

LIFE-BOATS

A SAILING SCULPTURAL INSTALLATION IN FERROCEMENT



BY SCULPTOR **MARIT BENTHE NORHEIM** WWW.LIFE-BOATS.COM

CONCEPT DESCRIPTION LIFE-BOATS

A sailing sculptural installation in concrete with incorporated music by composer Geir Johnson, direct social participation and artistic exchange

I am in the process of creating three sculptures in concrete which will become functioning boats, shaped as female figures. They will be 12m in length and rise 3m over the surface of the water. The sailing figures will be propelled forward by electrical motors which will be charged with alternative energy.

The sculptures will become "floating cultural houses" and will sail on the European canals, which naturally lead the ships through the heart of the European cities that are built up around the old waterways. The project will not be related to the borders of the respective countries, but rather, will connect their cities together through a cultural exchange - which has always been a part of the history of Europe.

The three sailing sculptures will be launched in Aarhus in June 2016, and sail the first two seasons as ambassadors for Aarhus being The European Capital of Culture in 2017.

The towns that we dock at will be decided through agreements with the respective locations – and the networks that we are in the process of building up. Here, part of the idea is that there should be a cultural exchange, where every country meets us with

their own performance artists, musicians, etc.

The Life-boats project is about meetings – about exchange – about receiving foreign expressions – about daring to move into unknown territory and opening up into "intimate spheres". In addition, I

will, as with several of my previous projects, be using direct participation and direct involvement in the process, both in the production phase and on the journey.

I have always been interested in the manner of which populist, recognizable symbols

provide a portal into the irrational, and I have therefore several times worked with the symbol of the figurehead as a protection on many different levels. There has been a need for protective symbols for as long as humankind has travelled on water. These have changed over the course of history in relation to the trends and ideologies of the time. I want to find the stories of specific figureheads and their journeys, and work them into my own framework.

The figurehead in this instance should take over the entire boat, instead of keeping watch from the bow. She will become the boat itself.

The water, the boat/ship - and the act of sailing, contain many symbols that relate to life and passion, rebirth and death, overcoming and communi-

IT IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE OVERALL CONCEPT OF THE PROJECT THAT "LIFE-BOATS" BECOME AN OPEN NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK AND THAT IT ESTABLISHES AN ARTISTIC EXCHANGE. THE SCULPTURES WILL FUNCTION AS MOBILE CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS.

Front page: "My ship is loaded with Life" is one its way outside



PHOTO MONTAGE OF LIFE-BOATS MODELS IN 1:5

CONCEPT DESCRIPTION LIFE-BOATS

cation on many levels. Each "Life - boats" character and its interior will relate to this. The audience in the towns that the boats will be docking, will be able to go on board and experience the installations within the sculptures.

The overriding theme is communication

The overall aim of the Life-boats project is to create new kinds of dissemination of art and culture. That is why we will be establishing, coordinating and planning exchanges on many different levels.

Women use their bodies to develop, protect and nourish life, both physically and intellectually, until it is viable. These are values that I, as a woman, want to keep elevated and visible in our pessimistic times, where fellowship needs to be emphasised. By doing this I want to demonstrate, what we can achieve together, and that we are dependent on both giving and receiving care and protection.

The figurehead as a protection against unknown dangers will be a reminder and an admission that we need the irrational and spiritual aspect in our meeting with the world. - A reality where all the unknowns have come closer through our communica-

tion possibilities, both digitally and physically.

Subtitle: "My ship is loaded with..." :

Each sculpture has its own identity and narrative. The individual titles are: My ship is loaded with Longing, - with Life and - with Memories. (- Based on a scandinavian word game, often played whilst travelling)

The sculptural group, Life - boats will comprise three female boats, where the preliminary overriding theme will be woman in the three phases of life;

1. Longing - the young one, entering the world
2. Life - in the middle of life and fertilised
3. Memories - the aging or the dead

These biological components of the female reality are the same for all women in all cultures. Obvious, but nevertheless full of incomprehensible and irrational magic.



"MY SHIP IS LOADED WITH LIFE" IS MOVED OUTSIDE, AND "MY SHIP IS LOADED WITH LONGING" IN THE BACKGROUND

INVOLVEMENTS LIFE-BOATS

Social participation is often an important component in Marit Benthe Norheims concept building, where the participation of the local population has resulted in direct involvement e.g. in 'The Lady of the Sea', where 905 children and young people between the ages of 3 - 16, worked with protection figures in ceramics and glass, which were then inlaid as a mosaic into the body of the sculpture.

In the 'Rat Maiden' sculpture www.rottejomfruen.no for the National Ibsen jubilee in Norway, 2006, 2318 children and youths participated in the process. They ended up making eyes in porcelain which were incorporated into the 7m high concrete figure. In addition, the sculpture has a slide, which can be used by both children and adults. Inside the sculpture one can hear music, written by the composer Geir Johnson.

This form of participation was transferred to the 'Campingwomen' project, made in collaboration with the European Capital of Culture, Stavanger 2008

LIFE-BOATS WILL INVOLVE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AS BOTH CULTURAL CREATORS AS WELL AS CULTURAL CONSUMERS.

Two of the five 'Campingwomen' have wallpaper made out of collected camping and wedding pictures. One of them is filled with a porcelain relief about fleeing, made by children and refugee women working together. www.campingwomen.com

In this Life-boats project She will also, as described in the chapter with the subtitle "My ship is loaded with", use participation of a variety of population groups.

Why involve children and young people?

"It is important for me when I involve children and young people in my projects that they should not just "do" but that they are made aware of the creative process - of thinking for themselves - of finding their own expression and sticking with it. This is why the schools have worked in parallel with me on a variety of related themes - also in many different subjects. This project will involve children and youths as cultural players, cultural creators and cultural consumers."

Marit Benthe Norheim has a singular ability to involve both children and adults in her huge projects. With great seriousness and commitment, she manages to both communicate her visions as well as being completely open and unbiased in her approach to the people that she includes in her work.

She has, as an artist, a unique respect for the expressiveness that children contribute, and she succeeds in creating enthusiasm, ownership – and above all else, meaning in the artworks that she creates

Head of Tourism, Inger Grund Petersen, Sæby



"THE LADY OF THE SEA, SÆBY, DENMARK

INSIDE OF THE LIFE-BOATS

"My ship is loaded with Longing"

She lies on her side, with her hips as the cabin. She will have a treasure chest inside her body

The treasure chest is decorated with true pearls and prisms, with a letter opening, so that the people we meet will have a chance to deliver letters with their dreams, hopes and longings for storage in this chest. These could be texts that they write in their encounter with the sculpture or letters that they have lying around.

In the roof there will be a large prism, which will send light into the space of the body.

The eyes will be made of glass, that will let some light into her head, which will be used as a seat.



" My ship is loaded with Life"

She floats on her back - fertilised - with her pregnant belly as the cabin.

Here we will ask some children and young people from every country that we sail to, to model a self portrait in ceramics. I want to have the greatest possible diversity of nations and cultures represented. We will collect the reliefs, when we arrive in the various docks and fix them into place in the boat.

The photo shows the inside of the model on a scale of 1:5, where children have created self portraits on a scale of 1:5 as a test of the resulting mosaic.



" My ship is loaded with Memories"

She travels on her belly, full of small figureheads on her back, so that they can maintain watch in all directions.

This ship will be built out of many composite notions of women, based on a variety of portraits of women from the participating countries. The women will be over 70 and will have a history which means that they will have travelled and lived in countries other than their own – and for different reasons. We will include interviews with refugee women and immigrant women from as many different cultures as possible – living in the participating countries. The interviews will be about belonging and identification and will be made available to the public audio visually inside the sculpture.

THE JOURNEYS OF LIFE-BOATS

The journeys in Scandinavia and on the European waterways.

The journeys can be undertaken over the course of many years during the summer seasons.

The three sailing sculptures will be launched in June 2016 in the harbor of Aarhus, They will sail the first two years as ambassadors for Aarhus, being the European Capital of Aarhus 2017.

Then Life-boats will have their home harbor in Aalborg for a few years, sailing out from there. Several possible routes can take place at different times. One could be a Nordic journey, the other an Eastern European and the third a West European canal journey. Our map shows the canals and rivers of Europe.

MANY COUNTRIES AND CITIES, IN SCANDINAVIA AND BOTH WEST AND EAST EUROPE HAVE ALREADY SHOWN INTEREST IN ORDER TO GET A VISIT FROM LIFE BOATS

Life-boats aims to show how life can be lived and how one can be transported without causing irreversible consequences for future life. Lifeboats are CO2 neutral. The motors are battery driven electrical motors, which can be recharged with energy that is produced by sustainable energy sources.

Life-boats will be living proof of the fact that it is possible to travel in a CO2-neutral manner and will hopefully help to convince us that a future without coal, oil and atomic power is a realistic possibility. Art can be an eye opener. Even in the context of climate.

Elsebeth Gerner Nielsen, Rector Design School
Kolding and previous Minister of Culture, Denmark

On this canal map one can see the towns that already has shown interest in a visit from Life-boats. (marked with red)

SKAGEN, SÆBY, ÅLBORG, RANDERS, ÅRHUS, FREDERICIA, SØNDERBORG, AABENRAA, FLENSBORG, HESINGØR, AND COPENHAGEN.
BERGEN, OSLO, THE TELEMAR CHANNEL, WARSAWA, KRAKOW AND SEVERAL CITIES ALONG THE WISTULA RIVER IN POLAND

In addition there are several cities along the canals of Europe waiting to be contacted (marked in yellow)

THE LUBECKER CHANNELS, BERLIN, AMSTERDAM, GHENT, BRUSSELS, PARIS, MARSEILLES AND THE SWEDISH CHANNELS



In our times, where opinions, affiliation and positioning are used as resources to wield power, I see one of the key tasks of art as being to establish dialogues in different situations.

Marit Benthe Norheim

COLLABORATING PARTNERS **LIFE-BOATS**

Danish collaborating partners:

- **Aarhus European Capital of Culture 2017**
- **Region Northern Jutland**
- **Region South Denmark**
- **Aalborg Portland**
- **Aalborg University**
- **Else Marie Bukdahl**, Dr. Phil former Rector of the Danish Royal Academy of Art
- **Elsebeth Gerner Nielsen**, Rector of Design School Kolding and former Danish Minister of Culture
- **Erik Foldager**, Ferrocement boat builder
- **Frederikshavn Municipality**
- **Hjørring Municipality**
- **Jens Frimann**, leader of the project Helsingør Theatre and www.hjemstav.com -cultural diversity as a resource in art.
- **Krogh Andersen** Signs and Advertising, Hjørring
- **Kvinno** - marking af Kvindernes Stemmeret 2015
- **Lars T. Olsen**, Ships engineer, CDE Danish Marine Design ApS, Copenhagen
- **The Norwegian embassy in Copenhagen**
- **The print workshop** in Hjørring
- **University College** Northern Jutland, Aalborg
- **Utzon Center**, Aalborg
- **Women's museum**, Aarhus

International collaborating partners:

- **Park Teateret**, Oslo - collaborating with:
- **Trans Europe Halles (TEH)** a European based network of cultural centres initiated by citizens and artists that advocates and promotes culture, makes accessible its knowledge and encourages new centres and initiatives. With more than 70 members and associates all over Europe, the network functions as a dynamic forum for ideas, experiences and exchange, supporting its members and their communities. Trans Europe Halles contributes to building a sustainable future for the independent cultural sector. <http://teh.net/>
- **The Norwegian Composers Union**
- **Bergen international Festival**, by Chief Executive & Artistic Director Anders Beyer
- **Holger Koefoed**, Art Historian and writer and principal of the Oslo National Academy of Arts.
- **Jorunn Veiteberg**, Dr. Phil, Art historian, curator, writer and Professor at the Bergen National Academy of the Arts
- **Josefine Visescene**, Oslo

- **Mary Miller**, General & Artistic Director of Bergen National Opera, Norway and former Director, Stavanger 2008
- **Norwegian Maritime Museum**, Oslo
- **Notam**, Norwegian Center for Technology in music and the arts
- **The Channels of Telemark, Norway**
- **Deutsch-Dänische Zusammenarbeit**, Flensburg, Germany
- **Grzegorz L. Duszyski**, an experienced Polish cultural organizer has communicated a great desire from the Polish side, to collaborate on the project and its cultural exchange.
- The **Polish street theatre KTO**, Krakow, Poland

Preliminary collaborating artist:

- **Geir Johnson**, composer, is writing the music for the insides of the Life-boats sculptures
- **Kjetil Berge**, Visual artist
- **Michael Richardt Petersen**, performance artist
- **Peter Kuchinke**, glass maker, made the eyes for the three Life-boats sculptures
- **Inge Tranter**, translator, photographer,
- **Joan Grønfeldt Kristensen**, Mygdal Pottmageri
- **Jørn Siemen Øverli**, a balladsinger and leader of the Norwegian Polish project Karuzela
- **Ruth Wilhelmine Meyer**, Singer/Vocal artist
- **Sandro Masai**, dancer
- **Tonje TT**, Walking Mermaid, composer, musician

In this project she has found new solutions to the relationship between sculpture, movement and music in order to be able to appeal to the viewers' feelings and fantasy and draw them into the magic circle of the artwork. In a world, where there are often contrasts between ethnic groups and nationalities, the "Lifeboats" will create new life affirming relations between people and symbolise a desire for fellowship and respect for one another, which is always at the top of our agenda, but which has often been difficult to realise.

Dr. Phil. Else Marie Bukdahl, former Rector of the Danish Royal Academy of Art.

TARGETS **LIFE-BOATS**

Children, youths, an adult art audience and an audience of random passersby, or people that the sculptures sail past – who do not expect an art experience. Both those who seek out the project as well as those who are sought out will have unexpected experiences.

The project relates to the common human condition, with a desire for inclusion and not segregation of the various population groups, ages, etc. Because the sculptures relate to basic experiences and stages that people move through. From young, the fertile to the aging or dying, the target group includes children, young people and adults in all age groups.

In one of the boats as many people/nationalities will be involved as possible, from all the countries that we sail to. By doing this, I hope that we can open a dialogue and interest in each others' experiences

and memories.

The sculptural ships will be used in connection with tourism, both at the launch ceremony, the journeys as well as between journeys, when the boats are docked, but can still be opened to the public.

The private sector is also a part of the target audience and is included in both the construction process as well as the development of technical skills and craftsmanship. Ferrocement boats must function both practically as well as artistically. The project will use different types of technology and research within engineering, building and construction as well as communications.

Cultural institutions and educational institutions are the target groups and collaborative partners for the collection and dissemination of knowledge and experience of the artistic and ship technical process regarding the journeys and the exchanges both artistically and culturally.

I AM HOPING FOR THAT PEOPLE WILL SEE THAT IRRATIONAL AND - AT THE OUTSET - MAD VISIONS CAN BE REALISED. THAT BELIEF CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS. THAT ONE CAN EMBARK ON UNKNOWN JOURNEYS IN AND OUTSIDE OF ONESELF AND CREATE A FOUNDATION OF VALUE IN THE SERVICE OF CULTURE, WHICH CREATES OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIFTING AND CARRYING TOGETHER.



BUILDING PROCESS IN MYGDAL SHIPYARD

THE MUSIC FOR LIFE-BOATS

The Norwegian composer Geir Johnson:

"During the last fifteen years I have worked out a lot of music to Marit Benthe Norheim's sculptures. Some have been implemented for the unveiling and inauguration. Others have been mounted inside her sculptures - and some have been pure sound installations - music to accompany the sculptures. When she asked me to compose music for Life-Boats, it was soon clear to me that I would need to consider at least two different tasks. One would be to create music that follows the sculptural boats on the journey, and which is mounted inside the boats, while the other will be the music used when the Life-boats come to their port calls elsewhere.

This time I decided to take on the first task, to create music that is in the boats, and which will face the public when they enter the boat, or which may accompany the crew on trips.

In this music I'm interested in mythical conditions, such as the Sirens' song of Odysseus: What was it really he heard, that was so beautiful that he had to bind himself to the mast? But music which is based on man's relationship with the sea has many other points of departure. One can also ask the question about the world of sounds that have followed the sailors at all times when they crossed the oceans, home from the trade mission or from looting, with spices and fine fabrics, or with slaves and booty. And in all this, the seafarers' own music, which often expressed longing for another life, and the songs of those who sat at home, and as expected, perhaps in vain for one who never came back.

As a textual basis, I work for example with texts by Enheduanna, the world's oldest-known poet, who was the princess and priestess in the city of UR in Mesopotamia about 4,000 years ago.



THE "CAMPINGWOMEN" STOP AT BLOKHUS BEACH ON THEIR FIRST JOURNEY TOWARDS STAVANGER 2008

This is the starting point for the music that will fill the three Life-boats of Marit Benthe Norheim, where hardly anything is going to be recognizable, but where the elements of this will be to rediscover in the creative process."

Vocal performer Ruth Wilhelmine Meyer

The vocal performer Ruth Wilhelmine Meyer has started a new piece of work in relation to the Life-boats journeys, where she will involve the audience directly into her musical performances/happenings, called "Life-sounds". Her musical language is communicative and contains roots from classical and ethnic traditions. She is exploring vocal combinations of both. Below is extracts from her concept description

Life-boats become Life-sounds

"It radiates so powerfully from the boats of Marit Benthe Norheim that they must get answers from living women on land. The boat sculptures must be transformed into social sound sculptures: Life-sounds

The boats - "Longing", "Life", and "Memories" must meet children, pregnant women and women over 70 when they dock. We must hear the sound of this meeting. We must hear children's voices of the most peculiar varieties, elderly people humming an old song from their shared musical heritage and very importantly, we must hear the sound of unborn life: many pregnant women gathered with contact microphones on their bellies so that we can all hear it together. That is how we become bound together in a communal sound sculpture.

This is universal, indivisibly connected to the life cycle and life experiences. Powerful and inviolable.

THE ARTIST BEHIND LIFE-BOATS

Marit Benthe Norheim was born 1960 in Norway, and now lives in Denmark.

She studied at the Norwegian State Art Academy, Bergen, Norway, a Travelling Art Academy, throughout Europe including 5 months in Italy, and The Royal Academy of Art (MA), London. This led to her living and working in London from 1984 until 1995.

Benthe has given many group and solo shows, and has undertaken several large public commissions in Norway, Denmark, England Sweden, Iceland and Greenland.

Her work is held in the Public Collections of a.o. the Norwegian Contemporary Art Museum and the National Gallery of Art, Norway and the New Carlsberg Foundation, Denmark.

She has been lecturing at a number of Art Colleges, including Royal Academy of Art and Central Saint Martin School of Art, London.

Some of her large public sculptures include local community involvement, and two of them use themes from the female figures of Henrik Ibsen's writings. The first one is "Woman of the sea" at the harbour of Sæby, Denmark. The last one is the "Rat Virgin" from "Little Eyolf" a 7m. tall sculpture covered in a mosaic of porcelain eyes, made by 2300 children in Skien, for the Ibsen Anniversary 2006.

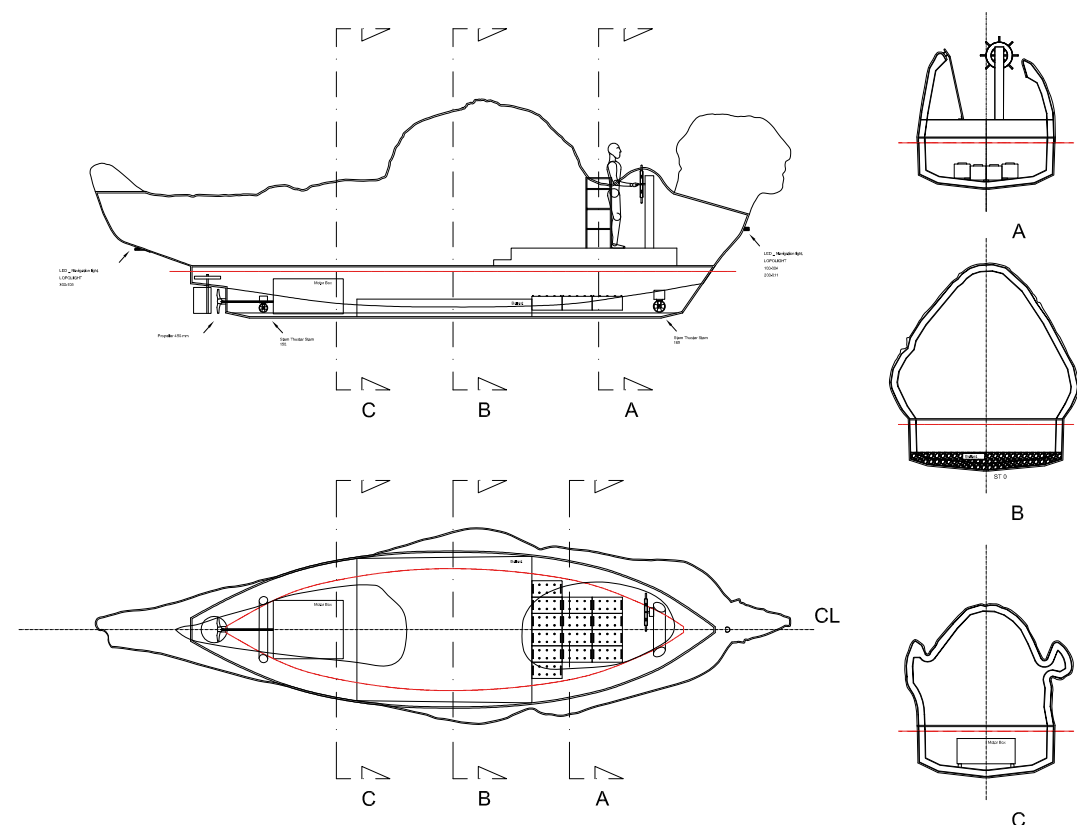
Leading up to Life-boats were her project "Campingwomen" for the European Capital of Culture, Stavanger 2008, Norway.

She has been preoccupied with the way popular, familiar symbols open up access to the irrational, and has therefore used a.o. angels or galleon figures. When combining these with a less accessible form of artistic expression, the contrasts often produce a fruitful result.

For more information about the artist, please visit

www.life-boats.com

www.campingwomen.com



TECHNICAL DRAWINGS FROM CDE DANISH MARINE DESIGN APS OF "MY SHIP IS LOADED WITH LONGING"

RECOMMENDATIONS **LIFE-BOATS**

excerpt from recommendations to the Life-boats project.

"LIFE-BOATS will be a sculptural and artistic manifestation of the European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017. In every way this is a Rethink project that fully lives up to the thoughts and visions of the ECoC. It is a project that rethinks art, culture, and communication. It is a project that invites everyone to take part and can create cultural encounters across Europe and also - literally - be flagship of our great cultural project in 2017,"

Gitte Just, former programme Director of Aarhus 2017

At a time of huge divisions in the European project, it is precisely this cross-border cultural exchange and powerful artistic projects like "Life-boats" that are capable of creating cohesion and cultural understanding. We need this – both politically and in commercial terms.

Inger Grund Petersen, Head of Tourism, Sæby, Denmark

- Her Caravan Women / Campingwomen, commissioned by Stavanger2008 - were emblematic of our vision, to bring international, national and regional artists together with the community to create exceptional and lasting projects.

Mary Miller, Director, Stavanger2008, European Capital of Culture

Many of Marit Benthe Norheim's monumental sculptures are mobile. Campingwomen is built on top of caravans and they have thus driven far and wide from Finnmark in the North to Iceland in the West and Denmark in the South. It is art that appeals to people in the places where they are, and which tackles existential and humanistic themes which never go out of fashion

Jorunn Veiteberg, Professor, at the Bergen National Academy of the Arts

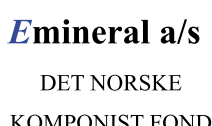
Marit Benthe Norheim's "Life-boats" is both a fascinating and intelligent journey, an open work, which does not unfold its meaning through an institution, but through a direct meeting with the audience. The work is an appeal or an invitation to the child, the audience, the viewer, the art museum, the city, the nation, to step in and become a part of it. An elementary, banal, trivial and archaic quality, which we may possibly have lost already in our efforts to encompass the entire world.

Jens Frimann Hansen, Director of Helsingør Theatre

There is an optimism and an energy here that we desperately need after economic crises and cultural depression. Nordic wanderlust has led to other ways of experiencing than by hoarding and this art project can become an image of the Nordic contribution to our common European culture which could create society and culture according to the Nordic model - politically, socially and artistically. This project is not ideology in solid form, but will function in a more open and inspirational way. There are alternatives, even in this day and age, which is so desperately in need of them.

Holger Koefoed, Art Historian and writer and principal of the Oslo National Academy of Arts,

Life-boats is until now supported by:



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