



at home week

eclectic

INTERIOR DESIGN ACCESSORIES BEDROOMS BATHROOMS KITCHENS OUTDOORS



Antique gilded wings grace the mantel of the living room. Touches of Asian influence introduce the eclectic scheme.

Home-court advantage

Suns great Alvan Adams' Paradise Valley home mixes treasure and tradition

■ Story by BRUCE FARR

■ Photography by MARK W. LIPCZYNSKI / The Arizona Republic

What makes a home eclectic? Surely, there's no label of interior design that's misused more often. Not to worry, Phoenix Suns' basketball legend Alvan Adams and his wife Sarah are on hand to show the real deal. With their indisputably warm, inviting – and thoroughly eclectic – Paradise Valley home, the Adamses have hoisted the design term onto a pedestal of exquisite taste. Alvan and Sarah began their home-building project eight years ago, in a neighborhood that allows only traditionally designed houses. True to the rule, their 5,000-square-foot Territorial looks like it's been there for a long, long time. The effect is intentional. "We lived in Encanto from 1976 through 1996, and we loved the older architecture in that neighborhood," Alvan said. "That's one of the reasons we decided to build where we did."

The Adamses know something about home design. When he wasn't playing basketball, Alvan was busy studying architecture, a career he nearly pursued until he was bitten once and for all by the sports bug. Sarah studied interior design in college and has worked as a designer. Needless to say, they both played an active role in their home's planning and construction.

Understated objective

The couple set out to create an understated effect throughout their home's design, and they've succeeded marvelously. Their gravel driveway proceeds past a small guest house and then dips down through a narrow wash, on the other side of which is a picturesque stone bridge and walkway leading to the front door. The modest, one-story, stucco-faced home is fronted by a broad, inviting porch, replete with two rocking chairs. Because the house was built with a direct western exposure, the porch serves a practical, as well as an aesthetic, purpose. The house's earth-toned exterior is neatly accented by authentic white trim. Small details – such as triangular window pediments and a brick parapet – add to the integrity of the home's traditional design.

Inside, the rooms to left and right are perfectly bisected by a brick-tiled central hallway that extends from the front door all the way to the rear of the house. The hallway's 14-foot ceilings are

— See ADAMS, Page AH6

Alvan Adams



Alvan and Sarah Adams with Chester (left) and Maizy (right).

At least it's a sport, Alvan . . . It's often said that the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree. In the case of Alvan and Sarah Adams' offspring, the apples may have fallen nearby, but they appear to have rolled a ways from their roots. Emily Adams, 23, was an All-American and two-time national champion volleyball player for the USC Trojans. Her photo, in full volleyball regalia, adorns several magazine covers in her bedroom. The couple's son Justin, 26, who now lives in New York City, didn't embrace his father's chosen sport either. "Justin played in high school," Alvan says, with an exaggerated sigh and a shrug of his shoulders, "and then he went off and played volleyball in college, too." Justin played for UC Santa Barbara.

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Above: A vaulted ceiling accentuates the kitchen's modern, yet country, design.

Right: The kitchen stays true to its country roots with a pot filler.



The family room features rustic furnishings and posters from the 1973 World University Games in Moscow. Alvan played in the games.

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Interior design

The total package

Choose your favorites – and reduce clutter – to make your room's design come together

By Gremlyn Bradley-Waddell

The leather couches are older but perfect, grandma's writing desk looks beautiful against the far wall and the family photos are just right on the sofa table.

But, somehow, your living room looks unfinished. Maybe a cornice and curtains would add polish. Maybe the floor needs to lose its shag carpeting and gain a sleek new wood surface. Fact is, lots of folks find themselves in very similar situations, wondering how to amp up their décor and take it to the next level.

"Most people know what they like but they don't know how to pull the room together and make it look complete," said DJ Burron, an interior designer with Ethan Allen.

But it might be easier than you think to "finish" a room and make a design statement by using existing furniture pieces, even on a slim budget. The key is to learn some tricks of the trade. For example, when Burron evaluates a room, she naturally takes in aesthetic considerations such as scale, balance and repetition of elements, such as color and shapes. But she also checks for things that aren't there.

Find the void

"When I look at a room, I look at what's missing," Burron said, adding that there's always something that can be tweaked "because design isn't stagnant."

Those missing components aren't always furniture pieces and they don't always have big price tags. They could be a great paint job, a different paint color or window treatments – which are "super important," Burron said.

The right accessories – such as an area rug that anchors a room – also layer a space with "texture and richness," she said. And while homeowners shouldn't feel they have to follow every trend, Burron said it's important to update every so often, not just every other decade.

"Sometimes, I'll see houses that are stuck in the '80s," she said.

Read about trends

A quick glance through current shelter publications is always a good way to get a pulse on current looks. One, for example, is a streamlined look.

Several design trends blend beautifully in this setting, with a duo of abstract prints hanging over a silky damask sofa.



Drexel Heritage

If your room lacks a natural focal point such as a fireplace, provide one such as this dramatic round mirror.

Clutter, which Burron said was once very popular, is out. So, why not try putting some knickknacks away and see how that affects your outlook?

Speaking of publications, they are some of the best tools to have on hand when attempting to complete a room, according to interior designer Jamie Herzlinger. The way she sees it, there really are only two basic design styles: traditional and modern. So she suggests that homeowners wanting to wake up a tired room pick up copies of their favorite publications, start turning pages and start imagining.

"I.D. the pieces you want, write down your shopping list and take the pictures with you when you go shopping," Herzlinger said. Going into a store unprepared is not a good idea, and can result in impulse purchases and buyer's remorse. "It's like going into a department store without knowing what you really want," she said.

Affordable options

While budgets for magazine layouts often don't reflect what real people have to spend, Herzlinger said a look can almost always be achieved at affordable stores. Some of her favorite places are Crate & Barrel ("modern, fresh") and IKEA (which "has some really good products").

And one more nugget that Herzlinger offers: Focus on a particular style and stick to it. The "buy everything you love, it'll all go together" approach never succeeds. "Just direct your passion," she said. "An amalgam never works."



Ethan Allen

Tips from the pros

Turning up the style quotient and making a room really come together often means taking a look at the bare bones of the space. Is there a focal point? Does the paint color provide the right backdrop? Is the furniture arranged in the most welcoming way?

• DJ Burron, an interior designer with Ethan Allen, has seen too many rooms full of Old World-style furnishings ensconced in white-walled wonders. The contrast is just too severe. "People are afraid of color, and color is a huge part of design," she said. Do you do the job yourself or have it done by a pro? Either way is fine, but she said that doing it yourself can result in a huge mess. "A professional painter is worth his weight in gold," she added.

• Oh, the horror of a too-skimpy, builder-basic chandelier in a gorgeous, spacious dining room! Light fixtures can make or break a room, so study your space to see what it needs and call in an expert if need be.

• Try to think – and buy – "classic" when it comes to large, key pieces. That doesn't mean your bunk has to be an 18th-century four-poster bed, but it does mean limiting your purchases of trendy items to smaller goods and accessories, such as pillows, artwork, picture frames. Try repeating colors, shapes or textures to create a sense of harmony, one of those indicators that a room is "finished."

• If you're starting with a clean slate and not sure of your style and color preferences, then by all means start with neutral-hued pieces. You can always add color with accessories.

• Not convinced your room has a focal point? Look around. Do you have handsome bookcases or an armoire? How about a very large mirror? Those items can easily stand in for more traditional focal points such as a fireplace or a fine work of art. And, yes, a room can have more than one focal point.

• Want to know where you can really vamp it up and go a little wild? Unleash your inner flamboyance in a powder room. "That's the one spot you can cuckoo," said interior designer Jamie Herzlinger. "That's my favorite little room."

From the ground up

For Nicki DiBella, an interior decorator at IKEA, taking a room to the next level often means starting at the bottom – as in the floor. Replacing carpet with laminate flooring can give a room a clean, simple and appealing appearance. Easier and less costly alterations include moving a sofa to a more focal wall, rearrang-

ing furniture or painting a wall an accent color.

If space is a concern, reduce clutter by adding multi-function items in your room. Have extra seating on hand by using inconspicuous folding or stacking chairs. Find storage pieces for magazines or books that don't overpower a room.

"Hiding things is always a good thing," she said.



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Interior design

Need advice?

Experts say these are the most common issues couples have when decorating their homes. Fortunately, there are compromises.

Treasured objects

Whether it's your childhood teddy bear or a questionable piece of art, there are some things you just can't give up. Designers recommend minimizing the impact of these items by keeping them out of public rooms and saving them for private spaces, such as dens or bedrooms.

Tech objects

It can be hard to hide a 42-inch television. If you don't have a media room, discretion can be the better part of valor: If the family's HDTV addict will compromise by allowing the television to live in an appropriately styled armoire when not in use, you've got a solution.

Comfort objects

A tattered recliner might be non-negotiable, but if you can determine what makes the object so desirable — the color? the style? — then you might be able to find a suitable replacement.

Floral explosion

While women traditionally make most of the decorating decisions, men are having a say more and more. And an abundance of flora and fauna often top the list of design no-nos. How to compromise? Use florals for accents or smaller pieces, such as throw pillows, and solids or stripes for sofas and more substantial items.

This built-to-fit cinema bookcase offers a drop-down screen. When not in use, the screen disappears into the wood molding.



Stone Creek Furniture Factory



Ethan Allen

Simple lines for this sofa and subtle patterns for its pillows allow plenty of room for compromising on design styles.



Thomasville

Contemporary accessories work beautifully with a cherry raised-panel wall and richly hued bedding.

Boy meets girl. Girl redecorates.

The decorating battle lines are drawn

By Kristin MacIntosh

Anyone who's shared space with a member of the opposite sex, or even a member of the opposite style, knows that blending differing décor into a harmonious whole can be a tough job.

The key is to compromise and "honor each other's styles," said Debra Camping, an interior designer at Ethan Allen.

Know which items are most important to you, and which items you could let go for the cause of décor. If you start with the understanding that you might need to give up a precious "wagon wheel coffee table" (thank

you, *When Harry Met Sally*), it will be easier.

Opposites attract?

Blending styles can be tough. These days, couples have to create a shared space with their own individual preferences about decorating. Some duos, such as modern combined with provincial French, might be a tough sell, but Camping has an answer for that:

"Blend with color — it doesn't mean that every room has to be the same color, but transition with accents so that your eye sees a little bit of that color flowing in," rather than a stark change from one style to another.

Depending on the styles you're trying to combine, zoning can be another solution.

"Zone by lifestyle of the home," Camping said.

Before you get any crazy ideas, zoning doesn't mean relegating your husband to the garage and garden. It means splitting the house — perhaps the family room and den for him, the kitchen and living room for her.

Storage solutions

Not to buy into stereotypes, but for many men, comfort near the big-screen TV is at the top of the list. That doesn't mean giving in to an ugly recliner and letting the TV hold the place of pride, it could instead mean coming to an agreement about a comfortable seating arrangement and a home theater system that hides in a cabinet when not in use.

Even if you and your significant other agree on style, use can still be an issue.

IKEA interior design specialist Victoria Jonsson said that the different storage needs of men and women are what lead to some arguments.

"Women have 100 pair of shoes, and men have three," she said. "Men have suits, women have long dresses. You have to work with that to make everyone happy."

Last resort: vanilla

When you just can't agree on anything, Camping has the perfect mix-and-match solution: Choose very basic, "almost no-style" pieces, she said, and create a style with accent pieces. That way, you eliminate the compromising and also leave yourselves open to develop your own, blended style. For example, a sofa in a neutral color and with simple lines can be made to seem French provincial with the addition of pillows in traditional prints, or strictly contemporary when flanked by black lacquer side tables. By designing with accessories, you can update without breaking the bank and allow for your own changing taste.



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Leather can work in very formal settings. Here, a French chair upholstered in leather is accented by formal tie-back draperies and a wool rug.

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Home's furnishings tell a story

— ADAMS, from Page AH1

dominated by massive wood beams that were distressed to give them an aged character and presence. The beams' repetition throughout the long corridor adds a sense of stability to this, the home's central "spine," as Alvan termed it. Adding to the effect, a window in the rear of the hallway reveals a striking view of Camelback Mountain's western facade.

Discovering rooms

The architect for the project was Jeff Swan, then of Gerald A. Doyle and Associates. "We wanted an old-style home, and Jeff told us that, in an older home, you 'discover' the rooms," Sarah said. "You don't simply walk in and see them all. That was a key idea in how our house was designed."

Discovery is the operating term when visiting the Adamses. Their home has become a repository for the artifacts and little treasures that they've accumulated over 31 years of marriage. Each painting, item of pottery and adornment is like a museum piece, with a story all its own. Sarah gestured to a stately fireplace surround in the home's comfortable living room. "We found this in England," she said. Alvan pointed out a charming set of hand-woven Passamaquoddy Indian baskets from Maine, which they inherited from Sarah's parents. "Everything that's not a big piece of furniture has a story," he said. "And the story is not the simple one that says, 'we just bought it and put it there.'"

"We've filled our house with things that we've collected in our travels — things we love," Sarah added. "I think homes should evolve. It doesn't matter if the things that you fill your house with don't appear to match — if you love them, they'll work."

Another goal for their home, Alvan says with a straight face, was to make sure it had an attached garage. "We've never had one in any house we've lived in!" he exclaimed, half seriously. "So we said to ourselves, 'we're going to have an attached garage next



A painting of the Adams' Bernese mountain dog, Zoe, hangs over the master bedroom fireplace.

to the kitchen." A bit later, walking through the house, Alvan opened a door off of the kitchen and gestured triumphantly. "The garage!"

Kitchen pass

The kitchen is one of the home's strongest elements, Sarah believes. It's easy to see why; connected to the dining room by a charming butler's pantry, the spacious room is as inviting a culinary habitat as one can be. It serves as a focal point for their home's engaging comfort, and is a gathering place, "where friends and family always end up when we're entertaining," Sarah said. Milky globes from large school-room lamps suspended over a free-standing work counter accent the friendly space.

The ceilings throughout the

house are soaring, as are the doorways from room to room — for good reason, one learns. "Most doorways are built to be 6 feet 8 inches in height, and I'm 6 feet 9," Alvan said. "So you can understand why we got involved with that aspect of design." It wasn't their primary motivation, however. "I think if we had been jockeys, we'd still have built a tall house."

Art of all kinds graces the Adams home. Several striking portraits by New Mexico-based neo-surrealist Paul Pletka gaze from the walls, as do other works by T.C. Cannon. A recent acquisition, a set of antique gilded wings, repose on the living room mantel. And Zoe, a predecessor of the family's current Bernese mountain dogs, Chester and Maizy, is memorialized in a stun-

ning portrait hanging above the fireplace in the couple's master bedroom. Surprisingly, the painting was a commission done by Leonardo Bianco, the father of renowned local pizza artisan Chris Bianco.

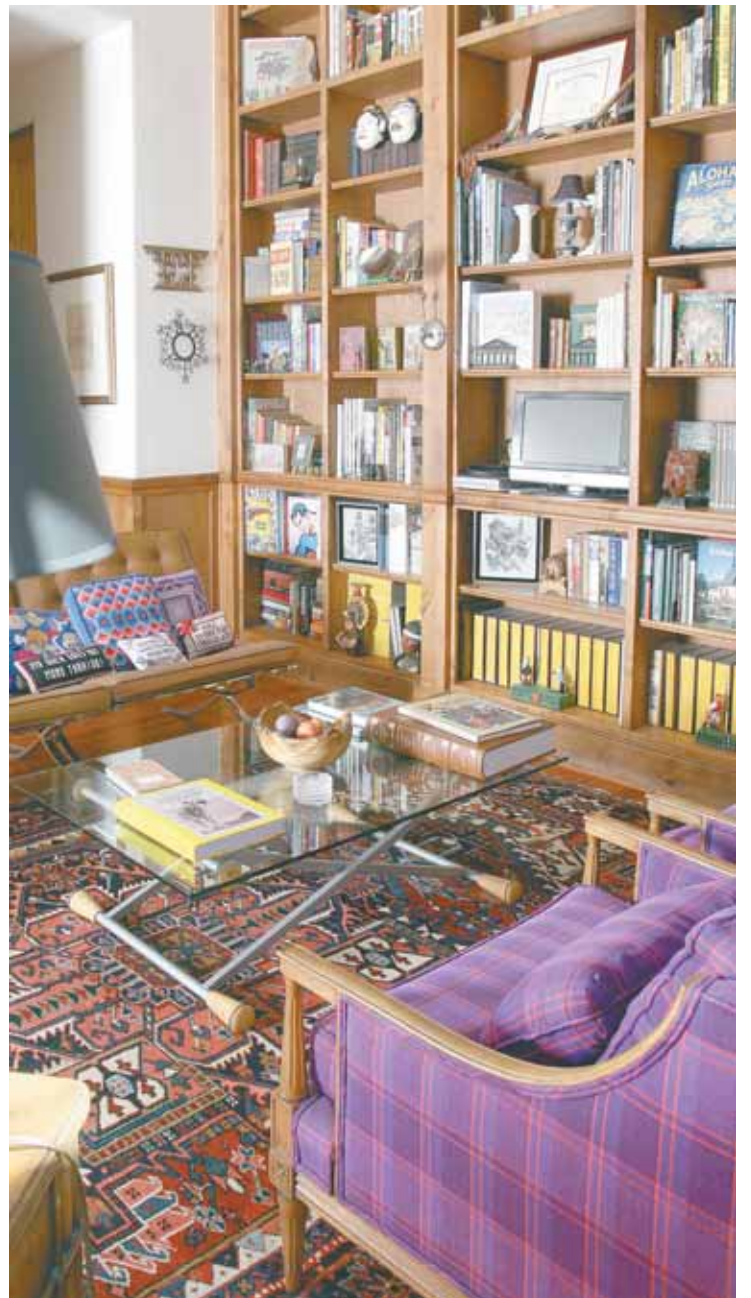
Storybook background

In storybook fashion, Alvan and Sarah met before their first day of classes as college freshmen at Oklahoma State. Introduced by a mutual friend, they've been inseparable since. Alvan went on to become a legendary college athlete. Nicknamed "The Oklahoma Kid," he was an intercollegiate standout before he was drafted by the Suns in 1975. He played for the team for 13 seasons, retiring in 1988.

"I had three contracts through that time, and I didn't consider going anywhere else," Alvan said. "We had really good teams through those contracts, and I wanted to stay here and play for Phoenix. Fortunately for us, we got to stay in this city and it's our hometown now." Today, Alvan works for Sports & Entertainment Services, the company that manages facilities for US Airways Center, Chase Field and the Dodge Theatre.

During his rookie year with the Suns, Alvan helped the team advance to the 1976 NBA finals, after which he was named NBA Rookie of the Year. In that now legendary championship series with the Boston Celtics, the fifth and final game went into triple overtime, in a 128-126 Suns loss. "It was David versus Goliath," Alvan characterized it. "We were not expected to do anything. We ended up losing that series, but we had really good teams for the entire next decade. It was really the beginning of putting Phoenix onto the sports map."

Alvan is one of 11 Suns' players and staff named to the team's Ring of Honor. His jersey, bearing his number, 33, was retired in 1988 and is today suspended in US Airways Center. Adams remains the Suns' all-time leader in games played, rebounds and steals.



The den showcases Sarah Adams' style: Her mother's traditional chairs, upholstered in bright purple, mix perfectly with modern Barcelona chairs in tan. National Geographic magazines dating back to 1978 are on display for added color.



A collection of Blue Willow china rests in the family's dining room cabinet.



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Bathrooms

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Feeling drained?

Vessel sinks give bathrooms a pick-me-up

- Vessel sinks tend to be smaller than traditional sinks, which can make for some messy shaving or face washing. That's why Thom Pitschke from EXPO Design Center said vessels are most popular in powder rooms.
- Some specialty sinks may require extra care. Be sure to avoid using ammonia on hand-painted metallic sinks. Glass vessels also will lose their luster if an abrasive material is used to clean them.
- Installing a vessel sink actually is easier than the process for the traditional under-mount variety. Still, Pitschke suggests professional installation. "Since vessel sinks are mounted directly to the countertop, if they're not installed properly they could wobble or loosen. Or if mounted too tightly they could break."
- Choosing a good faucet is as important as choosing a high-quality sink. Vessel sink faucets can be counter-mounted, wall-mounted or even floor-mounted. Make sure the faucet you chose is the appropriate height and has the appropriate reach for your sink. Professional installation also is recommended.

By Kara Anderson

Plain Jane bathrooms are no more, and sinks have become the star attraction. Once just bland basins, the bathroom sink has become a focal point — a way to turn a merely nice room into an eye-catching knockout. "The sink allows a great place to make a statement," said Thom Pitschke, a project designer at EXPO Design Center. "It's usually one of the first things you notice when you walk into the bathroom."

Indeed, the lowly bathroom is finally gaining stature. "The bathroom has taken its position as a very, very important room in the house, just as the kitchen had been the star for a very long time," said Diana Schrage, an interior designer at the Kohler Design Center.

Today's sinks come in a variety of sizes and styles, not to mention heights, materials and finishes.



Kamala, by Kohler
From \$1,675

Inspired by ancient tribal rain drums, this cast bronze vessel is a study in detail. The basin features a low-relief pattern that begins at the edge and gently works its way in, with elevated bands of dots, ridges, scrolls and links giving way to its narrow neck. "There are many concerns and issues people may not think of when installing a sink like this," Schrage said. "If you're looking at the Kamala, clearly you'd have to make a determination of how high your countertop is going to be. That is the critical dimension that most people don't think of when picking sinks and counters."



Liberum, by Porcher
\$2,695

This above-counter bronze basin, with its artistic asymmetry and hand-textured exterior, is perfect for today's modern bath. "The bathroom sink is a big deal," Pitschke said. "And we're starting to see a trend toward more modern styles." Simple, yet striking, it makes a statement without taking over the room. This sink is available in bronze and white bronze.



Semplice Square Basic, by Porcher
\$395 to \$450

Who says wash basins have to be round? Break the mold with this simple but daring square china sink. The clean design allows you to create your own style, and adds an unexpected touch of spa-like elegance to your bath. "A lot of people come in and they want a bathroom to be more spa-like, so the vessels tend to fit that feeling," Pitschke said. This above-counter lavatory, made in Italy, requires countertop installation. But its minimalist dimensions make choosing a faucet a cinch. Also available round or as a rectangle.



Striata, by Porcher
\$2,200 (includes pedestal)

This modern design adds a sense of vitality and softness to a room. The artistic handcrafted glass vessel is available in red or blue. It is shallow, and may be better suited to a guest bath or powder room. Pair with a standard counter or Porcher's stone pedestal. "Glass sinks take a little bit of extra care because if you use abrasive sponge or cleaner you could scratch the glass," Pitschke said. "Most of them will clean up with mild soap and water."



Crucible, by Kohler
From \$625

This above-the-counter sink is the definition of refined luxury. These vessels were inspired by Danish design from the 1950s and '60s, and it shows. Available in a variety of color combinations, each piece resembles an abstract sculpture: simple, yet oh-so unique. Because the Crucible sits high, you will likely want a wall-mounted faucet. Also consider your faucet's reach. "An important criteria you have to deal with is the depth from the wall for the water to fall into the Crucible," Schrage said. "This is usually what trips people up — not thinking about how high, how deep, or how the water will fall from the faucet."



Moxie, by Kohler
From \$3152

If it's a bold look you're after, you'll find it in the Moxie. This lavatory, with its decorated curtain of glass beads and tiles, is designed to inspire the romance of water. With its Vapour Indigo finish and soft edges, this sink does just that. "Clearly, this is more of an expression of art than it is just a placeholder for washing," Schrage said. The Moxie has no faucet holes, so be sure to plan for a wall-mount faucet with the recommended reach of about 5 inches.



Cloisonné, by Linkasink
\$1,700 to \$2,000

Phoenix-based Linkasink brings the 14th century Chinese craft of cloisonné into the home with their handcrafted sinks. These detailed works of art are created with wire and powdered glass, which are fused to a copper bowl. The result is stunning, and surprisingly simple to maintain — the Cloisonné requires no special care. The Cloisonné, available in a variety of designs, is one of Linkasink's most popular styles. It can be installed above-counter or under-mounted.

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