

Monia Acciari & Philipp Rhensius:

POLITICS OF CURATORSHIP – COLLECTIVE AND AFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS

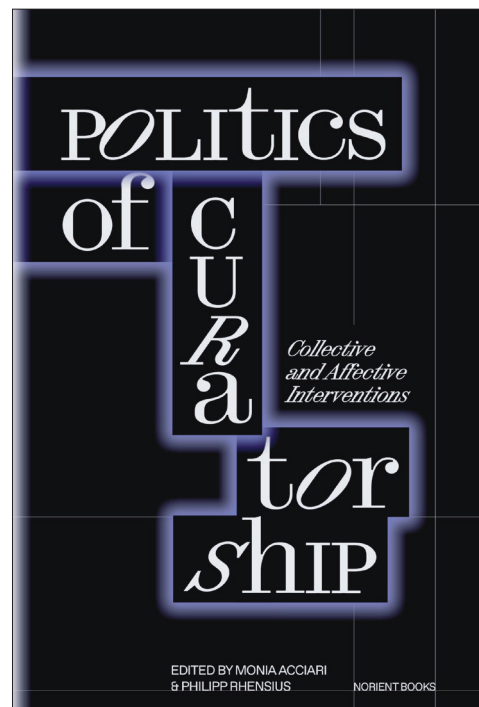
What happens to curatorial practices when treated as multi-voiced, pluralistic, and process-based? *Politics of Curatorship – Collective and Affective Interventions* asks what curatorship could be when it is freed from its elitist notions. It assembles a range of different interventions by 32 writers, artists, journalists, and scholars from all over the world. They reflect on curating as a practice of meaning-making that is subject to multiple parameters: contextual, affective, bodily, sensorial, personal, aesthetic, economic, and political. On the occasion of Norient's 20th anniversary, we attempt to disentangle the term curatorship from the received definition as a mere selecting process within the creative realm.

For 20 years, Norient has been successfully publishing texts, films, and sounds that offer new ways to think about and with music and sound from all over the world. This book is a reminder of what Norient stands for: an urge for deep research that doesn't ignore nor fetishize the senses, and constant questioning, expanding or revising of cultural canons. The volume shows that what has become known as «decolonization» to an often malevolent mainstream discourse might need to be addressed as a matter of curation and curatorship. A more challenging, surprising and less boring way of cultural production is not only a question of what but how one curates. May this book find the readers it deserves and needs.

Diedrich Diederichsen

This collection is an insightful curation in motion: it weaves together both nuanced and textured experiences, existences, imaginations, voices, presences, journeys, tales, stories, and narratives about the art of «cura» in all its forms – from photography, performing arts, journalism, film, music, sound, radio, DJing, and poetry. Critical outlooks onto curatorial worlds; radical affective and emotional engagements – sparkled with subtle humor, and astute craft – this contribution is an uplifting, refreshing, deep, joyful, and indeed both timely and urgent intervention!

Jenny Mbaye



Politics of Curatorship –
Collective and Affective Interventions
edited by Monia Acciari & Philipp Rhensius

with 33 contributions incl. short essays, comments, poems, articles, and photo essays by Monia Acciari, AGF aka poemproducer, Ailín Grad aka Aylu, Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock, Lendl Barcelos, Sandeep Bhagwati, Phila Bergmann, Thomas Burkhalter, Vivian Caccuri, Chico Dub, Daniel «duex» Fontana, Andrea Goetzke, Natalie Gravenor, Nikhila H., Rim Jasmin Irscheid, Raphael Kariuki aka DJ Raph, Steph Kretowicz, Ari Robey-Lawrence, Sulgi Lie, Imaad Majeed, Laura Mascarenhas, Thea Reifler, Philipp Rhensius, Sergio Salazar, Rebecca Salvadori, Suvani Suri, Gisela Swaragita, Chafic Tabbara, Lucia Udvardyová, Gita Viswanath, Salomé Voegelin

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Philipp Rhensius

is a Berlin-based writer, musician, sociologist, poet, musicologist, curator, and editor of Norient. His projects are driven by the idea that feeling the chains is the first step toward emancipation. Currently, he is doing artistic research on alienation, and works on new formats such as the audio essay and the monthly Norient column «Sonic Worlding» for which he invites contributors to think with rather than only about music and sound.

WHAT HAPPENS TO CURATORIAL PRACTICES WHEN TREATED AS MULTI-VOICED, PLURALISTIC, AND PROCESS-BASED? «POLITICS OF CURATORSHIP – COLLECTIVE AND AFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS» ASKS WHAT CURATORSHIP COULD BE WHEN IT IS FREED FROM ITS ELITIST NOTIONS. IT ASSEMBLES A RANGE OF DIFFERENT INTERVENTIONS BY 32 WRITERS, ARTISTS, JOURNALISTS, AND SCHOLARS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. THEY REFLECT ON CURATING AS A PRACTICE OF MEANING-MAKING THAT IS SUBJECT TO MULTIPLE PARAMETERS: CONTEXTUAL, AFFECTIVE, BODILY, SENSORIAL, PERSONAL, AESTHETIC, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL. ON THE OCCASION OF NORIENT'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY, WE ATTEMPT TO DISENTANGLE THE TERM CURATORSHIP FROM THE RECEIVED DEFINITION AS A MERE SELECTING PROCESS WITHIN THE CREATIVE REALM.

For 20 years, Norient has been successfully publishing texts, films, and sounds that offer new ways to think about and with music. This book shows that what has become known as «decolonization» to an often malevolent mainstream discourse might need to be, addressed as a matter of curation and curatorship. It proves that a more challenging, surprising and less boring way of cultural production is not only a question of what but how one curates.

– DIETRICH DIEDERICHSEN,
Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien

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NORIENT
BOOKS

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POLITICS of CURATORSHIP

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& PHILIPP RHENSIUS

NORIENT BOOKS

ESSAY

On

SUBVERSIVE gatekeeping for Black queering

*When the DEI Tactics
Weren't Enough*

BY ARI ROBEY-LAWRENCE



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NORIENT SOUNDS



Despite the global trend for white Wokeness in the aftermath of Black Lives Matter, Black queer, trans, and intersectional artists still face exclusion in the electronic dance music industry. In their essay, Ari Robey-Lawrence explore how practices of exclusion affect BQT/POC musicians in the dance music scene, and how a subversive curatorial practice could enable a more equitable and organic environment.

In the dance music industry, gatekeeping is the chief mechanism by which Black queer, trans, and intersectional (qti) artists with intersectional backgrounds are excluded from opportunities and professional mobility within the scene. Such artists, who use their platform or work to call into question unjust and inequitable aspects of the current status quo in the industry, particularly those who do not fit Eurocentric beauty standards, can be deemed «problematic» by white industry professionals or white-led organizations because their work or their perspective may unsettle them or their audiences.

The mechanism I am describing here represents only a small facet of how Black qti artists, whose work is not easily digested by the industry's neoliberal/capitalist model, goes overlooked. Despite the fact that some still consider the scene to be partially underground or community-based, we still don't see enough industry gatekeepers supporting Black qti artists as they circumnavigate neoliberal capitalism's predatory industry structures, unless they have been given a gold seal of approval by insiders or the culture machine (Moore 2021), or a given social movement or current

«GATEKEEPERS» ARE PEOPLE WHO CONTROL



SUPPORTING DIALOGUE BETWEEN ARTISTS AND DISCIPLINES IN A CYCLE OF MUTUAL INFLUENCE

THE MEANS OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION.»

If you'd have asked me if I identified with the notion of «content curation» a decade ago, I'd have vehemently said no. As editor-in-chief of the niche interdisciplinary art publication *AQNB*, I wanted as little to do with any notion of gatekeeping as I did the gauche 2010s trend towards Tumblr users declaring themselves «curators» of their image streams. Yet here I am, 10 years on, being invited to write about my experience of the term at the helm of a site with a very specific art and music niche and its own sizable, oddball following. It's a platform with a distinct focus on contemporary critical discourse, political theory, and creative culture online, with myself having final say over what, and who, is featured. «Gatekeepers» are people who control access to something, in this case to the means of cultural production. As the last part in the hierarchy of artists, colleagues, and writers who contribute to and appear on *AQNB*, I think the word pretty much sums it up.

That's the short of it, but the long of it is a little more complicated. For the many who might not know, *AQNB* is a digital editorial and publishing platform, co-founded by myself and Guillermo Fraile, that has operated independently since 2009. First established in London a couple years before I joined, the site launched at the tail end of the early-millennial Web 2.0 blog boom, its name an acronym of the phrase *atractivo que no bello* («Attractive, but not beautiful») from Guillermo's native Spanish. When I came to *AQNB* – purely as a freelance contributor he'd solicited on an online marketplace in 2011 – it had a lower-case brand logo and a navbar packed with categories, including «graphic», «moving image», and «technology».

ORGANIZING INFORMATION FOR AN AUDIENCE

Animation was a frequently covered topic, as was photography and new software. The music featured was mostly local London indie pop and the art was institutional. There was little editorial direction and, even if there was, I wasn't interested in most of it. I was a struggling culture journalist, recently moved from Australia to the UK, with a foundational education in rock music criticism and a need for any income. Guillermo told me I could write about all things «sub-culture and art», which I did for a little over a year

SHORT ESSAY

At the same time, I was so preoccupied with not giving anything away that AQNB often struggled to define what it was. Post-internet's sweeping assault on the existing art canon allowed me, a neophyte, to enter a world with its own customs and vernacular, networks and class distinctions, through the back door of an online culture that emerged with a younger cohort of creative practitioners. The knowledge and technical skill required to navigate this new language of digital technology was so specific that it alienated anyone who wasn't raised with it, presenting somewhat of a carte blanche of self-determination and identification for those who were.

While there are broader, more global issues around internet access worth noting, in the limited scope of an educated web-literate millennial crowd, this monumental technological shift meant that everything was up for debate. A site like AQNB exulted in that unknowing, where it learned, developed, and changed alongside the generation it vaguely represented. That bode badly for our countless unsuccessful public funding applications, but well for the site's cultural dynamism and editorial freedom.

Now it's coming up to AQNB's 10-year anniversary since it started to become what it is right now – with a forthcoming print anthology where my colleagues and I have the opportunity to account for the legacy of a publication and the art scene it had a hand in shaping. In doing so, we've also been tasked with retrospectively organizing a decade of content to stake our claim as a significant point in the alternative art continuum. In some ways it feels like a defeat: by accepting the reality of cultural influence, AQNB's unspoken aspiration for destroying the canon meant curating its own in the meantime.

REFERENCE

Hoffmann, Jens. 2003. «KIASMA: Institution 2». *Fkawdw.nl*. Accessed May 2022. https://fkawdw.nl/en/our_program/exhibitions/kiasma_institution_2.

NOBILIT SOUNDS

Gatekeeping Without a Gate

What is most important to you when curating?
 TO CREATE SPACES AND SITUATIONS IN WHICH PEOPLE WANT TO SPEND TIME - INTRIGUED, COMFY, CURIOUS SPACED OUT.
 2. What are the biggest conflicts / pleasures you encounter when curating?
 MAKING WORKING CONDITIONS

What does curating mean to you?
 IT'S A PROCESS OF BEING BUILT.

TIONS AS POS-SIBLE WHILE NAVIGATING THAT IS ALL UNKNOWN, INSECURE, AND PRECARIOUS. LEARNING TO SAIL IN A BOAT THAT IS STILL IN THE PROCESS OF BEING BUILT.

T I C E
 SOMETHING TO DO RATHER THAN TO BE. A PRACTICE OF WEAVING THREADS TOGETHER TO CREATE A SHARED SPACE. AND GATHERING A CREW TO EMBARK ON A JOURNEY OF TRUST.

Philo Reiffer & Phila Rogmann, Artistic Directors, Shedhalle, Zurich

PHOTO ESSAY

Rejected.zip

NOBILIT SOUNDS

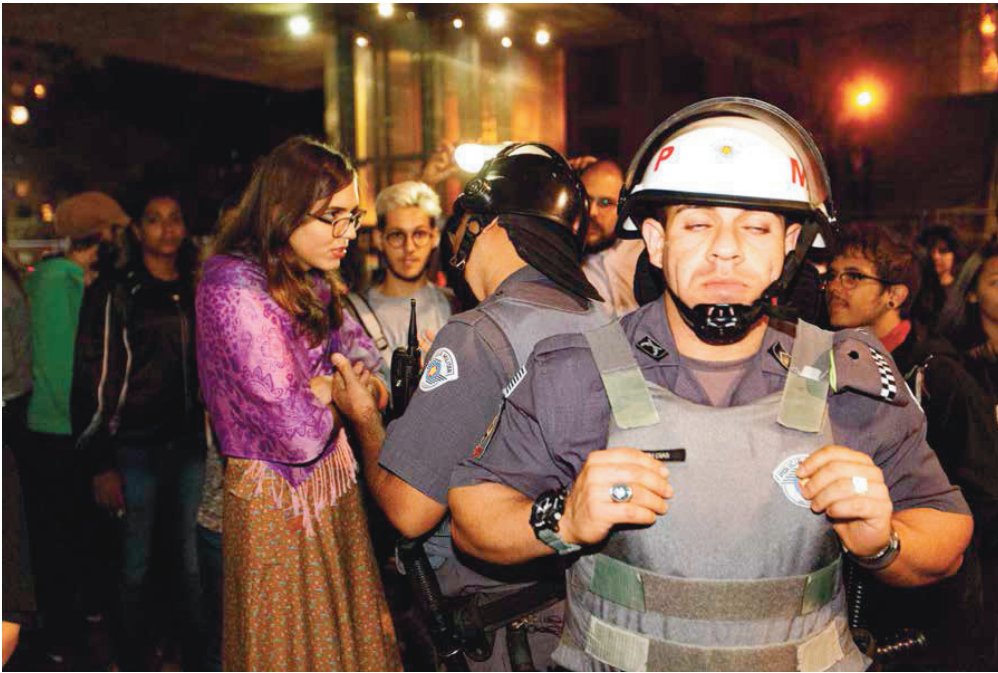


One of the first lessons of photography is that a «good» image is a long and laborious process. Magic requires a lot of work – no matter who is in front of or behind the camera, or where and why the photo is happening. Finding the right angle, the right light, and the right framing is a hell of a job. Even when everything is right your character might close his eyes, someone could pass in front of the camera, or the clouds could change. During this process a lot of digital trash piles up in cloud storage and on hard drives.

A photographer's photo dump is a heavy burden. This photo essay explores the reasons that lead us to discard a photo. It is an attempt to make sense of the non-sense, to bring together the outcasts of curatorship. To break the rules. Susan Sontag can help us understand why these images are still relevant and inspiring to look at:

«Photos that in themselves cannot explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation and fantasy.»

(Sontag 1977, 17)



A REALLY NICE POSE OF A POLICEMAN.
SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL (2016)

This photo was taken during a protest against the impeachment of the former Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff. In reality, a coup d'état, the beginning of a period of much hatred and result that will last until the end of the current far-right government. During this time I was working as a photojournalist.



In more than a month of coming to the Apocryphe, not once had I paid attention to the way the music transitioned. It had been a blanket without a snag; I had noticed no rip or seam. But I did remember the melody of the record I was now listening to in the headphones; I had heard it numerous times but, I now realized, not all the way through. At the precise moment when a voice interrupted the melody, another track was usually overlaid. Which one or which ones, I wasn't sure; I didn't know any of the song titles.

— Anne Garréta (2015, 21–22)

There are an infinite number of ways to go about selecting, collecting, and preparing for a mix — each method brings a specific variety of curatorial politics of frequency. A DJ might stick to (or be expected to stick to) songs of a particular locale or time period, play pieces in alphabetical order, decide to use track titles or so-called «genre» as a guide, use machine-learned algorithmic suggestions, or tend toward any number of other strategies and their permutations. Every tactic pulls the mix in different directions, splitting the singularity of a DJ's auditory experience into multiphonic gardens of forking paths. All this happens under the time-pressure of a track's duration: there is an urgency of selection that occurs with every choice, a certain time-limit that counts down to a silent zero, though there are many technological methods of time-dilation to ensure silence is delayed.

Depending on a DJ's preparation-style, they might curate a set of tracks to play beforehand, taking into account the set and setting of the journey along which they would like



While Indian TV debates enter loudness wars, household devices entail noise reduction features. Read an essay speculating on curatorial tactics that can collectively mobilize a practice of **CRITICAL LISTENING.**

Peter: «An invisible system, but powerful nonetheless. Sounds that in a sense guide people through the city. I mean they are not conscious of it, but it's there, and it's different in all parts of the city...»

Ellen: «So each part of the city has a different chord?»

Peter: «Well, every part of the city has its own instructive atmosphere. It's impossible to disconnect the sound from the collective state of mind. It affects the people, you understand? Why do people feel the way they do, why do people act the way they do, there is a reason... there is an order here.»

This dialogue is from Michael Tyburski's 2019 film *The Sound of Silence* about a professional house tuner named Peter Lucian, who visits people's houses to detect inaudible and discordant resonances that are a cause of anxiety for the residents. The awry acoustic could be a frequency emanating from a refrigerator that's interfering with someone's sleep, or it could be traced to the toaster's piercing pops, or even the way the floorboards squeak. Lucian culls these covert and uncanny frequencies from unexpected parts of the home, and eventually equalizes, harmonizes or re-tunes them to render the domestic space «din and clamor free», thus restoring a sense of calm.

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19 UN-CURATORIAL NOTES — MEMORANDUM OF OUR COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCES

THE FOLLOWING IS NOT ANOTHER SET OF RULES THAT DEFINE A PRACTICE, OR A MANIFESTO TO ADHERE TO. IT IS A TAPESTRY OF AFFECTIVE VIEWS ON PRACTICES AND INTELLECTUAL ENGAGEMENTS WITH CURATORSHIP. WE UNDERSTAND UN-CURATING AS A POSITIVE PRACTICE WHICH IS INFORMED BY A POLYPHONIC ARRAY OF MULTIPLE STIMULI AND AFFECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE APPROACHES, RATHER THAN ON FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE. SUCH METHODS HAVE THE POWER TO ACT UPON CREATIVE SELECTIONS. UN-CURATING HINTS AT CURATING OTHER FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE, WHICH ARE PERSONAL, SPONTANEOUS AND IRRATIONAL.

1. WE STILL DON'T SEE ENOUGH INDUSTRY GATEKEEPERS SUPPORTING BLACK QTI ARTISTS AS THEY CIRCUMNAVIGATE NEOLIBERAL CAPITALISM'S PREDATORY INDUSTRY STRUCTURES, UNLESS THEY HAVE BEEN GIVEN A GOLD SEAL OF APPROVAL BY INSIDERS, OR A GIVEN SOCIAL MOVEMENT OR CURRENT EVENT HAS EFFECTED PROFOUND IMPACT ON THE MATERIAL PRACTICES OF GATEKEEPERS.
ARI ROBEY-LAWRENCE: SUBVERSIVE GATEKEEPING FOR BLACK QTI ARTISTS

2. I BELIEVE THAT IN CURATING, THE DISREGARD FOR AND THE INVISIBILITY OF CERTAIN ARTISTIC PRACTICES AND ARTISTS IS OFTEN NOTHING MORE THAN THE RESULT OF SLOPPY THINKING AND LAZY RESEARCH: RESEARCH THAT DOES NOT WANT TO SEE THROUGH THE SYSTEM OF EXCLUSION THAT IT RELIES ON - AND THAT DOES THEREFORE NOT EVEN LOOK FOR WAYS TO COUNTERACT IT.
SANDEEP BHAGWATE: NEW WAYS OF CURATING MUSIC/KING

3. A LAW-ABIDING LITTLE GIRL ALSO WOULD NOT CURSE IF THE COOL RADIO ANNOUNCER DECIDED TO CUT THE SONGS WITH GREETINGS, ADS, OR JINGLES, BECAUSE SHE WOULD NOT PUSH THE RECORD BUTTON WHEN THE SONG PLAYED.
GISELA SWARAGATE: THE CRIME OF LISTENING WHAT YOU WANT

4. I FEEL GUIDED BY A COLLECTION OF VARIED INTERCONNECTED EXPERIENCES.
REBECCA SALVADORI: LIKE A FRAGRANCE IN A ROOM

5. «UNCURATING» IS NOT A REJECTION OF CURATION. IT DOES NOT PRESENT A PURE NEGATIVE WHICH CARRIES AN

ANTINOMIC LOGIC THAT SUBSUMES ITS ALTERNATIVES. INSTEAD, IT IS AN UNTETHERING OF CURATORIAL PRACTICE FROM ITS POLITICO-HISTORICAL FRAME. THIS ENTAILS AN UNTYING OF THE CURATORIAL FROM THE EXPECTATION OF EVIDENCE AND REFERENCE TIED TO SINGULAR AND APPROVED ANCHOR POINTS.
SALOMÉ VOEGELIN: ON UNPERFORMING THE CURATORIAL

6. TO PUSH FURTHER TOWARDS A FEMINIST IMAGINING WHAT KIND OF COMMUNITY THIS SPACE WOULD FOSTER. THE TRAJECTORY WAS NOT JUST ABOUT MAKING MALE-DOMINATED SPACES FEEL SAFE FOR WOMEN, BUT WE WERE SLOWLY QUEERING THE SPACE, MAKING ROOM FOR ALL KINDS OF LIVED EXPERIENCES.
IMAAD MAJID: QUEERING A SPACE THROUGH CONVERSATION

7. THE ACT OF CURATING LEADS TO AN ACT OF MEANING-MAKING. IN THE COURSE OF SELECTION, THE CURATOR GENERATES A CONVERSATION AMONG ARTISTS, CRITICS, AND VIEWERS ABOUT THE CONTEXT AND MEANING OF THE ART PIECES/FILM AT HAND. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THERE IS AN INTERSECTIONALITY IN THE PROCESS OF CURATION AND PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE.
NIKHILA H. AND GITA VISWANATH: CINEPHILIA

8. CONSIDERING SPACES OF CURATORSHIP (AND THEIR EMOTIONAL INVISIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE) ALLOWS US TO DECOUPLE THE CHOICE OF ONE FILM OVER ANOTHER FROM THE PARAMETERS OF PERSONAL

TASTE. A FILM IS NOT ONLY AN OBJECT OF SCRUTINY, BUT ALSO A DENSE METAPHOR OF ABSENCES AND DISCONNECTIONS.
MONIA ACCIARI: ON EXPOSING THE CURATORIAL «US»: CURATORIAL NOTES #3

9. GOING DEEP IS PRINCIPLE 1 FOR CONDUCTING STRONG, RIGOROUS RESEARCH, GOOD CURATION, AND HIGH-LEVEL JOURNALISM. HOW DO I GET CLOSER TO MUSIC, CLOSER TO MUSICIANS, AND CLOSER TO PHENOMENA AND MOMENTS IN AND AROUND MUSIC?
THOMAS BURKHALTER: NORIENT: FROM TASTEMAKING TO MULTIMODAL STORYTELLING

10. GIVING VOICE TO EMERGING, MARGINAL, AND UNDERREPRESENTED PERSPECTIVES, WHILE SUPPORTING A DECENTRALIZED MODEL OF ARTISTIC DIALOGUE BETWEEN ARTISTS AND DISCIPLINES, PRACTICES AND PRACTITIONERS.
STEPH KRETOWICZ: GATEKEEPING WITHOUT A GATE

11. BECAUSE OPENNESS REQUIRES SOME CONSTRAINTS, STRUCTURE IS ESSENTIAL TO ALLOW FOR A DIVERSITY OF PRACTICES WITHIN THE PROTOZONE. CONCENTRATION ON PROCESS, PROTOZONE, AND INTENSITIES PROVIDES BOTH CURATORS AND

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