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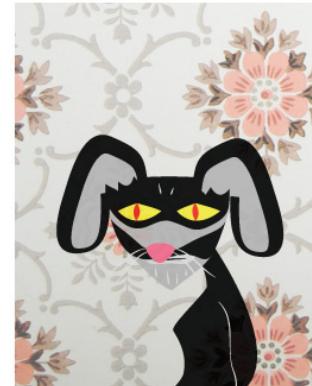
photography
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digital art
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book design
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Adam Pere...

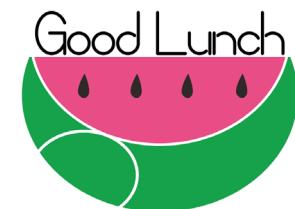
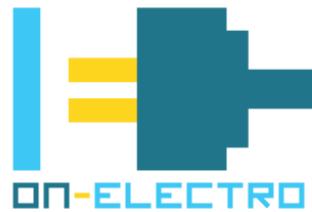
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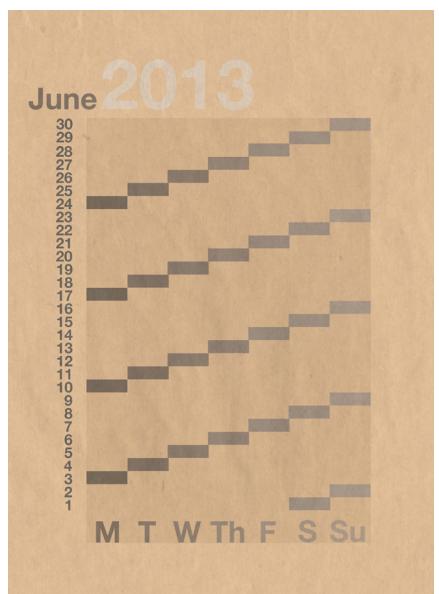
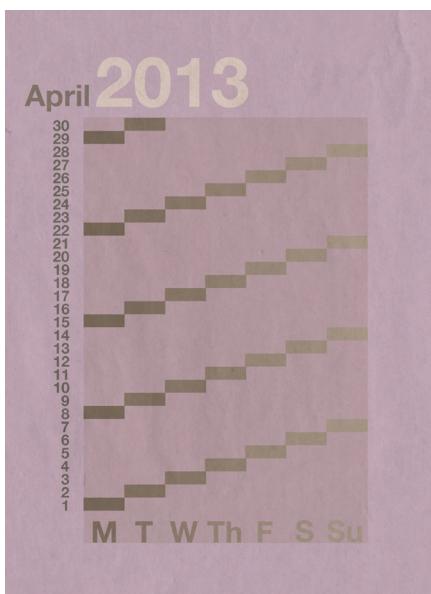
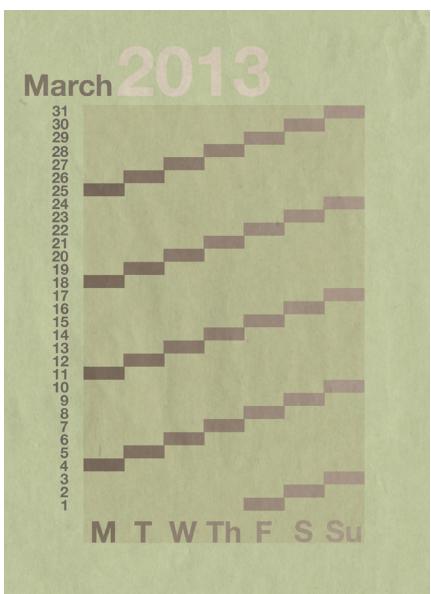
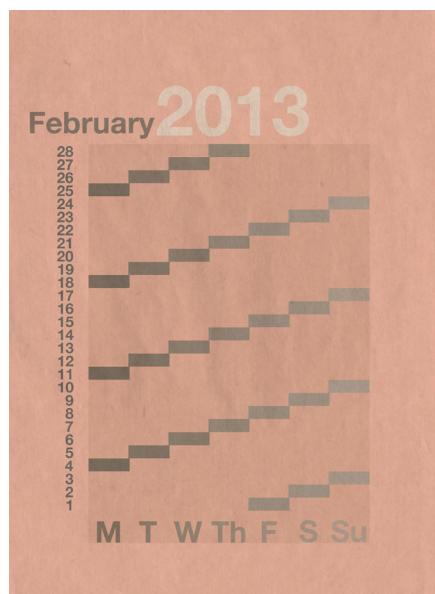
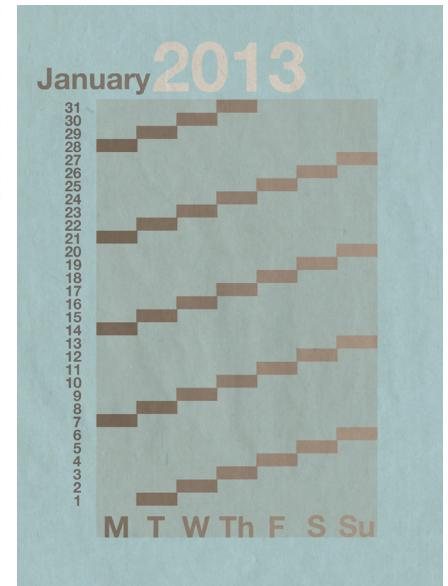
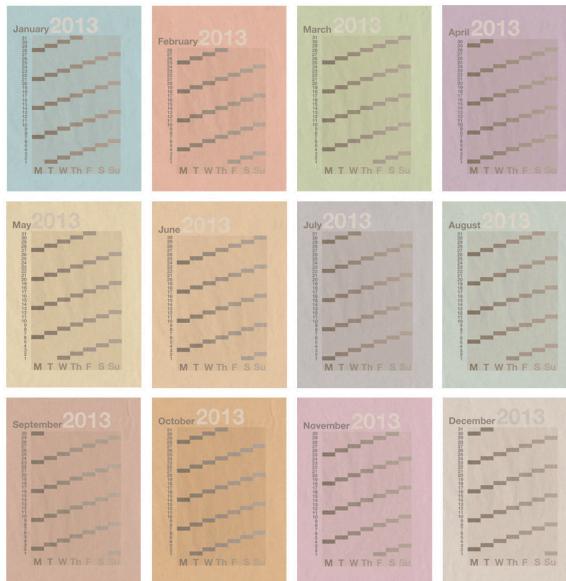
graphic design **characters**



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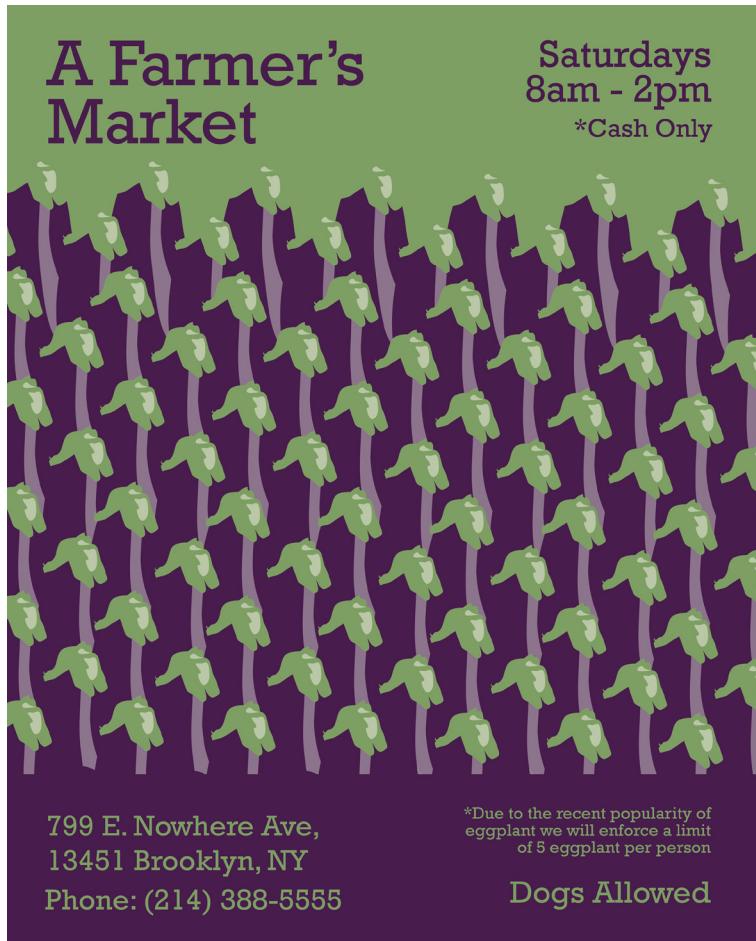
graphic design **calendar**



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posters



graphic design
posters

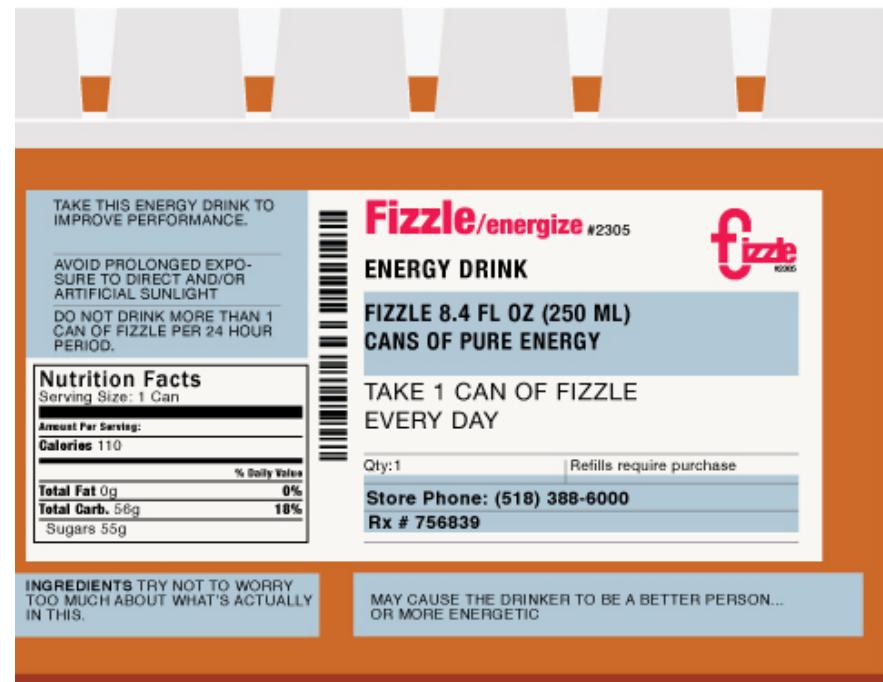


fizzle
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graphic design
fizzle



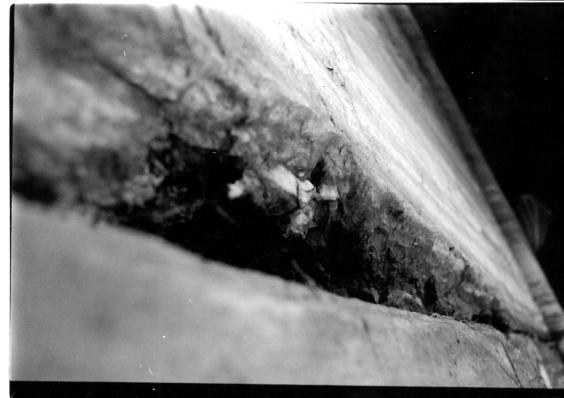
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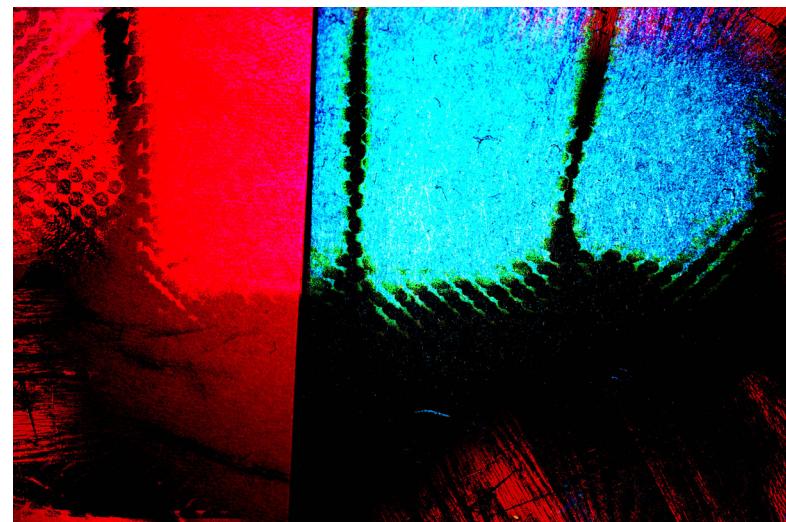
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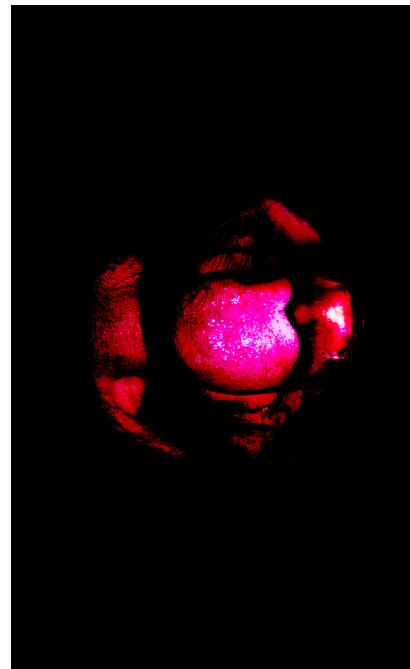
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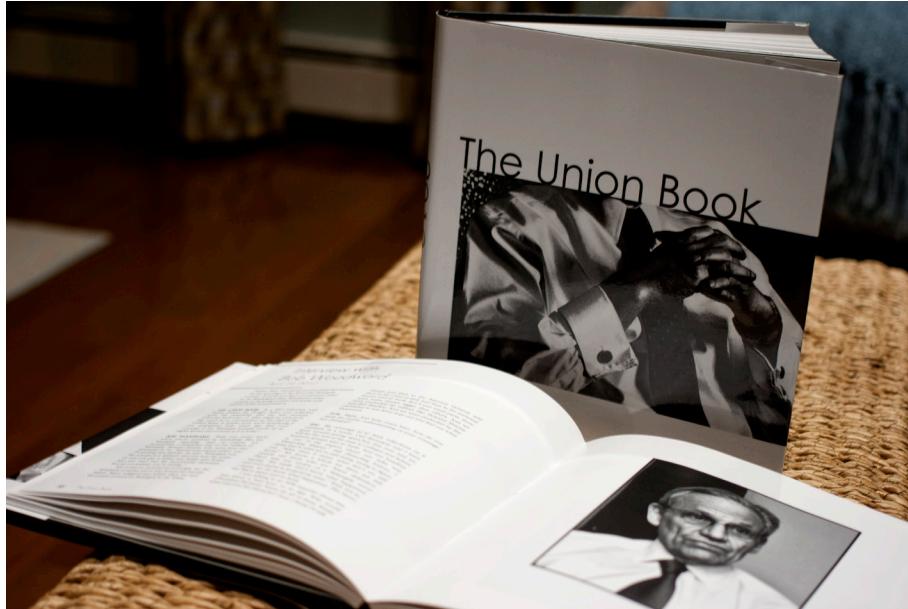
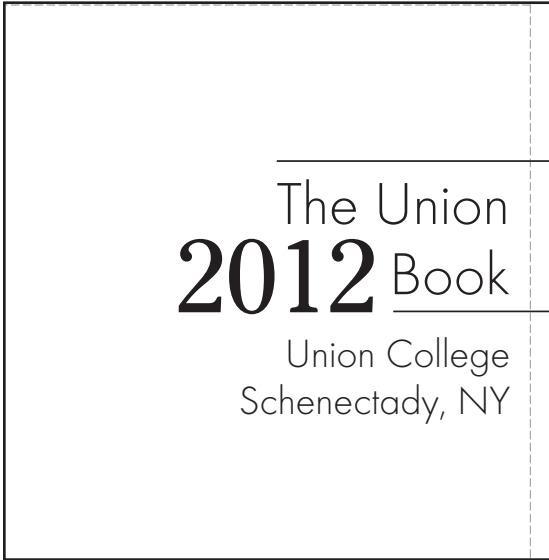
digital art
hands



digital art
self portrait



book design the union book



**Interview with
Valerie Barr**
April 23, 2012

Valerie Barr the chair of the Computer Science Department and director of the Interdisciplinary Programs. Her work has been concentrated in the application of software testing. Barr is completing her own series of oral histories on computing in her subfield of computer science.

THE UNION BOOK: Can you please provide a bit of background into your career as a computer scientist and professor here at Union College?

VALERIE BARR: How far back do you want me to go?

TUB: As far as you'd like, maybe when you first started getting interested in the field.

VB: Okay. So, I'm a dinosaur. I learned to program in high school, which in the early 1970s was not the normal thing. And I went off to college to be a math major, which was what I was planning to do. In my senior year of college, a year, a friend of the family sat me down and said, "You shouldn't do pure math because all you can do with it is teach." He said I should pursue something else. I went to Mount Holyoke College, went to Mount Holyoke, I liked like Union College, it had no men — and announced that I wanted to pursue my own major in applied math.

So, that was sort of accidentally what I pursued. But what really set me on the path for computing were the summer jobs I had. The

summer after my freshman year, I worked at a small company in Connecticut called Interdata. When I walked in on the first day, the guy I was gonna work for basically said, "Here is a problem I need you to solve. There's a library. There's a computer. There's a keyboard. There's a monitor. You have to have fun." And I really had fun. I had a great time.

By my senior year, I really was pretty hooked. But bizarrely thought no one would hire me, so I applied to grad school. And I got into the PhD program at NYU and actually hated it. I ended up leaving the program with my master's.

After working as a professional for eight years and trying to go back to NYU, which I finally ended up at Rutgers. I started Rutgers in January '88, and got my PhD in May of '96. So, in a sense, computing is all I've ever done. But becoming an academic was my second career.

TUB: Do you feel any pressures as a woman in the field of computer science?

VB: When I look back at my experience at NYU the first time, it's hard to say for sure. I was twenty when I started graduate school. I took my first term of courses. I did fine. I was the only full-time woman PhD student who entered my program. And the year before I started, students had just started. In terms of fully funded students, there were almost no women.

At the end of my first term, I went to meet with the department chair who said, "Oh, I think you can take your qualifying exams in January." Essentially, what I had to do was teach myself the entire curriculum, which is three level courses, and teach myself assembly language. And as you might imagine, that did not go well.

Now, we can look at that two ways. We can look at that and say, "Well, he thought I really needed more supervision than I was given, and I probably really surprised that I did not pass my exams." Or we could look at that and say, "That was a set up. He wanted to get rid of me." I don't know.

Either way, I went to a women's college. I never really had a problem. I went to a women's college; I felt pretty strong about my abilities, and I feel very comfortable with what capabilities were in my power to be where I am. I never had a problem saying to people, "Shut up and get out of my face." I never felt like anybody was really questioning my abilities. But that didn't stop them from being rude and crude.

TUB: Here at Union, what is the proportion of women computer science majors versus men?

VB: On a good day, it's ten percent.

TUB: Do you see any form of hostility towards women here, as is sometimes experienced in the field at large?

VB: No, our students are wonderful. And I would personally wring the neck of anyone who I found out was treating the women students badly. We actually have a lot more women taking computer science courses here because over the years we've changed the intro course to make it open to all students. And there are a huge number of women in neuroscience, and so they all take intro computer science.

The gender balance in the intro is way more equal than it used to be. And some of those women go on to take more CS, and become minors. I think we also have some really nice students. And I think does help that we have women in the department, and they eventually all end up taking classes with at least one of us.

And I think that the liberal arts focus of the college is helping. I think the faculty are upset because we want students to identify much more with the department. But they're all of running track in the field or they're in the swim team or the football team or they're singing in chorus. So, they're involved in a lot of activities that are putting them in shoulder-to-shoulder with a lot of women students in other parts of their academic life and their co-curricular and extracurricular life. And I think that helps. I think that it's probably different at a place like RPI, where the entire student body is only two-thirds female enrollment. So, there are male students, you may go through lots of classes where you don't see many women.

We had a speaker recently, a really lovely speaker, that went with Valerie Barr. And his talk was in RPI. And there were three female students in a room of one hundred and sixty. We'll give a similar talk here, and there may only be one female student.

book design **the union book**



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about this a little here: the day he resigned, he called all of his senior staff, friends, cabinet, to the East Room of the White House. And he had his wife and two daughters, two son-in-laws there, and there was no script. It was Nixon unscripted. He talked about his mother and his father, [a] mournful, strange talk. And then he waved his hands at one point, kind of like, "This is why I called you all here." And he said, "Always remember, others may hate you. But those who hate you don't win unless you hate them. And then you destroy yourself."

Wow. I mean, here at this moment, he's leaving and he realized, it was the hate in him and in his administration that destroyed him. The hate was the piston. He listened to the tapes, and they were full of hate and rancor. And in the

David Frost interviews, Nixon said that what Carl [Bernstein] and I wrote was trash and more trash. Two years after he resigned. Now what? I mean, why is he carrying that around? And David Frost, in his memoir about the Nixon interviews said, "[At] that moment, Nixon was just seething. It was just raw hate."

TUB: When you were reporting during the Nixon Presidency, did you know that all of your investigations would in part lead to his resignation?

leaving and he realized, it was the hate in him and in his administration that destroyed him. The hate was the piston. He listened to the tapes, and they were full of hate and rancor. And in the

BW: No, because you're just doing the reporting. There was a point when we accused the former Attorney General, John Mitchell, of controlling this secret fund that financed Watergate, and a lot

of the other espionage activities — there was a moment where Carl Bernstein [realized]. We were in the little cantine on the fifth floor off of the [Washington] Post newsroom, and he just kind of turned around and said, "This president's gonna be impeached." And I said, "I think you're right. And we can never use that word in this newsroom because people will then think that we have an agenda." And it was not for a year before the impeachment investigations began.

TUB: Your coverage of Watergate was pretty much unprecedented investigative journalism. Were there any mentors that got you on the path you were going on, or was it pretty much you and Carl Bernstein that got to where you went?

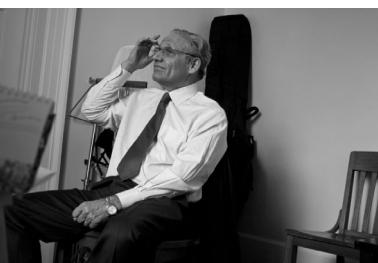
BW: What I try to do – and it’s been House, I have written about since Nixon, and also the Supreme Court, John B. Reserve – is try to look at

BW: Well, I'd been in the Navy from 1950 to 1970 during the Vietnam War. And I booked the last year in the Pentagon, and saw a lot of the classified traffic about the war and saw that they just were not telling the truth about it. And that was very distressing to me. The people who were reporting about the war very aggressively — Seymour Hersh, [Cornelius] Mahon,薛瑞思·海許, [and] others — were kind of on, and they say it's going this way. And we've got sources and information that say it's going this power and [see] it's really not what it is.

CONCORDY: You mentioned earlier Howard Simon, who was the managing editor of the *Washington Post* at the time. What was his role in the Watergate pre-elections?

BW: His role was to be a pest. And that's what editors do, they're pests. And he would run around, and he'd say, "Where's the next Mistakenly Arrested? Here we are doing an interview with [redacted] and he's not here."

Watergate story: How are we doing on Watergate? Where are we going?" And, "Let's points of view. It even happened to the Administration. The first Obamas



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