is part of the Strand Cultural Quarter at King's College London, home to a diverse programme of events, installations and exhibitions.

**#KingsCulturalCommunity**

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