Interplay of tradition and modernity in contemporary art practices

Interacción entre tradición y modernidad en las prácticas artísticas contemporáneas

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine the profound transformation of artistic consciousness in recent years, drawing attention to the relationship between traditional philosophy and art and modernity. Despite the instability of this connection, art today reflects the reality of our time and focuses on social problems and political revolutions. Using the method of literary analysis and processing of such databases as Scopus, Google Scholar and Research Gate, the paper analyses the impact of postmodernism on contemporary art and culture, expanding the horizons of interpretation and understanding of the image in art. The results of the work revealed theories that enable each individual to express their ideas and views through art, creating new ways of perceiving the world around them. It has been shown that the interaction of tradition and modernity in contemporary art practices occurs through the image as a key element of postmodernism, which plays an important role in the modern world. Visual perceptions, symbolism, fantasy and imagination are combined in the work.

Resumen

El propósito de este artículo es examinar la profunda transformación de la conciencia artística en los últimos años, llamando la atención sobre la relación entre la filosofía tradicional y el arte y la modernidad. A pesar de la inestabilidad de esta conexión, el arte actual refleja la realidad de nuestro tiempo y se centra en los problemas sociales y las revoluciones políticas. Utilizando el método de análisis literario y procesamiento de bases de datos como Scopus, Google Scholar y Research Gate, el artículo analiza el impacto del posmodernismo en el arte y la cultura contemporáneas, ampliando los horizontes de interpretación y comprensión de la imagen en el arte. Los resultados del trabajo revelaron teorías que permiten a cada individuo expresar sus ideas y puntos de vista a través del arte, creando nuevas formas de percibir el mundo que lo rodea. Se ha demostrado que la interacción entre tradición y modernidad en las prácticas artísticas contemporáneas se da a través de la imagen como elemento clave del posmodernismo, que juega un papel importante en el mundo moderno. Las percepciones visuales, el simbolismo, la fantasía

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of artists and contribute to the formation of reflective thinking. Husserl's philosophy and approaches to the perception of entities helped to develop reflection and understanding of the contemporary socio-cultural environment through the image as a “condition of possibility” for perceiving the world. We conclude that the visual dimension reflects the social construction of the gaze and the atmosphere of our time, reflecting the unique spirit of the era in which we live. The result is a relevant and important understanding of the importance of the image in contemporary culture and the impact of tradition on society.

**Keywords:** Artistic consciousness, political revolutions, using the method of literary, traditions, postmodernism, practices, contemporary art.

**Introduction**

The interaction of tradition and modernity in contemporary art practices is reflected in a wide range of cultural, philosophical and aesthetic aspects. The ideas of postmodernism, postcolonialism and postfeminism influence the development of contemporary art and culture, expanding the horizons of interpretation and understanding of art. For instance, modern authors' photography and video artwork often explores the intersection of tradition and modernity in modern societies. She uses traditional imagery and symbols in a contemporary context to address issues of gender, politics, and society in the modern world (Kergel, 2023). These concepts help humanity to better understand the present by defining and analysing various aspects of cultural and artistic life. This modern relationship between tradition and modernism creates new opportunities for expressing ideas, emotions and views of our contemporary world through art.

Over the past forty years, according to Hanna & Paans (2020), humanity has witnessed a profound transformation of artistic consciousness. Starting in 1964, when art became more open to rigorous philosophical theories, it seemed that a new connection between philosophy and art had emerged (Pippin, 2021). Philosophy is now seen as an integral part of the art world, whereas previously it was seen as something separated from it through a distance of alienation. The authors create immersive installations that blur the lines between traditional art forms and contemporary culture. Their work often challenges viewers to reconsider their perceptions of space, identity, and social norms through a combination of traditional sculptural techniques and modern conceptual ideas (Melnyk et al., 2023). Thus, it can be argued that artists are indeed looking at aesthetics with new eyes, constantly returning to tradition through the prism of modernity (Simmons III, 2021).

Despite the fact that aesthetics and related theories resonate and are valued in art, this relationship remains unstable. Over the last thirty years, most aesthetic theories have moved away from “art”, exposing it to postmodern art practices and theories (Slugan, 2019). The philosophy of art has significantly changed its trajectory, leaving contemporary art practices without proper analysis. Thus, the purpose of this article is to analyse in depth the related works of art historians and philosophers to explain contemporary artistic phenomena and the relationship between tradition and modernity.

Art today reflects the reality of our time, where politics, morality and ethics are becoming key topics. Artists focus on social issues, ethnic conflicts, and political revolutions (Cahn, Ross & Shapshay, 2020). Their goal is to create works that will provoke viewers, make them think about the essence of the modern world without turning away from tradition. They are not afraid to be critical and subversive, they want to be “engaged” in what is happening around them.

Art today is a tool for expressing thoughts, emotions and views on reality. Modern artists combine traditional portraiture techniques with modern elements by painting contemporary figures in the style of classical European portraits. This juxtaposition of tradition and...
modernity challenges traditional representations of power and identity (Earley, 2023). In order to understand how the history - one of the possible histories - of certain artistic, aesthetic and philosophical positions has developed over the past two decades, the paper focuses on some of the preliminary conditions that made them possible, and then on how they were identified and theorised. The main theories that have influenced - and continue to influence - not only contemporary aesthetic concepts, but also, and above all, art and culture are examined.

The study begins with an analysis of the idea of postmodernism, which emphasises the breakdown of traditional values and emphasises the role of individuality and diversity. This approach to art allows artists to experiment and express their ideas without restrictions.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to analyse in depth the interaction between tradition and modernity in contemporary art practices, focusing on the ideas of postmodernism. In particular, the work aims to reveal the impact of these concepts on the development of contemporary art and culture, to expand the horizons of interpretation and understanding of the image in art, and to support diversity and individuality in art. In order to achieve this goal, the paper covers the following issues:

1. What are the main ideas of postmodernism that contribute to the development of contemporary art?
2. How is the interaction between tradition and modernism reflected in the work of artists today?
3. What new possibilities for expressing ideas, emotions and views are opened up by the modern approach to art?

Answers to these questions will help us better understand the influence of contemporary concepts and traditions on art today, as well as reveal new perspectives on the development of art in the future.

Theoretical framework

Over the past 40 years, art has moved from modernism to modernity, but postmodernism remains an important link in this process. Despite criticism, postmodernism helps to avoid the totalisation of modernity and frees us from the limitations of the absolute concept of individuality. According to Melnyk, Shakun, Herasymenko, Nitchenko, Olkhovyyk & Kolievatov, (2023), postmodernity is defined by the recognition that totality can only arise from the absolute definition of separateness, which means that distinction and diversity are necessary.

Starting in the 1970s, postmodernism emerged in Europe as a new phenomenon in theory and practice that was strikingly fresh (Ioris, 2023). However, attitudes towards postmodernism quickly changed, and it came to be seen as a “complex and cautious newcomer”, although it was also praised as an emancipatory cultural paradigm (O'Donnell, 2023). Despite this, the criticality of postmodernism remained unchanged. There have been attempts to reject postmodernism, arguing that modernity continues its journey and remains relevant. This attitude has also been expressed in concepts that still exist today, such as “parallel modernities”, “second modernity” or “modernisation” in China (Kergel, 2023).

In order to identify important cultural features of modernity, in particular those related to aesthetics, it is possible to consider the rise of postmodern ideas as a starting point (Botvyn et al., 2022). The fascination with postmodernism and its constant attempts to define itself by defending itself against modernity can be important for understanding contemporary culture. From the perspective of the present, postmodernism is mainly a transitional phenomenon that reflects profound historical changes - the transition from industrial society and national cultures and economies to a post-industrial information society and globalised capital (Titkova, 2022).

In the early 1980s, one of the main theoretical issues was the question of the existence and nature of the fashionable cultural dominant of postmodernism (Sproesser et al., 2022). Although the answer to this question has not yet been clear, it is still relevant even in our time. To put forward some possible answers, the focus is on three theories that have attracted the attention of a wider audience than just aesthetics. In this context, the study focuses on the “aesthetics of cultural relations” and contemporary art theory.

An analysis of the interaction between tradition and modernity in contemporary art practices shows that the visual arts are perceived as a major branch of art that can influence philosophical and theoretical communities (Di Sabatino, & Mastrantoni, 2022). The authors analyse contemporary art by considering its impact on
global processes. They believe that artists and contemporary art are inseparable and mixed, which makes it difficult to define the boundaries between different cultural and geographical areas of the world (Chi & Belliveau, 2022). According to Say & Seng (2022), if we assume that changes in relation to the past and the future reflect an era of transformation, then the period in culture and art of the 1980s can be classified as such. The main current of this time, postmodernism, is the latest cultural paradigm that has been developed and exclusively theorised mainly in the European and American context (Baker & Joselit, 2022). As a concept and an empirical phenomenon, postmodernism also emerged in the field of architecture, which indicates the rejection of the previous cultural paradigm, which prevailed at that time, mainly in literature and art. The notion of postmodernism became popular because it uniquely reflected various fragments of socio-cultural life. According to Jürgens & Hildbrand (2022), the term was initially popular only in literary criticism, but then it became associated with ultramodernity, breaking with tradition, and extremism.

Thus, postmodernism embodied everything that was previously considered negative in traditional critical theory and the avant-garde. While this statement was justified by Western canons, it was questioned in other countries and within the community: in Cuba, for example, the term “postmodernism” was banned because of its association with the United States. In China, it was seen as a concept of “modernity”. In the countries of the former Soviet Union, on the other hand, postmodernism became an emancipatory social and cultural theory because of its openness to dogma (cultural or political), its search for eclecticism, and its “anything goes” approach. Postmodernism has also been positively received in small cultures, which have always favoured the cultural politics of appropriation and eclecticism within modernism. This cultural practice, previously understood as a sign of a lack of originality and a tendency to borrow, has been transformed: it is now seen as a manifestation of active participation in contemporary cultural trends.

The existing literature on the interaction between tradition and modernity in contemporary art practices tends to focus on the positive aspects of postmodernism and its impact on global processes. However, there is a lack of critical analysis of the limitations and contradictions inherent in postmodern art movements.

Future research could delve deeper into the power dynamics within the art world and how they shape the production and reception of contemporary art. Additionally, a more nuanced exploration of how different cultural and geographical contexts interpret and engage with postmodernism could provide valuable insights into the complexities of contemporary art practices. Exploring the ways in which postmodernism may reinforce or challenge existing power structures and inequalities in the art world could offer important perspectives on the role of art in society. Additionally, investigating how contemporary artists navigate the tensions between tradition and modernity in their work and how this is reflected in their artistic processes and outcomes could shed light on the changing dynamics of the art world.

A more critical and nuanced approach to the study of tradition and modernity in contemporary art practices could provide a deeper understanding of the complexities and contradictions inherent in the cultural production of our time.

Methodology

The work is based on the analysis of related scholarly literature in cultural theory and philosophy, referring to original texts and secondary literature studies that reconstruct various aspects. The literature search included research papers from 2020 to 2024 from such search engines as Scopus, Google scholar, and Research Gate. The question of the role of the image in contemporary art is quite extensive, and to consider it, the paper focused on the central aspect - the image (accordingly, these were the keywords selected for the search). Today, humanity is witnessing a revival and diversity of forms of the image that surround it, which leads to the fact that we are talking about a “civilisation of the image” or an “era of the image” (Jürgens & Hildbrand, 2022). The debate about the “fear” of the image, which arose in ancient times from the work of Plato, is still relevant today, reflecting the history of Western thought and generating distrust of the image. However, the epistemological revolution and the new scientific approach indicate a crisis in the scientific credibility of the tradition and restore the importance of the image in the cultural context.

The methods used to explore the profound transformation of artistic consciousness in the last forty years included an analysis of postmodernist theories and their impact on contemporary art and culture. Husserl's
philosophy was also used to develop reflective thinking and understanding of the contemporary socio-cultural environment through the image as a “condition of possibility” for perceiving the world. The importance of the image in contemporary culture and its impact on society was determined through the analysis of the visual dimension, symbolism, fantasy and imagination in artistic practices. The result is the creation of new ways of perceiving the world and the development of the creative potential of each person through art.

In order to address the working issues, a number of methods were used: analysis and classification of images in contemporary art, study of the history of the image and its development in culture, research of the influence of socio-political factors on the formation of images in contemporary art, analysis of the emotional and psychological impact of images on the viewer and ways of reproducing them in different artistic genres, research and analysis of the reception of images in contemporary society and their interaction with globalisation and multiculturalism, study of the role of images in shaping cultural values. The use of these methods allowed us to examine a wide range of aspects of the image in contemporary art and to reveal its importance in the cultural context of tradition and modernity.

**Results and discussion**

The interaction of tradition and modernity in artistic practices means that the image as a key element of postmodernity plays an important role in the contemporary world. Visual perceptions, symbolism, fantasy and imagination are combined in contemporary artistic creativity, playing a role in the formation of holistic reflective thinking. Husserl's philosophy and approaches to the perception of entities help to develop reflection and understanding of the contemporary socio-cultural environment through the image as a “condition of possibility” for perceiving the world (Fig. 1):

![Figure 1. Interpretation of the image as a key element of postmodernity. Source: Authors' own research.](image)

The visual dimension reflects the social construction of the gaze and the atmosphere of our time, reflecting the unique spirit of the era in which we live (Dorren, 2024). In today's world, the image can be considered one of the key features of postmodernity, a prominent feature of our era. It is significant that the image, along with symbolism, fantasy and imagination, has returned to the forefront and played an important role. It is worth emphasising the intensity of visual perceptions, the image as a key form of our everyday life, where it is entangled in all spheres of society, and as a type of knowledge. According to Rugg's (2022) analysis, we can refer to a common “archetype” or mundus of the imaginary that covers the entire spectrum of thought. This mundus is expressed in visual perception, where our eye seems to be already used to work: spreading, accumulation and circulation are the processes that help the image take shape and fascinate our visual perception (Drummond, 2022). Phenomenological sensitivity, when the image draws our consciousness to entities, relating the individual to the world and introducing us to the “vision of entities” in Husserl's way.

Husserl's philosophy considers essence as the basis of true knowledge, which consists in the perception of absolute forms and allows us to develop reflection and thinking (Drummond, 2022). According to Husserl, access to essences is based on perceiving reality as it is and understanding things according to their revealed properties (Taylor, 2023). This philosophy is marked by the study of the “climatology” of our time, which takes into account the current socio-cultural environment and focuses on the image as a “condition of possibility” for perceiving the world (Brannigan & Lawson, 2023). The world is reflected in the visual dimension, where we can identify the social construction of the gaze that reflects the atmosphere of our time and the air we breathe, for example, as in the works of D.B. Waterman (Fig. 2):
Considering the centrality of vision and the image as a contemporary 'sensory' form, it is possible to understand that vision becomes a symbolic aspect of cognition, contributing to oculocentrism. This tendency, according to Earley (2023), arises from knowledge transmitted through images and interaction with visual experience. Ways of seeing and working with irrigation allow us to understand the world through a visual presentation consisting of various aspects of traditional experience conveyed through modern techniques. The centrality of vision promotes understanding through the “representational” nature of the image and reveals reality through the visualisation of the world through various media. The aim is to make the world present through visual metaphor.

In this aspect, according to Corey (2023), knowledge can be seen as experience in visual images, where it becomes a space for the consumption of experience. The image that emerges before us should be seen as a form of expression and communication that helps us to understand the world. This image can be seen as a means of reflecting on everyday life, as well as a part of a comprehensive sociology. In continuation of this idea, Abrudan (2023) notes that the transition from modernity to postmodernity can be expressed through immersion in a visual context where images become the basis for building social relations. In postmodern culture, images become the dominant cultural form of knowledge transmission.

A related work by Mullen (2023) describes one of the important aspects of the transition from modernity to postmodernity. According to the scholar, it is the use of visual context as a means of building social relations. In postmodernity, in contrast to traditional culture, where the verbal prevailed, visual images become the main means of expression. This leads to the pluralisation of images of the world and the constitution of the world as an image. According to Vidomenko, Levchenko & Lukianykhin (2022), the growing spectacularity of society, fuelled by technological development, is becoming more and more present, expanding the flow of production and consumption. We stand in solidarity, because we live in a “society of the spectacle”, where only what can be visualised is important.

It should be added that, in addition to the criticisms that can be made about this “spectacle”, Skakun (2022) adds that it should be realised that today's society receives information about different worldviews through the creation of photographs or films. These images can also be seen as a form of social presence and interaction. The transition from analogue to digital, which has become a feature of our time, intensifies these processes through the proliferation of digital cameras. It is becoming the norm and a daily routine. However, it is precisely because of its ordinariness that it acquires special significance. Banality, as sociologist Sayed (2023) argues, is part of an epistemological process where display and gesturation are important. Photographing or filming everyday life illustrates this idea (Fig. 3):
This may be perceived as an obsession, but it is actually an indicator of modernity, of social life permeated with visual elements, where visual narratives are created with the help of numerous devices that capture every moment of everyday life. Thus, the characteristics of the image society are becoming more pronounced according to the analysis of visual research theorists Stoliarchuk, Binkivska, Khrypko, Spudka, Chop, Chornomordenko & Salo (2024). The researchers emphasise the importance of visual experience and the centrality of everyday life in visual culture. This culture aims to understand image consumption as the main strategy of visual research (Kleczek & Hajdas, 2024). Thus, visual sociology studies society through the analysis of visual products and sees visual information as sociological data and social indicators.

The visual culture that permeates the contemporary atmosphere includes a variety of visual references, from films and videos to advertisements and photographs (Jove et al., 2022). This iconographic context not only takes into account optical aspects but also emphasises their tactile impact (Wigena et al., 2023). This helps us to better understand the visual practices that involve objects created by mass tourism (Fig. 4):
An important part of this is the exchange of images in digital space that reflect experiences, places and connections to tradition, the perspective of modernity against ancient ruins, and diverse perspectives on everyday life. In this way, these images become a means of exchange and community, recreating everyday life and normality in a contextualized way.

The emergence of digital technologies allows us to transfer direct experience from physical space to the Internet using various tools, such as laptops with webcams, new generation smartphones, Bluetooth technology and continuous connectivity via Wi-Fi or iPhone. The technological presence in the urban environment facilitates this process of transition between different spaces, creating synergies between them.

In a related study, Kowalik (2023) demonstrates that new technologies facilitate constant exchange and provide the ability to create, experiment and play with images easier than ever before compared to traditional visual devices. They are means of expression that facilitate the construction of visual narratives. By visiting a variety of websites such as Flickr, Picasaweb, or participating in popular social media such as Twitter and Facebook, one can observe everyday life.

In his study, Bendaş (2023) explains that it is a contemporary art form that can be described as a true “web ethnography” that reflects the atmosphere of social life and the need for communication, reflecting the “cultural spirit” of our time through symbolic “elements” and the creation of playful “clouds”. It is indeed a game with photos and videos, a game with images as a form of experience, which, with the help of digital potential, emphasises the emphasis on the moment (Fig. 5):

![Figure 5. Kellie O’Dempsey integrating reality into the game.](image)

Source: Kellie O’Dempsey (2015)

The integration of reality into play is one of the characteristics of contemporary experience that affects the human condition in new conditions. This leads to a new aesthetic that emphasises the everyday and the banal, through which connections, heritage and interaction are formed. For example, comments on photos on social media such as Facebook, where the image describes the daily life of an individual and encourages us to communicate with others. This allows the individual to express themselves and show their self (Pieniążek, 2023). Society and interaction are built on role gestures that are manifested in everyday interactions. A network built through images, where the self and the other are defined in the context of media interaction (Baca, 2023). This interactivity in cyberspace is a natural expression of human nature, and the “here and now” position builds the framework of our existence, where our identity develops in different worlds.

All digital technologies are involved in creating and maintaining the “integrated” show in the background that is a characteristic of today. We are all becoming active participants in the great spectacle of everyday life, and various services such as Flickr, Fotosicity, Daylymotion,
YouTube, Jomeo are clear examples of the changes in the virtual environment of the modern person (Farokhinejad, 2023). This “visual” need reflects the proliferation of representation in the postmodern world, where images are created and distributed through digital technologies.

Thus, a photo taken at a party, in social situations or in everyday life reflects a person's presence, which becomes a trace of their existence and life experiences when these images are posted in a “slideshow” on sharing sites (Brondino & Greaney, 2023). This opens up a variety of social forms that harness the potential of digital technologies as a means of training the internal processes of the mind.

In general, the image has always been important in every era, changing and adapting to the atmosphere of its time. The civilisation of the image has existed in various forms, and in the modern world it is once again attracted by digital technologies. We are in a post-Kodak era that simultaneously evokes the “analogue” nostalgia of vintage video photography, pulling out the magic of the Leika or Super 8 camera, icons that accompany modern fetishisation (Arnold, 2023). The paradox of digitalisation, which, according to Chifor (2023), strengthens the analogue style, is marked by its vigour and exposure. We can talk about the merging of styles and patchwork, which are characteristic of postmodernism. If we focus on the style of the era, as suggested by Zimmel, we should take into account that the digitisation of an image and its subsequent visualisation have a great impact on the social and cultural world, bringing a special sensitivity to the ways of communication and connecting people according to the Latin meaning of the word “communicare”, which means “union”. The digitisation of the image as a postmodern brand should be seen as both a medium and a cultural object that influences research in visual sociology and the relationship between image and society. The impact of a medium on an individual or society depends on the change in scale produced by each new technology and each expansion of our property.

Limitations of the study include the reliance on a specific philosophical perspective (Husserl's philosophy) and its application to the contemporary art world. This may limit the generalizability of the findings to other philosophical frameworks or artistic practices. Additionally, the study mainly focuses on the role of the image in postmodernity without considering other factors that may influence artistic creativity, such as political, economic, or social contexts.

Concrete examples of how the findings can be applied to the real world include the use of digital technologies to create and share visual narratives. Artists can leverage platforms such as social media and photo-sharing websites to reach a wider audience and engage in dialogue with viewers. This allows for the democratization of art and the exploration of new modes of artistic expression. Furthermore, understanding the role of the image as a "condition of possibility" for perceiving the world can encourage artists to reflect on the socio-cultural environment and create works that challenge conventional thinking. By embracing the visual dimension as a reflection of our time, artists can contribute to a deeper understanding of contemporary society and its complexities.

Conclusions
Thus, the interaction of tradition and modernity in contemporary art shows that the concepts of cultural heritage and innovation can exist together and continue to evolve. Artists use traditional cultural symbols and techniques, but reinterpret them in the context of the modern world, introducing new ideas and approaches. This synthesis helps to create new forms of expression and open up new ways of perceiving and understanding art. As a result, the image becomes a dynamic and living symbol of the union of the past, present and future, which opens up new opportunities for the discovery and development of cultural heritage in the modern world. So, we can draw several conclusions:

- First of all, the image in the modern world is a key feature of postmodernism and an important feature of our era;
- Visual culture and image are an important way of perception and communication in modern society;
- The study of visual aspects of sociology allows us to better understand the world and interactions between people;
- Digital technologies influence the creation, consumption and exchange of visual images, which reflects an important aspect of modern experience and communication;
- And finally, it is worth considering that the image, as an important element of cultural consciousness, combines the ability to search for new things, to embody ideas and to perceive the world around us.
For future research, it is important to further explore the influence of tradition and innovation on contemporary art, including in the context of globalisation. It would be useful to investigate how different cultures interact and influence each other through art, which can lead to new forms of aesthetic perception and understanding. It is also important to study the impact of technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and others on the creation and perception of images in art. Studies of the role of art in shaping the cultural identity of modern society, as well as its impact on social and political processes, are also promising. Research in this area can expand the general understanding of the importance of art for the formation of a creative and open society.

Future research in the field of visual culture and fine arts can contribute to the further development of art and its understanding of the world through the prism of the image.

Some limitations of the study to consider could include the lack of a diverse range of artists and artworks examined, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study may not fully capture the complex and multifaceted nature of tradition and modernity in contemporary art, as these concepts can be interpreted and manifested in a variety of ways.

In terms of future research, it would be valuable to explore how different cultural backgrounds and experiences shape artists’ approaches to blending tradition and modernity in their work. Additionally, examining the impact of social, political, and economic factors on the production and reception of contemporary art could provide further insights into the dynamic relationship between tradition and innovation. Investigating how contemporary artists navigate the tension between preserving cultural heritage and pushing the boundaries of artistic expression could also shed light on the complexities of this artistic practice.

Overall, by delving deeper into these aspects, future research can offer a more nuanced understanding of how tradition and modernity intersect in contemporary art, and how this intersection shapes artistic production, reception, and broader societal discourses.

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