George Bellows (1882-1925) has long been respected for his ability to capture the spirit and character of American life in the early 20th century. **The Powerful Hand of George Bellows: Drawings from the Boston Public Library**, which features 57 works, sets a new standard for recording the history and significance of the artist's drawings. Taken from the Wiggin Collection and related lithographs at the Boston Public Library, the works-ranging from intimate studies of the artist's friends and family to public sporting events and social gatherings-have not been seen together since the 1950s. The exhibition is on view April 10 through June 1, 2008 at the Portland Museum of Art. (right: George Bellows (United States, 1882-1925), *A Knock Down*, 1917-1921, crayon on paper, 15 x 19 3/16 inches, Boston Public Library.)

Best known for a relatively small number of controversial boxing images, Bellows is equally notable for his contributions to American landscape painting, portraiture, and especially scenes of modern American life. His well-known paintings convey the liveliness present in many aspects of American society, from urban scenes to the seashore. His lesser-known drawings reveal how he captured this energy with a quick, vibrant line that leaps off the page and brings the scenes to life. These drawings are not only preparatory works for paintings and lithographs; they are often finished works in themselves, intended for publication in magazines and newspapers like *Harper's Weekly* and *The Masses*.

During his brief lifetime (he was a college drop-out at 22, member of the National Academy of Design in 1909 at 27, the country's most accomplished lithographer at 35, and dead of appendicitis at 43), Bellows was given major one-artist exhibitions at museums in Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Worcester, Cincinnati, Columbus, and Rochester.

Since his death in 1925, the country's most significant collections of American painting have granted Bellows a place among their most important artists, and celebrated his accomplishments in at least 20 major exhibitions. Bellows created an enormous body of work in his 21 years-more than 700 paintings, almost 200 editions of lithographs and an equivalent number of drawings.

Presentation of this exhibition in Portland will also be enhanced by the inclusion of five monumental paintings by Bellows. These paintings represent key moments in his career and offer an expanded view of some of the same subjects dealt with in his works on paper. Selected works on paper from the collection of the Portland Museum of Art will also augment the works on view.

The exhibition was curated by Robert Conway, formerly Director of Associated American Artists and a specialist in modern American prints and drawings for more than 20 years. The catalogue accompanying the exhibition, written by Conway, illustrates all 48 Wiggin drawings and describes for the first time the ingenious combinations of graphic media Bellows used to create them. The catalogue will be available in the Museum Store in the spring. The Portland Museum of Art's curator for the exhibition is Jessica Skwire Routhier.

The exhibition tour itinerary is as follows:

- The Frick Art & Historical Center in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania (April 21-June 17, 2007);
- The Columbus Museum of Art in Columbus, Ohio (July 12-September 23, 2007);
- The Mennello Museum of American Art in Orlando, Florida (October 11-December 23, 2007);
The Powerful Hand of George Bellows: Drawings from the Boston Public Library was organized by the Trust for Museum Exhibitions in Washington, D.C., in collaboration with the Boston Public Library, Massachusetts.

(above: George Bellows (1882-1925), Business Men’s Class, April 1913, monoprint with graphite, crayon, pen and ink, and scratchwork on the print and the mount. 15 13/16 x 25 1/8 inches, Wiggin Collection, Boston Public Library.)

(above: George Bellows (1882-1925), Preaching (Billy Sunday), March 1915, crayon, pen and ink, brush and ink, wash on board, 14 13/16 x 28 5/16 inches, Wiggin Collection, Boston Public Library.)

About the Trust for Museum Exhibitions

The Trust for Museum Exhibitions is a non-profit museum service organization founded in 1984 by Ann Van Devanter Townsend. Respected internationally for the unique quality of its large, richly textured traveling exhibitions, and for distinctive and sharply focused scholarly exhibitions, the Trust's hallmark on any fine or decorative arts project ensures intellectual integrity and outstanding aesthetic quality in both content and execution.

The Trust's Mission

Without cultural diplomacy, the nations of the world would lack a common language. With cultural exchange within and between nations, understanding is fostered. With these founding principles as its guide the Trust seeks to complement and expand the cultural and educational institutions of the communities it serves by offering a rich and varied spectrum of fine and decorative arts exhibitions for national and international audiences. Through its comprehensive traveling exhibition services the Trust acts as a resource for art institutions throughout the United States and around the world.

Trust Resources

All of the Trust's services are managed by highly trained and experienced exhibition professionals, supported by teams of internationally renowned specialists. The Trust provides complete traveling exhibition services to lending and host institutions, including conceptual planning and development, engagement of guest curators, scheduling
and logistical planning, publications, didactic and educational materials, publicity and marketing, conservation, security, wall-to-wall insurance, packing and crating, domestic and international transportation and customs, registration and installation assistance.

Trust Partnerships

For two decades the Trust for Museum Exhibitions has served as a coordinator for consortium projects between museums, and has assisted institutions in circulating their own collections. The Trust has formed partnerships with more than 200 museums, cultural institutions, and private collections world-wide to ensure that important objects, powerful ideas, distinctive presentation and cost effective planning result in highly successful and affordable exhibitions. Currently the Trust is involved collaboratively in more than two-dozen exhibitions, either on tour or in development in the United States and abroad.

Selected wall texts from the exhibition

Opposing wall (right of entrance), to accompany photo mural (Juley photograph from Smithsonian Photo Archives):

I am always very amused with people who talk about lack of subjects. . . . The great difficulty is that you cannot stop to sort them out enough. Wherever you go, they are waiting for you. . . . The children at the river edge, polo crowds, prize fights, summer evening and romance . . . the beautiful, the ugly. . . . It seems to me that an artist must be a spectator of life; a reverential, enthusiastic spectator, and then the great dramas of human nature will surge through his mind.

Intro Text (gallery interior)

The Powerful Hand of George Bellows
Drawings from the Boston Public Library

George Bellows was born in Columbus, Ohio in 1882. He left his hometown for New York City in 1904, and in the next five years, he rose from a beginning art student to a critical and commercial success. In 21 years of professional life, Bellows created an enormous body of work -- more than seven hundred paintings, almost two hundred editions of lithographs, and an equivalent number of drawings. Notorious for a few controversial boxing images painted during his first five years in New York, he is equally notable for his contributions to American landscape painting, portraiture, and scenes of modern urban life.

Underlying his more celebrated roles as a painter and printmaker, Bellows maintained an active and successful career as an illustrator. His drawings demonstrate his lively sense of humor and his seemingly effortless talent. Bellows captured with a quickly drawn line the essence of his subjects and then delivered it to his viewers with perception, compassion, and, occasionally, outrage.

The Powerful Hand of George Bellows presents for the first time to a national audience the outstanding collection of drawings donated by Albert Wiggin to the Boston Public Library. In 1941, Wiggin gave his collection to the Library, including his near-complete group of lithographs by Bellows. Over the next ten years, he and Arthur Heintzelman, the Library's first Keeper of Prints, built on the strengths of his donation. In 1943, working with Bellows's widow, Emma Bellows, and his long-time dealer, H.V. Allison, the two completed a joint purchase/donation of the group of drawings in this exhibition.

The full range of Bellows's graphic art is represented here: quick sketches in the field to be used later in the studio, finished compositions intended for publication in popular magazines, commissioned illustrations for short stories and serialized novels, preparatory drawings for lithographic editions, and intimate portraits of friends and family. This is a rare opportunity to see the drawings of one of this country's most accomplished artists, as represented by one of the country's most comprehensive collections.

Text Panels

Life in the City

In 1904, Bellows moved from his native Columbus, Ohio, to New York to study art under Robert Henri. From the beginning, Bellows was acclaimed for his ability to capture the crowds, the noise, and the characters of the city in his paintings and drawings, many of which were reproduced in popular magazines and newspapers. Bellows looked to his own experience for inspiration -- including his circle of artist friends and their favorite haunts -- but he was particularly well known for his witty and satirical views of life in the tenements of the lower East Side. The quick and merciless humor that was one of his greatest strengths also earned him some criticism. One of his fellow contributors to the socialist journal The Masses publicly criticized Bellows for humorizing the
his sensitive portraits of his family became some of his best-known works. In the early 1920s, Bellows's masterpiece was the 48 drawings of the Christ" rally, organized by the evangelist Billy Sunday. The resulting article was a seamless coming together of word and image. Reed's words and Bellows's illustrations give equal weight to the image of Sunday "climbing on the pulpit, sliding from one end of the platform to the other, crouching like a runner, leaping, crouching, every movement as graceful as a wolf's. . . . When he wrenched himself into a contortion twenty thousand heads and shoulders involuntarily followed."

Though Reed was ambivalent about Sunday's message, Bellows was unvarnished in his contempt for the preacher. The combination of humor and venom he incorporated into his portrayals of Sunday -- and a handful of other images related to organized religion, made at different points in his career -- makes them among the most powerful of his work in any media.

Bellows in Maine

Bellows first visited Maine in 1911, traveling to Monhegan Island with his friend and teacher with Robert Henri. Henri had been spending summers on Monhegan regularly since 1903, and he had given a generation of his students there -- including Bellows, Randall Davies, Edward Hopper, Rockwell Kent, and Leon Kroll -- to experience Maine and establish a community of modernist artists. Through 1916, Bellows returned to Maine annually with his wife and daughters, finding a wealth of material for his work and participating fully in island life. The island of Matinicus was a part of Maine that Bellows was the first of the Henri circle to discover. He was fascinated with the sights and sounds of the working harbor there, and around 1916 it inspired a series of works derived from the same composition. Together they perfectly demonstrate Bellows's facility in a variety of artistic media, and his rare ability to give a single subject -- even a single view -- full expression with either paint or paper.

Illustration

Bellows had made a name for himself recording his views of daily life and real events, but in the early 1920s he made some experimental forays into illustrating for fiction. He accepted commissions to illustrate serialized versions of two books: The Wind Bloweth, a story of 19th-century Ireland by Donne Byrne; and Men Like Gods, a futuristic, utopian tale by H. G. Wells. The latter, in particular, opened up a whole new area of expression for Bellows in depicting a purely imagined, fantastical world. These images correspond with a time in which Bellows was heavily influenced by the art theorist Jay Hambidge, who developed a compositional system called Dynamic Symmetry. Bellows was frequently criticized for his adherence to Hambidge's theories, which called for a precise geometrical distribution of pictorial elements across the picture surface. Despite this, his innate talent for depicting human emotion and passion through gestures of the human body is also evident in these drawings.

Religion

In January 1915, Metropolitan Magazine hired Bellows and reporter John Reed to cover the "Christ for Philadelphia -- Philadelphia for Christ" rally, organized by the evangelist Billy Sunday. The resulting article was a seamless coming together of word and image. Sunday -- who, like Bellows, was a baseball player in his youth -- was known for dramatic and athletic preaching style, using his entire body to convey his message and engage his audience. Reed's words and Bellows's illustrations give equal weight to the image of Sunday "climbing on the pulpit, sliding from one end of the platform to the other, crouching like a runner, leaping, crouching, every movement as graceful as a wolf's. . . . When he wrenched himself into a contortion twenty thousand heads and shoulders involuntarily followed."

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Women

Early in his career Bellows used the female form as the conduit for crucial explorations in his art. The first lithographs Bellows produced were derived from nude life studies; the classical subject helped him to determine how to translate a composition successfully from drawing to print. After his marriage to Emma Story in 1910 and the birth of their two daughters in 1911 and 1915, his sensitive portraits of his family became some of his most highly acclaimed works in all media. He also frequently portrayed the
families of his artist friends in New York and Woodstock, where he summered from 1920 on. Bellows portrayed these women with loving elegance, pushing the boundaries of traditional portraiture with works that examine ideas of family, community, and even autobiography, through the depiction of women whose lives intersected his own. Late in his career, his approach to the female form evolved again, with nudes reappearing in his work in a more enigmatic, seemingly symbolic, way. (illus=Geo, Jean, Emma & Anne @Woodstock, Woodstock cat., p. 112-also the artist and his lithographs, p. 68)

The Beach

This group of images relates to a trip the Bellows family took to the beaches at Newport, Rhode Island in 1919. Beginning around this time, Bellows took a hiatus from his successful career as a lithographer. While in Newport he focused on drawing from life, creating a catalogue of images he would later use in paintings and prints. When he resumed lithography in 1921, the resulting works were smaller than his earlier prints, more pictorially unified, and more classically ordered, corresponding to his new interest in compositional theories. Still clear, however, is their direct relationship to his spontaneous drawings of years earlier, demonstrating the artist's irrepressible humor as well as his enduring strength in documenting the human animal at leisure. (illus=Henri, Bellows, Davey on Monhegan, 1911, Allure of the Maine Coast, p. 16)

The Voice of the Artist

This group of large-scale images on social and political subjects make up George Bellows's most ambitious and fully realized compositions on paper. The War Series of 1918 documents Bellows's transition from an ardent pacifist opposed to World War I to a supporter of the American war effort and an ardent critic of the atrocities committed by the German army. Bellows used as source material The Bryce Report, published in abridged form in the New York Times in 1915. This was the report of an international committee investigating Germany's treatment of civilians, particularly Belgian civilians, during wartime. A number of the images, in their final lithographic versions, were published in Vanity Fair and Everybody's Magazine between August and December 1918.

It is characteristic of Bellows's working process that his first encounter with the material that inspired the War Series came fully three years before the drawings and related prints were produced. His depictions of other controversial themes -- notably The Law is Too Slow and The Dead Line -- similarly drew upon incidents and events he had read about, and been moved by, years before. (illus=GB, 1924, The artist and his lithographs, p. 128).

Quotes

[Painting] occurs simultaneous with and is inseparable from the act of drawing.

Make what propaganda there may be, subtle, interesting, full of wit and art, or not at all.

The great illustrator must be interested in the noble order of form, the noble order of light, and the noble order of sensation.

Give me a wilderness or a city -- there is much the same bigness of life in both.

Every artist is looking for news. He is a great reporter of life; keeping his eyes open for some hitherto untold piece of reality to put on his canvas.

A picture is primarily a human document, a record of the mind and heart of the man who made it, of his limitations and his greatness.

Checklist from the exhibition

Objects 1 through 57 are all from the collection of the Boston Public Library (included in all exhibition venues)

1. Dogs, Early Morning (Hungry Dogs), February 1907
   graphite, pen and ink and crayon on paper
   13 _ x 9 7/8 inches

2. Splinter Beach, February 1912
   crayon, graphite, pen and ink wash on paper
   16 _ x 22 _ inches

3. Business Men's Class, April 1913
   monoprint with graphite, crayon, pen and ink, and scratchwork on the print and the mount
   15 13/16 x 25 1/8 inches
4. *Business-Men's Class*, 1916
lithograph
11 5/8 x 17 1/8 inches

5. *The Strugglers (Solitude)*, June 1913
crayon, pen and ink, brush and inkwash on board
22 x 17 inches

6. *Prayer Meeting (Prayer Meeting No. 1)*, Summer-Fall 1913
pen and ink on paper
5 1/16 x 6 5/8 inches

lithograph
18 x 21 inches

8. *Night at Petitpas (Artists' Evening, Petitpas)*, February 1914
crayon and graphite on paper, mounted on board
8 9/16 x 12 inches

9. *Pinched (The Street)*, March-April 1914
crayon, graphite, and pen and ink on board
20 x 15 3/8 inches

10. *Matinicus*, Fall 1916
crayon on paper
6 5/8 x 9 inches

11. *Billy Sunday and the Sawdust Trail (The Sawdust Trail)*, March 1915
crayon, pen and ink, brush and ink wash on board
26 9/16 x 19 15/16 inches

12. *Preaching (Billy Sunday)*, March 1915
crayon, pen and ink, brush and ink, wash on board
14 13/16 x 28 5/16 inches

13. *Standing Nude Bending Forward (Standing Nude)*, Winter 1916
crayon on paper
13 7/16 x 11 inches

lithograph
12 x 10 1/8 inches

15. *The Old Rascal*, Winter 1916
crayon, pen and ink on paper
9 3/16 x 7 inches

16. *Preliminaries (Preliminaries to the Big Bout)*, Spring 1916
crayon, ink and brush on paper
17 22 inches

17. *Preliminaries to the Big Bout* 1916
lithograph
15 x 19 inches

18. *Well at Quevado*, Fall 1917
graphite, crayon, pen and ink, ink wash, and brush on board
10 x 15 5/8 inches

19. *Four Figures in a Room (Two Girls)*, Winter 1917
graphite on paper
4 15/16 x 6 1/8 inches
20. Two Girls, 1917
lithograph
7 5/8 x 8 7/8 inches

21. A Knock Down, circa. 1917-1921
crayon on paper
15 x 19 3/16 inches

22. The White Hope, 1921
lithograph
14 _ x 18 _ inches

23. Base Hospital, 1916-1918
crayon on board
11 _ x 9 _ inches

24. The Last Victim, Spring-Winter 1918
graphite, crayon, brush and ink wash on board
19 x 23 11/16 inches

25. Return of the Useless, Spring-Winter 1918
graphite, crayon and black ink on board
19 _ x 12 11/16 inches

26. The Barricade, Spring-Winter 1918
crayon on board
17 3/16 x 28 7/8 inches

27. Doves and Figures, Fall 1918
crayon on ragboard
19 9/16 x 15 _ inches

28. Hail to Peace, Christmas, 1918, 1919
lithograph
4 _ x 3 _ inches

29. The Beach and Girl on Beach (on the reverse Study for Legs of the Sea), June 1919
graphite on paper
6 5/8 x 8 1/8 inches

30. The Beach (Legs of the Sea), June 1919
crayon on paper
14 _ x 20 11/16 inches

31. Legs of the Sea, 1921
lithograph
8 _ x 10 5/8 inches

32. Study for Bathing Beach, Summer 1918 or 1919
crayon on paper
10 3/8 x 7 7/8 inches

33. Study for Bathing Beach (Girl on Sand), Summer 1918 or 1919
crayon on paper
8 x 10 5/8 inches

34. Bathing Beach, 1921
lithograph
8 3/8 x 7 inches

35. Study for Indoor Athlete No. 1, Winter 1917-Winter 1921
graphite on paper
7 7/8 x 7 1/16 inches

36. Indoor Athlete, No. 1, 1921
37. Study for Indoor Athlete No. 2, Winter 1917-Winter 1921
   crayon or graphite on paper
   6 5/6 x 5 1/4 inches

38. Parade Forms on the Right (Spring, Central Park), 1921
   crayon on paper
   18 3/8 x 16 11/16 inches

39. Introducing Georges Carpentier, July 1921
   crayon on paper
   19 x 25 inches

40. Elsie, Figure, 1921
   crayon on brown paper
   11 11/16 x 5 7/8 inches

41. Elsie, 1921
   crayon on paper
   14 1/8 x 10 inches

42. Elsie, Emma and Marjorie, No. 1, 1921
   lithograph
   9 5/8 x 12 inches

43. Punchinello,
   January and February 1922
   crayon on paper
   9 11/16 x 6 inches

44. Punchinello in the House of Death, January and February 1922
   graphite, in and brush on board
   16 x 19 5/8 inches

45. Punchinello in the House of Death, 1923
   lithograph
   16 x 19 3/8 inches

46. Study for The Irish Fair, January and February 1922
   crayon on paper
   9 x 5 7/16 inches

47. The Irish Fair, 1923
   lithograph
   18 7/8 x 21 3/8 inches

48. Builders, Winter 1922
   crayon on paper
   12 3/8 x 10 1/8 inches

49. The Battle, Winter 1922-Spring 1923
   crayon on board
   24 x 20 inches

50. The Return to Life, Winter 1922-Spring 1923
   crayon, chalk, ink wash and brush on paper
   12 1/2 x 10 1/16 inches

51. The Law Is Too Slow, Winter 1922-Spring 1923
   crayon on board
   21 1/8 x 16 15/16 inches

52. The Law Is Too Slow, 1923
   lithograph
53. Girl Sewing, circa Winter 1923
   crayon on paper
   12 _ x 10 1/8 inches

54. Sixteen East Gay Street, Summer 1923
   crayon on paper
   9 _ x 11 _ inches

55. The Appeal to the People, SummerFall 1923
   graphite, crayon and chalk on paper
   14 1/8 x 18 3/8 inches

56. The Dead Line, circa 1923
   crayon, pen and ink on paper
   12 x 10 7/8 inches

57. Energizing the Broken (Salvation Army), June 1924
   crayon, ink wash and brush, opaque watercolor
   and brush on paper
   17 15/16 x 17 7/8 inches

Additional paintings (Portland venue only)

58. An Island in the Sea, 1911
   oil on canvas
   34 1/4 x 44 3/8
   Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio. Gift of Howard B. Monett, 1952.025

59. Riverfront No. 1, 1915
   oil on canvas
   45 3/8 x 63 1/8
   Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio. Museum purchase, Howald Fund, 1951.011

60. Matinicus, 1916
   oil on canvas
   32 x 40
   Bequest of Elizabeth B. Noyce, 1996.38.1

61. Two Women, October 1924
   oil on canvas
   57 x 60

62. The Picket Fence, December 1924
   oil on canvas
   26 x 38 _
   Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Chauncey L. Waddell (Catherine Hughes, CClass of 1920), 1964.22

Potential additional works on paper (Portland venue only)

The Actress, undated
   lithograph on wove paper
   13 1/4 x 11 _ (image)
   15 7/16 x 13 1/8 (paper)
   Gift of James Augustine Healy, 1952.13

Head of Emma, Looking Down, circa 1923
   conte crayon on wove paper
   9 5/16 x 6 5/16 (paper)
   Gift of Chris Huntington and Charlotte McGill, 1994.37.2
In the Park, Dark, 1916
lithograph on wove paper
16 _ x 21 1/8 (image)
24 x 32 (paper)
Gift of Christopher Huntington, 1989.12

Letter from George Wesley Bellows...to...Sterner, Sep 01 1921
type on wove paper
10 1/2 x 8 (paper)
Gift of Christopher Huntington, 1981.1273.23

Letter from George Wesley Bellows...to...Sterner, Nov 02 1920
type on wove paper
11 x 8 _ (paper)
Gift of Christopher Huntington, 1981.1273.28

Letter from George Wesley Bellows...to...Sterner, undated
ink on wove paper
8 3/4 x 5 11/16 (paper)
Gift of Christopher Huntington, 1981.1273.10

Matinicus, 1916
lithograph on wove paper
9 3/4 x 11 3/4
Museum purchase with support from the Friends of the Collection, 1989.41

Matinicus,
etching on paper
9 1/4 x 11 1/8 (uneven)
Private collection, 22.1998.12

Mother and Children, 1916
lithograph on Japanese paper
10 7/8 x 11 1/8 (image)
14 1/2 x 14 1/4 (paper)
Gift of Chris Huntington, 1991.65

Road Workers, circa 1906
graphite on wove paper
4 15/16 x 7
Gift of Chris Huntington and Charlotte McGill, 1994.37.4

Sketch of Figures on a Beach, 1919
colored crayon on wove bond paper
4 1/4 x 6 1/2
Gift of Chris Huntington and Charlotte McGill, 1994.37.1

Under the El, circa 1906
graphite on paper
5 3/8 x 7 3/4
Gift of Chris Huntington and Charlotte McGill, 1994.37.3

Untitled (Family), undated
conte crayon on wove paper
5 1/2 x 7 1/2
Gift of Chris Huntington and Charlotte McGill, 1994.37.5

Editor's note: readers may also enjoy:

- Leaving the Country: George Bellows at Woodstock (11/19/03)
- Leaving for the Country: George Bellows at Woodstock (10/2/03)
- George Bellows: The Tragedies of War (8/9/03)
- George Bellows in Newport and Beyond (5/24/00)
- The Woodstock Art Colony (6/15/99)
George Bellows: The War Series (1/16/99)
An American Pulse: The Lithographs of George Wesley Bellows (1/99)
George Bellows: Love of Winter (12/6/97)
Ashcan Artists

and these books:


The Vibrant Metropolis: 88 Lithographs, By Carol Belanger Grafton. Published 2002 by Courier Dover Publications. 96 pages. ISBN:0486423042. Google Books says: "This handsome volume is an original selection of Bellow's best lithographs depicting a wide array of subjects, from portraits and nudes to street life and prize fighting. Brilliantly executed, richly evocative works include Nude in a Bed, Evening, In the Subway, Dempsey Through the Ropes, and Base Hospital." Google Books offers a Limited Preview of this book. For more information on this and other digitizing initiatives from publishers please click here and here.(left: front cover, The Vibrant Metropolis: 88 Lithographs, image courtesy Google Books)

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