

URS FISCHER MADAME FISSCHER

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1 FOREWORD

Presenting new perspectives on the François Pinault Collection to the public, through thematic exhibitions conceived by world-renowned curators; inviting the most influential artists of our era to invade the Palazzo with projects conceived specifically for the space, thus combining a retrospective dimension with in-situ creation: this alternating principle – from group exhibitions devoted to the *works* in the collection, to solo shows by today's most important *artists* – structures Palazzo Grassi's programming.

François Pinault decided on Urs Fischer to inaugurate this new cycle of one-man shows, thus becoming the first living artist to be the subject of a solo exhibition at Palazzo Grassi–Punta della Dogana–François Pinault Foundation.

Spread over the atrium and the *piano nobile* of the Palazzo, this exhibition is the artist's most important European show to date, and the first to present a look at Fischer's career over the past two decades. Conceived by Urs Fischer and Caroline Bourgeois, this exhibition, entitled "Madame Fisscher," is on display from April 15 to July 15, 2012. It brings together works from numerous international collections. We hereby warmly thank all of the lenders who, through their generosity, made this project possible.

Madame Fisscher is accompanied by an extensive program of cultural activities, developed in close collaboration with Urs Fischer: the publication of two books conceived and edited by the artist; film screenings in the two auditoriums of the main staircase; workshops in collaboration with students from the Accademia delle Belle Arti di Venezia; a program of guides and documentation specially designed to accompany each visitor through the exhibition; a talk with Urs Fischer, open to the public (part of our monthly program of talks with artists)...

The next exhibition at Palazzo Grassi will take place during the last trimester of 2012 and will address a dimension of the François Pinault Collection that has not previously been given much exposure in Venice: that of videos and artist films.

All the while, *In Praise of Doubt* will continue at Punta della Dogana until December 31, 2012. Since the opening of this show in April, Palazzo Grassi–Punta della Dogana–François Pinault Collection has welcomed nearly 300,000 visitors.

Martin Bethenod
Director of Palazzo Grassi – Punta della Dogana
François Pinault Foundation

2 THE EXHIBITION MADAME FISSCHER

Bringing together over 30 works spread over 2,000 square metres, Urs Fischer's monographic exhibition unfolds throughout the atrium and first floor of Palazzo Grassi. The works selected come from several international collections, including the artist's own and, of course, that of the François Pinault Foundation. Together, they present the artist's career from the late '90s to today, including new productions shown here for the first time as well as works created in collaboration with Georg Herold—one of Fischer's former professors—and a sculptural project installed in the public space of the city, organized in collaboration with students from the Venice Academy of Fine Arts.

This exhibition presents an overview of the career and the philosophical foundations of an artist widely considered one of the most important contemporary sculptors. The unique quality of this artist's work stems from the way in which he seizes ordinary objects (Fischer's favourite working material) and transforms their meaning through the use of highly diverse techniques and materials, in an approach that often resembles that of collage.

Combining illusion and reality, violence and humour, eternity and the ephemeral, Urs Fischer's universe is both logical and absurd. The artist attempts to capture an unstable equilibrium whose meaning is never definitively set. For instance, the exhibition's title, "Madame Fisscher," is borrowed from the name of an installation, the first that the visitor will encounter in the museum. The game suggested by this title and its spelling participates in this same logic of misappropriation: does it refer to the artist, to his companion, or to his mother? Or perhaps to Madame Tussaud and her famous wax museum? Eliciting simultaneously surprise, laughter, and doubt, the exhibition plays on a vast array of sensations.

The work *Madame Fisscher* sets the tone for the exhibition. It opens its doors onto a space, that of the studio that Fischer had kept in London, whose walls and contents, minutely reconstituted here, literally become sculptural. Within this space, the visitor can physically experience the artist's creative process, which unfolds in stark contrast with Jeff Koons' *Balloon Dog*. This dialogue with Koons' sculpture (the quintessential "finished" work, also on display in the Palazzo's atrium) puts into perspective Fischer's own creative philosophy, in which the classical order of priorities is reversed, and the phase of conception is as important, if not more, as that of completion.

On the first floor, the scenography allows us to rediscover the structure and circulation of Palazzo Grassi at the time when it was still a private residence, thanks to the reopening by the artist of different passageways, notably those on the Grand Canal. This installation creates a central axis, which produces a mirroring effect: the works on display on each side of this axis echo one another. We have the deconstructed domestic object of *In Dubio pro reo* (2007); the game with the chairs (a favourite motif in Fischer's oeuvre) in *The Lock* (2007) and *A Thing Called Gear-*

box (2004); or finally, the recurrence of works that rely on motorized mechanisms, such as *Nach Jugendstil kam Roccoko* (2006), “*Mr. Watson—come here—I want to see you.*” (2005), *Keep It Going Is a Private Thing* (2001), and *A Sigh Is the Sound of My Life* (2000–01).

This resonance allows us to perceive an implicit movement. In fact, throughout his work Urs Fischer has always exalted movement. He is undoubtedly the great sculptor of suspended time.

Caroline Bourgeois
Curator

3 SITE-SPECIFIC PROJECTS

For his exhibition *Madame Fisscher* at Palazzo Grassi, Urs Fischer wished to complete various special projects to enrich the exhibition.

The first consists in the realization, outside Palazzo Grassi, of works designed in collaboration with students from the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice. This project, inspired by the installation he made in Tilburg in Netherlands in 2011, will be installed in Venice's public spaces. It bears witness to Palazzo Grassi's commitment to investing external spaces, in order to communicate with the city and its inhabitants by opening a window onto its contents.

The artist asked students of the Academy enrolled in Professor Gaetano Mainenti's Decoration Class to produce small clay sculptures, relating to an idea he proposed. The sculptures will be made directly on the site where they will be exhibited—green areas of Venice, far from the usual tourist paths, such that the public will discover them by chance.

The emotion of surprise is at the heart of Fischer's creative process. In this project, the final appearance of the sculptures is not determined by the initial project. Instead, it takes shape as different hands contribute different forms. The value of this operation resides in the expressive urgency of the students, who must work with ideas and materials to which they aren't accustomed, thus obtaining unexpected results. Urs Fischer, a renowned artist, establishes a creative dialogue between himself and the younger generation.

The sculptures, produced throughout the day of the exhibition's inauguration, will dissolve over time, following the natural degradation process of clay. The works will be located on Google Map, described and updated daily on a website also created by the students: <http://www.decorazione.org/progetti/aplaceforurs.html>

This initiative constitutes another opportunity to consolidate the already well-established dialogue between Palazzo Grassi and Venice's various cultural institutions, especially the Academy of Fine Arts with which several collaborations have taken place since 2007.

The other two special projects take place inside Palazzo Grassi: in the two cinema rooms in which Urs Fischer chose to screen a series of films that he selected himself and in the museum's café, where posters of his previous exhibitions will be on display.

4 PUBLICATIONS AND READING ROOM

The exhibition catalogue of *Madame Fisscher* is designed and published by the artist himself.

It contains texts by Caroline Bourgeois, Patricia Falguieres and Michele Robecchi, and a wide selection of installation views made at Palazzo Grassi at the public opening of the exhibition. It will be published in three languages, French, Italian and English, and will be available from May 30, 2012.

For the opening of the exhibition *Madame Fisscher*, the catalogue “Shovel in a Hole,” published by the New Museum in New York and JRP Ringier in 2009 for the exhibition *Urs Fischer: Marguerite de Ponty* will be reedited. This book, also designed by the artist, provides a comprehensive overview of his work: works, installation views, pictures of his studio and special projects in more than 400 illustrations.

Two other catalogues will be also published : “Necrophonia” - the exhibition catalog by Urs Fischer and Georg Herold at the Modern Institute in 2011 - and “Skinny Sunrise” - the catalogue of the exhibition at the Kunsthalle Wien in February 2012, containing an interview by Gerald Matt in German and English.

All these books and other exhibition catalogues, articles and interviews with Urs Fischer will be available at the end of the show in the reading room open to all visitors who wish to deepen their visit. Is also available to the public a documentary film, made in 2010 and tracing the preparation for the first solo exhibition of Urs Fischer in the U.S. and showing its main productions and exhibitions of the past six years from Venice to London, from Sydney to Zurich and Shanghai.

In addition, Palazzo Grassi has established a partnership with the Department of History of Art at Ca 'Foscari, in order to provide visitors with a service of cultural mediators selected and professionally trained to answer all their questions.

5 ARTIST TALK WITH URS FISCHER, JUNE 20, 2012

The François Pinault Foundation continues the cycle of monthly artist talks , with artists whose works are presented in the exhibitions at Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana.

Each meeting allows the artist to converse with an Italian art world professional – university professor, art critic, curator, director various institutions.

After Boris Mikhailov, Francesco Vezzoli and Adel Abdessemed, from January to March 2012, Punta della Dogana will host a meeting with Giuseppe Penone on May 23, 2012. The artist Urs Fischer, protagonist of the show *Madame Fisscher*, in a conversation with Francesco Bonami, will close the cycle of meetings on June 20, 2012.

These meetings are integral to Palazzo Grassi's commitment to supporting artists and to facilitating their exchanges with the public. This program aims to emphasize the artists' thoughts and words, continuing in the trajectory traced by the exhibitions' catalogues, which include interviews with the artists, as well as by its website. With this public initiative, Palazzo Grassi becomes a real workshop for the exchange of knowledge, enabling conversation between artists, academics and the wider public.

6 THE SECOND FLOOR OF PALAZZO GRASSI: A SELECTION OF WORKS FROM THE FRANÇOIS PINAULT COLLECTION

The second floor of Palazzo Grassi brings together a selection of works from the François Pinault Collection, by 14 artists from different generations and origins, from Alighiero Boetti to Sigmar Polke, from Maurizio Cattelan to Lee Ufan, including three site-specific productions (Giuseppe Penone, Rudolf Stingel and Takashi Murakami).

The artists included in the exhibition are

Alighiero Boetti
Frédéric Bruly Bouabré
Maurizio Cattelan
David Claerbout
Marlene Dumas
Ger Van Elk
Urs Fischer
Lee Ufan
Takashi Murakami
Giuseppe Penone
Sigmar Polke
Charles Ray
Rudolf Stingel
Jonathan Wateridge

A special issue of *Beaux-Arts* magazine (52 pages, 10€) presents the works exhibited on the second floor and the architecture of the palazzo. It contains in particular texts by Martin Bethenod and Giandomenico Romanelli and a wide portfolio of illustrations.

7 THE EXHIBITION *IN PRAISE OF DOUBT* AT PUNTA DELLA DOGANA

From April 10, 2011, Punta della Dogana is exhibiting *In Praise of Doubt*, also curated by Caroline Bourgeois.

This exhibition brings together historical pieces and new works which question the idea of uncertainty, our convictions about identity, and revisit the relationship between private space and the space of the artwork.

Among the 20 artists shown in the exhibition *In Praise of Doubt*, almost half had never been included in previous exhibitions of the Francois Pinault Collection. The exhibition presents newly commissioned works by Julie Mehretu and Tatiana Trouvé, specially created for the site.

The artists include:

Adel Abdessemed
Marcel Broodthaers
Maurizio Cattelan
Chen Zhen
Subodh Gupta
David Hammons
Roni Horn
Thomas Houseago
Donald Judd
Edward Kienholz
Jeff Koons
Paul McCarthy
Julie Mehretu
Bruce Nauman
Sigmar Polke
Charles Ray
Thomas Schütte
Sturtevant
Tatiana Trouvé

The exhibition *In Praise of Doubt* is open to the public until December 31, 2012.

8 EXHIBITIONS AT PALAZZO GRASSI AND PUNTA DELLA DOGANA SINCE APRIL 2006

April 29, 2006 – October 1, 2006

Opening of Palazzo Grassi, *Where Are We Going?*, first exhibition of a sélection of Works from the François Pinault Foundation, curated by Alison Gingeras.

November 11, 2006 – March 11, 2007

Exhibitions *Picasso, la joie de vivre. 1945-1948*, curated by Jean-Louis Andral and *François Pinault Collection: a Post-Pop selection*, curated by Alison Gingeras.

May 5, 2007 – November 11, 2007

Sequence 1 – Painting and Sculpture from the François Pinault Collection, curated by Alison Gingeras.

January, 26 2008 – July 20, 2008

Rome and the Barbarians, the Birth of a New World, curated by Jean-Jacques Aillagon.

September 27, 2008 – March 22, 2009

Italics. Italian Art between Tradition and Revolution, 1968-2008, curated by Francesco Bonami.

June 6, 2009 – April 10, 2011

Opening of Punta della Dogana, *Mapping the Studio. Artists from the François Pinault Collection* at Punta della Dogana and Palazzo Grassi, curated by Francesco Bonami and Alison Gingeras.

April 10, 2011 – December 31, 2012

In Praise of Doubt at Punta della Dogana, curated by Caroline Bourgeois.

June 2, 2011 – February 21, 2012

The World Belongs to You at Palazzo Grassi, curated by Caroline Bourgeois.

April 15, 2012 – July 15, 2012

Madame Fisscher, solo exhibition by Urs Fischer at Palazzo Grassi, curated by Caroline Bourgeois.

9 BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARIES

François Pinault

François Pinault was born on August 21, 1936, in Champs-Geraux in Brittany. He established his first wood business in Rennes in 1963. Subsequently, he widened the scope of his activities to include wood importing and, eventually, manufacturing, sales, and retailing.

In 1988, the Pinault group went public on the French stock market.

In 1990 François Pinault decided to refocus the group's activities on specialized sales and retailing and to withdraw from the wood business. From then on the group began to acquire other companies: first the CFAO (Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale), a leader in sales and distribution in sub-Saharan Africa; then Conforama, a leader in the household goods field, La Redoute, leader in the French mail-order business. Renamed PPR, the group expanded its portfolio with the acquisition of FNAC.

In 1999, PPR became the third largest firm in the luxury-goods sector worldwide, after acquiring the Gucci Group (Gucci, Yves Saint-Laurent, Bottega Veneta, Sergio Rossi, Boucheron, Stella McCartney, Alexander McQueen, and Balenciaga).

In 2007, the Group seized a new opportunity for growth when it acquired Puma, a leading brand in sports/lifestyle goods. Thus, PPR continues to develop its activities in key markets, where it is present in major, recognized brands.

At the same time, François Pinault has pursued a plan of investment in companies with strong growth potential in sectors outside the specialized retailing and luxury goods fields covered by PPR. In 1992, he created Artemis, a private company entirely owned by the Pinault family. Artemis controls the Château-Latour vineyard in Bordeaux, the news magazine *Le Point* and the daily newspaper *l'Agefi*. François Pinault also controls the auction house Christie's, a world leader in the art market, as well as being a controlling shareholder in the Bouygues Group and Vinci. François Pinault is also the owner of a French premiere league football team, Stade Rennais Football Club, and of the Théâtre Marigny in Paris. In 2003, François Pinault entrusted his group to his son François-Henri Pinault.

A great lover of art, and one of the largest collectors of contemporary art in the world, François Pinault has decided to share his passion with the greatest number of people possible. In May 2005, he acquired the prestigious Palazzo Grassi in Venice, where he presented a part of his collection during three exhibitions: *Where Are We Going?* (2006), *Post-Pop* (2007), and *Sequence 1* (2007). François Pinault was named the most influential person in the world of contemporary art for two years running (2006 and 2007) by the magazine *Art Review*. He was nominated President of the Comité Français in October 2008 and appointed International Adviser to the candidate selection committee for the Praemium Imperiale.

In June 2007 François Pinault was selected by the City of Venice to undertake the transformation of Punta della Dogana into a new center for contemporary art, where his collection will be on permanent display. Renovated by Tadao Ando, Punta della Dogana opened in June 2009 with the exhibition *Mapping the Studio* followed by *In Praise of Doubt* (2011-12) which was conceived to coincide with the exhibition *The World Belongs to You* (2011), presented simultaneously at Palazzo Grassi.

Solicited by many municipalities, public and private institutions, François Pinault also presents a part of his collection outside of Venice, for instance, the exhibition *Passage du Temps* at the Tripostal in Lille (2007), *Un certain Etat du Monde?* at the Melnikov Garage in Moscow (2009), *Qui a peur des artistes?* at Dinard in Brittany (2009) and *Agony and Ecstasy* at the SongEun Foundation in Seoul (2011).

Martin Bethenod

Martin Bethenod, 45, has been CEO and Director of Palazzo Grassi – Punta della Dogana, François Pinault Foundation since June 1st, 2010. He has previously held a number of positions in the fields of contemporary art and culture.

He began his career as Project Director for the Director of Cultural Affairs for the City of Paris (1993-1996), going on to work as Chief of Staff for the President of the Pompidou Centre (1996-1998), before creating and chairing the Direction of Publications at the Pompidou Centre (1998-2001).

After being Deputy Editor of *Connaissance des Arts* magazine (2001-2002), and then Culture and Lifestyle Editor at *French Vogue* (2002-2003), he worked at the French Ministry of Culture and Communication as Arts Delegate (2003-2004).

From 2004 to 2010 he was General Director of FIAC (International Contemporary Art Fair, Paris), which he steered to its current position as one of the most important international art events. In 2010 he was also in charge of the artistic direction of the *Nuit Blanche* in Paris, which garnered both critical and public acclaim.

Caroline Bourgeois

Born in Switzerland in 1959, Caroline Bourgeois graduated in psychoanalysis at Paris University in 1984. She directed Erick Franck Gallery in Switzerland from 1988 to 1993 and co-directed Jennifer Flay Gallery from 1995 to 1997.

From 1998 to 2001, she worked on contemporary art installations at metro train stations in Paris with a number of artists including Dominique Gonzales Foerster.

In 1998 she was appointed to be in charge of François Pinault Foundation's video collection. In this context she gave the collection broad horizons, thanks to several research programs and meetings with artists. These art installations are a history of the moving image.

In 2001 she worked on the production team of Pierre Huyghe's artworks for Biennale's French pavilion. She worked on at a number of independent projects as well, among which: the video program *Plus qu'une image* for the Nuit Blanche in Paris' first edition; the exhibition *Survivre à l'Apartheid* at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie during Paris photography month having *Emergences Resistances Resurgences* as theme (2002); the video collection production *Point of view: an Anthology of the Moving Image*, in association with New Museum of Contemporary Art (2003) and *Valie Export – an Overview*, travelling exhibition co-organized with Centre National de la Photographie (CNP) of Paris (2003-2004).

From 2004 to 2008 she was Art Director of Paris' Plateau, contemporary art centre. In 2008 she directed several exhibitions, including: *l'Argent*, *Joan Jonas*, *Cao Fei*, *Melik Ohanian*, *Adel Abdessemed*, *Loris Gréaud*. From 2007 to 2009 she curated three exhibitions for the François Pinault Foundation: *Passage du temps* at Lille's Tripostal (2007), *Un certain Etat du monde?* at the Garage Center for Contemporary Culture in Moscow (2009) and *Qui a peur des artistes?* in Dinard (2009) and in Venice *In Praise of Doubt* at Punta della Dogana (2011) and *The World Belongs to You* at Palazzo Grassi (2011).

Urs Fischer

Born in Zurich in 1973, Urs Fischer now lives and works in New York.

Characterized by Fischer's sense of humor, his penchant for the paradoxical, and the virtuosity of his execution, his abundant and generous oeuvre borrows simultaneously from an extraordinary diversity of both media (combining painting, sculpture, and installation) and materials (ranging from bronze and candle wax to mirrors and mechanical devices), in order to call into question the history of art and sculpture, our relationship to our bodies and to intimacy, and the status of the object.

Fischer's work has been exhibited in a variety of international institutions, including the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London (2000), the Stedelijk Museum Bureau in Amsterdam (2000), the Kunsthaus Glarus (2000), the Santa Monica Museum of Art (2002), the Centre Pompidou in Paris (2004), the Kunsthaus in Zurich (2004), Fondazione Nicola Trussardi in Milan (2005), and the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam (2006). More recently, an exhibition at the New Museum in New York, *Urs Fischer: Marguerite de Ponty* (2009), presented works created over four years and was the first exhibition to take over the entirety of the museum's space since it reopened in its new building in 2007. In 2012, three exhibitions have been dedicated to the work of Urs Fischer: *Skinny Sunrise* at the Kunsthalle Wien, *Beds & Problem Paintings* at the Gagosian Gallery Beverly Hills and *Schmutz Schmutz* at the Gagosian Gallery Paris.

Works by Urs Fischer have been included in every exhibition at Palazzo Grassi since its reopening, from *Where Are We Going?* (2006) to *The World Belongs to You* (2011). Also in Venice, his work was presented at the visual art Biennales in 2003, 2007, and 2011.

He exhibits regularly at Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich; Sadie Coles HQ, London; Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York; and The Modern Institute, Glasgow.

10 GENERAL INFORMATION

Palazzo Grassi

Campo San Samuele 3231
30124 Venice
Vaporetto stops: San Samuele (line 2),
Sant' Angelo (line 1)

Punta della Dogana

Dorsoduro, 2
30123 Venice
Vaporetto stop: Salute (ligne 1)

Tel: + 39 041 523 1680
Fax: + 39 041 528 6218
Infoline: 199 139 139

More information on opening hours, prices and activities of Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana is available on the website:
www.palazzograssi.it

Opening Hours

Palazzo Grassi

Madame Fisscher
April 15, 2012 – July 15, 2012
Open every day except Tuesday
from 10am to 7pm.
Last entrance at 6pm.

Punta della Dogana

In Praise of Doubt
April 10, 2011 – December 31, 2012
Open every day except Tuesday
from 10am to 7pm.
Last entrance at 6pm.

Ticket Office

The entrance ticket for both exhibitions is valid for three days.

- Full rate: 20€ for two museums / 15€ for one museum
- Discounted rate: 15€ for two museums / 10€ for one museum
- Free: children Under 11, Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana members, 3 adults for every school group of 25 students, 1 guide for every group of 15 adults, the disabled, chartered tour guides by the City of Venice, journalists (upon presentation of press ID valid for the current year), the unemployed.

Booking, presales and guided tours

Call center vivaticket
www.vivaticket.it
By phone from Monday to Friday
from 8am to 8pm and Saturday
from 8am to 1pm (paying call)
From Italy / 199 139 139
From abroad / + 39 041 2719039
For any further information
about the guided tours, please contact:
Associazione guide turistiche autorizzate
di Venezia
Tel: + 39 041 5209038
guide@guidevenezia.it
www.guidevenezia.it

st_art project

st_art is an educational program for schools and families who wish their children to embark on a path of discovery of contemporary art. Art labs and itineraries are suited to each age group's needs. For school groups, on booking by email: scuole@palazzograssi.it by phone, via vivaticket
> from Italy: 199 139 139
> from abroad: + 39 041 2719039
For all children from 4 to 10 years, every Saturday afternoon at Palazzo Grassi or Punta della Dogana, on booking by phone: +39 041 24 01 304

The website

Palazzo Grassi's website offers a variety of tools to enrich your visits to Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana. It features interactive maps of the exhibition, information about each installation, as well as exclusive interviews with Caroline Bourgeois and several of the artists, made during the exhibition's installation. Furthermore, the section "Rendez-vous" of the website offers a comprehensive schedule of all the initiatives organized at Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana (artist talks, weekly lectures L'Opera parla, st_art educational workshops, etc...).
www.palazzograssi.it

Palazzo Grassi and Dogana Shop

Situated on the ground floor of Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana, the bookshops are managed by the Italian publisher Electa, specialized in art and architecture publications. In the premises, fully designed by Tadao Ando, you may purchase the various catalogues illustrating Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana exhibitions as well as a wide range of art and architecture books and exclusive merchandising items.
Open from 9am to 7pm.
Tel: + 39 041 2412000

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MADAME FISSCHER

Venice, Palazzo Grassi
15/04/2012 – 15/07/2012

Exhibition curated by
Caroline Bourgeois

Visual Identity
Kühle und Mozer, Cologne

Graphic Design
Tassinari/Vetta
(Leonardo Sonnoli
with Irene Bacchi,
Anny Comello)

Guided Tours
Pierreci Codess

Education
Federica Pascotto / Saganaki

Dogana Shop
Electa

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