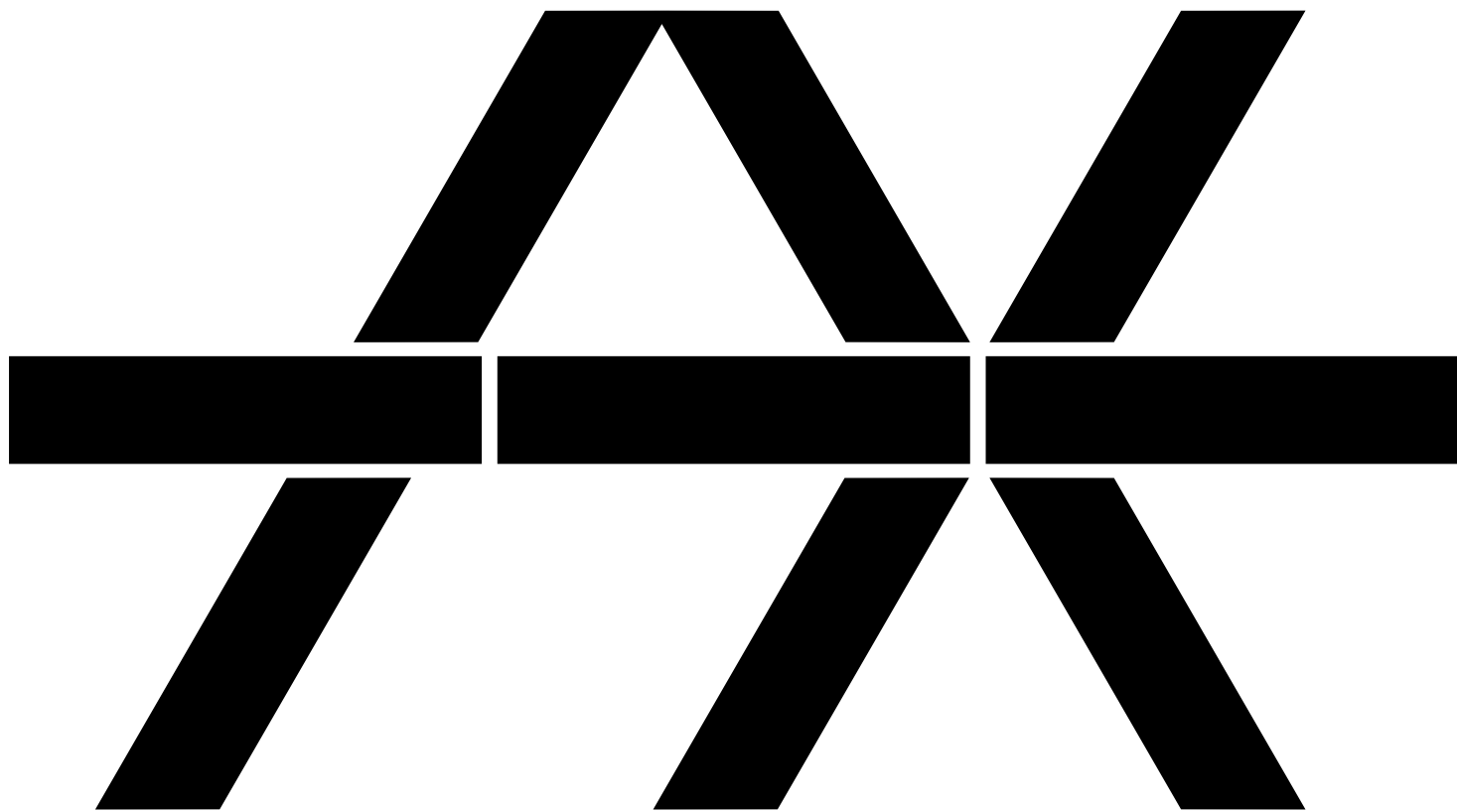




Together apart
The 70s and Aarau
12.6. – 6.9.2026



Foreword

Social and artistic conventions are turned upside down. A spirit of experimentation is in the air. In the 1970s, a new self-confidence emerges in the Swiss art world. Close to the pulse of the times and international developments, the art landscape begins to change. Vibrant art scenes come to life outside the major cities. In Aarau, the artists of the Ziegelrain studio collective (1967–1975) were among the driving forces behind these innovations. In a former factory, they set up a space for artistic experimentation to test new strategies and approaches.

The exhibition captures the spirit of new beginnings and shows how different styles, themes and media coexisted and inspired one another – both *together* and *apart*. Starting with the Aargau art scene of the time, the exhibition's route leads through Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme, conceptual approaches and other positions ranging from the local to the international. The exhibition highlights thematic focal points and reveals connections between local, regional, and international movements and artists. One focus is on collective forms of collaboration, jointly created works, friendships between artists, and networks.

Works by 55 artists in the fields of painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, and installation are on display. They come from the artists' own collections, from estates and, to a large extent, from the Aargauer Kunsthaut collection.

The exhibition occupies the entire ground floor and is complemented by a documentation space on the lower floor. We recommend following the route in a counterclockwise direction.

Featuring Marie-Claire Baldenweg, Heidi Bucher, Balthasar Burkhard, Gianfredo Comesi, Barbara Davatz, Monika Dillier, Martin Disler, Herbert Distel, Anton Egloff, Marianne Eigenheer, Helmut Federle, Peter Fischli, Franz Gertsch, Pierre Haubensak, Josef Herzog, Markus Kaufmann, Otto Kälin, Heiner Kielholz, Rosina Kuhn, Emma Kunz, Bernhard Lehner, Urs Lüthi, Manon, Max Matter, Willy Müller-Brittnau, Markus Müller, Olivier Mosset, Jakob Nielsen, Guido Nussbaum, Jean Pfaff, Vaclav Pozarek, Markus Raetz, Heiner Richner, Christian Rothacher, Dieter Roth, Hans Schärer, Philippe Schibig, Klaudia Schifferle, Jean-Frédéric Schnyder, Willy Spiller, Albert Siegenthaler, Daniel Spoerri, Hugo Suter, Harald Szeemann, André Thomkins, Jean Tinguely, Niele Toroni, Hannah Villiger, Ben Vautier, Aldo Walker, Ilse Weber, David Weiss, Gillian White, Rolf Winnewisser



Max Matter, *Hungerberg*, 1968

Room 1

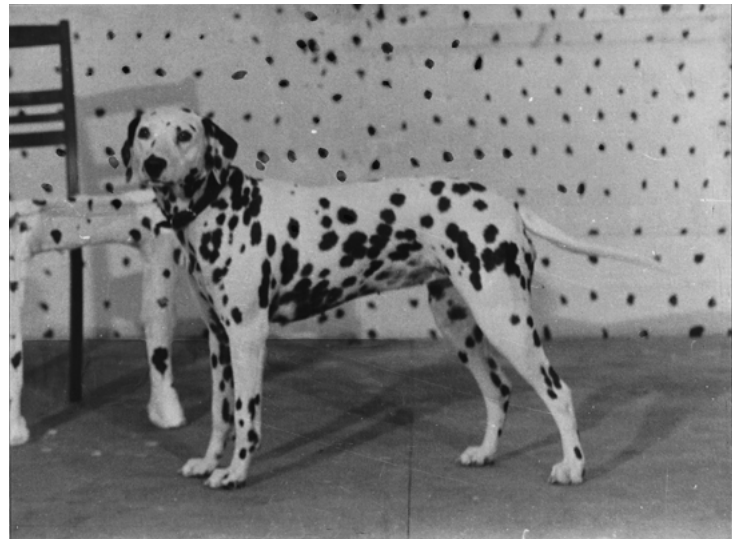
While searching for a suitable studio space, in 1967 Christian Rothacher (1944–2007) came across an advertisement for a factory property available for rent at Ziegelrain 29 in Aarau. He persuaded fellow artists Markus Müller (*1943) and Max Matter (*1941) to rent the property together with him. A short time later, Heiner Kielholz (*1942) and Hugo Suter (1943–2013) joined them. The site provided the artists with a space for experimentation, and mutual exchange stimulated their artistic output. The Ziegelrain studio collective and the influential figure Heiny Widmer (1927–1984), who acted as the Director of the Aargauer Kunsthaut from 1970 until his early death, gave rise to an exceedingly vibrant art scene in this small town. During this period, cities and towns of varying sizes – Aarau, Bern, and Lucerne among them – became leading Swiss art centres for the first time.

Room 2

Pop Art had significant impact on Swiss art of the 1960s and 1970s, which was also evident among the Ziegelrain artists. Pop Art embodied a new way of life, a carefree spirit of optimism among young artists. Pop Art generates images based on two-dimensional models, such as images from media,



Markus Müller, *Blumenstrauß [Bouquet]*, 1970



Heiner Kielholz with Jakob Nielsen, *Dalmatiner [Dalmatian]*, 1971

comics, or advertising. Markus Müller stages the car as an object of desire, indeed as a fetish. In his *Boliden [Bolides]* series, he renders it in abstracted, colourful forms. In *Fulvia* (1968), the vehicle is similarly colourful, yet appears empty, reduced to its outer shell. With its glossy surface, Herbert Distel's (*1942) *Eierteppich [Egg Carpet]* (1969) is reminiscent of food displays in supermarkets. Everyday themes are also central to the work of Max Matter. He works with spray paint rather than oils, and instead of canvases, he uses Kelco panels and plastic domes, thus creating media-based images with a deliberately artificial appearance.

Room 3

Working in close proximity, the artists of the Ziegelrain studio collective tested new media and forms of expression between 1967 and 1975. Alongside Heiner Kielholz, Max Matter, Christian Rothacher and Hugo Suter, artists Josef Herzog (1939–1998) and Jakob Nielsen (*1950) were closely associated with the Ziegelrain during this period. Artistic freedoms were explored. Different approaches and new touch points emerged. Starting in 1969, Heiner Kielholz experimented with viewers' perception. Initially, he created his dot paintings in black and white and in 1970, he started incorporating photographs of a Dalmatian into his works.

The series of photographs was created in collaboration with Jakob Nielsen. Nielsen's projects remain more elusive: he describes and photographs them but only completes them upon request. At the same time, Josef Herzog creates drawings of identical size. His works reveal a clear regularity: the line is drawn in layers from the lightest to the darkest colour.

Room 4

The active networks of the time were also of fundamental importance. The now legendary art festival *Aktionen Blumenhalde 1976* (10–13 June 1976), organised by Laura Buchli (*1940) and Konrad Oehler at Villa Blumenhalde, was one important example. More than 40 artists participated, among them Gillian White (1939–2026) and Daniel Spoerri (1930–2024), and numerous parallel events and performances took place on this occasion. Markus Müller, for instance, painted portraits of friends such as Josef Herzog and Laura Buchli, while Rosina Kuhn created large-format paintings set to music as a live performance.

Hugo Suter's house in Seengen on Lake Hallwil was also a key meeting place for the art scene in Aarau and the region. Martin Disler (1949–1996), Helmut Federle (*1944), Heiner Kielholz, Theo



Aldo Walker & Rolf Winnewisser,
Ohne Titel [Untitled], 1975



Christian Rothacher, *Kieferfund [Jaw Find]*, 1975

Kneubühler (*1945), and Rolf Winnewisser (*1949) could be found there. Lifelong friendships were forged there, as evidenced by extensive correspondence and collaborative works. The portrait bust by Aldo Walker (1939–2000) and Rolf Winnewisser is a collaborative work. It depicts a fictional figure named *Beryll Christallo*, whom the artists developed together.

Room 5

Following a period of works shaped by Pop Art and Arte Povera, Christian Rothacher starts from existing everyday objects. For these works, he seeks new interpretations and uses materials such as plaster, crystals, ceramics, and wood. Around the same time, Hugo Suter turns away from oil painting. By combining different materials in unconventional ways, he creates objects and drawings that challenge our usual perspective.

Heiner Richner (1944–2024) also finds common ground with the Ziegelrain artists, with whom he feels an intellectual kinship. Following the graphite and charcoal drawings from his time in Berlin, the artist produces tyre-like, layered stelae made from tree trunks. *Ohne Titel [Untitled]* (1974) consists of three parts and has been installed both outdoors and in the museum; it is one of his most important works.

Instead of natural materials, Marie-Claire Baldenweg (*1954) has been working with plastic for more than fifty years. In her work *Oil Spill* (1979), the artist adds a black bin-bag roll to the depiction of a household oil bottle, intertwining natural and artificial elements.

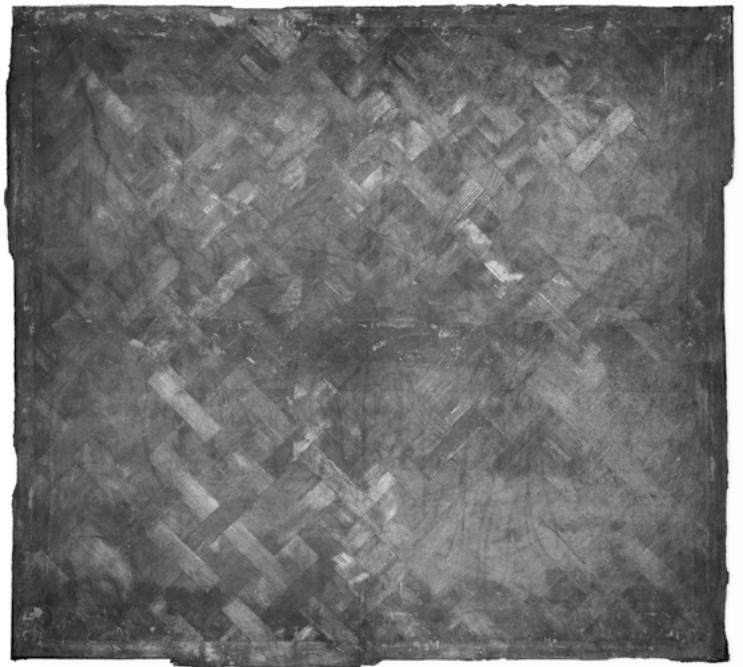
Room 6

The Nouveaux Réalistes artists responded to the emerging consumer culture of the 1960s and 1970s. Drawing on the Readymade and Dadaism, their works engage in various ways with the world of objects and industrial society. Jean Tinguely (1925–1991) and Daniel Spoerri used materials from the world of consumer goods and everyday culture in their art. Daniel Spoerri conceived works that came into being with as little intervention from him as possible, such as his famous *Fallenbilder [Snare Pictures]*. After a meal with friends, the artist transformed the ordinary arrangement of the table into art by adding his signature.

The connection between art and life is also evident in the oeuvre of Dieter Roth (1930–1998). From the 1970s onwards, he created an increasing number of works consisting of tools from his studio and everyday objects. Guided by this principle of using everything at hand, no object is too mundane to become part of the artwork. In this respect,



Daniel Spoerri, *Tableau piège [Snare Picture]*, 1972



Heidi Bucher, *Bodenhaut (Ahnenhaus Obermühle)* [*Floor Skin (Ancestral Home Obermühle)*], 1980

Spoerri, Roth, and the Ziegelrain artists share a playful approach to new materials that dissolve the boundaries between art and everyday life.

Room 7

In 1973, Heidi Bucher (1926–1993) returned to Switzerland after a stay lasting several years in the United States and Canada and co-initiated the groundbreaking exhibition *Frauen sehen Frauen [Women See Women]* (1975) at the Strauhof in Zurich, which aimed to challenge prevailing gender stereotypes.

During this period, Bucher covered entire rooms with a layer of latex and then tore it away. What remained were spatial skins—such as the parquet-floor skin *Bodenhaut (Ahnenhaus Obermühle)* (1980) from her grandparents' house in Winterthur. These are being shown here for the first time at the Aargauer Kunsthaus since the work entered the museum's collection as a permanent loan from the Gottfried Keller Foundation. In her work, Bucher combines biographical memories with the exposure of intra-familial and patriarchal power structures.

Room 8

In 1969, Harald Szeemann (1933–2005) presented the large-scale exhibition *Live in Your Head – When*

Attitudes Become Form at Kunsthalle Bern, bringing together a wide range of conceptual approaches by international artists. This event—together with the exhibition *Visualisierte Denkprozesse [Visualised Thought Processes]* (curated by Jean-Christophe Ammann in 1970)—proved decisive in establishing the significance and presence of abstract art in Switzerland. In the wake of the legendary exhibition, a work of the same title was commissioned by Edition Loeb as a conceptual co-production by Balthasar Burkhard (1944–2010), Markus Raetz (1941–2020), Jean-Frédéric Schnyder (*1945), and Harald Szeemann.

Inspired by stays in the United States, several of the artists presented here explored the American influences of Minimal Art and Conceptual Art.

Starting in 1977, Olivier Mosset (*1944) spent ten years in New York painting works that focused purely on surface and colour. On the minimalist colour fields, there is no trace of the painting process or the artist's hand. Jean Pfaff (*1945) also explores the monochromy in his *Shaped Canvases*. The multi-part artwork on a wooden panel transcends classical genres of painting and sculpture and plays with the ambivalence between image and object.



Balthasar Burkhard, Markus Raetz, Jean-Frédéric Schnyder, Harald Szeemann, *Live in Your Head – When Attitudes Become Form*, 1970

Room 9

Piggybacking, striking acrobatic figures, casually posing on bicycles, the artists David Weiss (1946–2012) and Urs Lüthi (*1947) display youthful exuberance in front of the camera of their friend Willy Spiller (*1947). Playful lightness and clear symmetry come together in this photo series – very much in keeping with the spirit of experimentation of the time. The staging is also an early example of Lüthi's multi-layered play with the Self, which is continued in Room 11 with the group of works *Treat me like a Stranger* (1974).

In 1979, David Weiss began working with Peter Fischli (*1952) as part of the now-famous artist duo. The four objects made of unfired clay date back to their early artistic collaboration and form part of the collection called *Plötzlich diese Übersicht* [*Suddenly, this Overview*]. The objects humorously depict episodes of world history, everyday situations and contrasts, ranging from the important to the seemingly banal. The group of works not only laid the foundation for their international career but is also considered a landmark work of Swiss art from the 1980s.



David Weiss, Urs Lüthi, Willy Spiller, *Sketches*, 1970

Room 10

Alongside Geneva and Aarau, Central Switzerland's art scene also becomes a place of upheaval. Jean-Christophe Ammann (1939–2015), the Director at the time of the Kunstmuseum Luzern, provides a platform for the young local and international art scene. At the same time, the School of Design in Lucerne was opening up to new forms of education. Artist and lecturer Anton Egloff (1933–2025) championed the strengthening of liberal arts. The correspondence between artist friends Martin Disler, Rolf Winnewisser, and Hugo Suter, displayed in the showcase, brings this lively exchange to life.

While the artists Hans Schärer (1927–1997) and Philippe Schibig (1940–2013), were described as 'outsiders' at the time, they were featured in show at the Kunstmuseum Luzern. Heiny Widmer organised a solo show at the Aargauer Kunsthaus in 1973 featuring works by the naturopath Emma Kunz (1892–1963). The exhibition *Der Fall Emma Kunz* [*The Case of Emma Kunz*] was met with resistance, while also highlighting a shift within the art world. Emma Kunz did not consider her works to be art, but rather research products. She was only recognised as an artist posthumously.



Klaudia Schifferle, *Ohne Titel [Untitled]*, 1975

Room 11

Klaudia Schifferle (*1955) discovers her dual vocation as an artist und musician in the 70s. In 1977, she co-founded the women's punk band *Kleenex* (later *LiLiPUT*). The works shown here belong to her little-known early oeuvre, some of which are being exhibited for the first time. They were created during Schifferle's studies at the F+F School of Experimental Design in Zurich. Twenty years old at the time, the artist combined photography and drawing and created self-portraits in secret – at night, away from the gaze of her fellow students. In conversation, Schifferle reflects: «These early self-portraits are a kind of 'selfie'...an exploration of the self».

The fragmentary nature of photography also characterises the series by Hannah Villiger (1951–1997). A landscape in motion is captured three times: a combine harvester protrudes into the frame and whips up the hay. The image changes again and again. The straws flying through the air captivate the viewer with their tactile quality.



Monika Dillier, *Klytemnestra hat den Tisch gedeckt, Klytemnestra bittet zu Tisch* [*Clytemnestra Has Set the Table, Clytemnestra Invites Us to Dine*], 1979/1980

Room 12

The works of Monika Dillier (*1947) and Rosina Kuhn (*1940) are united by a performative, cross-media approach that exemplifies the blurring of artistic genres at the time. The two works by Dillier are among her early pieces and bear witness to the artist's feminist engagement. The table, a symbol of domestic togetherness, is not laid, but stained blood-red. On another occasion, the artist presents herself lying naked on the table. In her studio, she photographs herself using the self-timer. These works form part of a larger oeuvre referencing the mythological murderer and adulteress Clytemnestra.

During her formative period at the City of Zurich's studio in New York in 1976/1977, Rosina Kuhn came into contact with performance art: in public happenings, she created expressive colour landscapes, such as *Ocean* (1976), to live jazz music. Back in Zurich, she continues her collaboration with other artists.

Room 13

Freiraum – Open Space on the Lower Floor

In short interviews, fascinating personalities reminisce about the 1970s and discuss collaborative work – back in the day and today. Display cases with archive material, a billboard featuring

exhibitions from that era at the Aargauer Kunsthaus, and a reading corner invite visitors to browse. In the documentation and learning space, visitors are invited to immerse themselves once more in the art scene of the 1970s and to reflect on possible parallels between then and now.

Curator: Anouchka Panchard

Scientific trainee: Franziska Fellner

Events

Exhibition Opening
Thursday, 11 June 2026, 6 pm

Preview for Members of the
Kunstverein Association
Thursday, 11 June 2026, 5–6 pm
Exclusively for members of the
Aargauischer Kunstverein

Art Stroll
13 June 2026
10 am – 12.30 pm, for 9 to 13 y/o
1:30 – 3:30 pm, for 5 to 8 y/o

Interactive Tour
The Art Scene of the 1970s
Sunday, 21 June 2026, 3 pm
With artists Rosina Kuhn and
Markus Müller and Curator
Anouchka Panchard

Open Studio
Sunday, 28 June 2026, 11 am – 4 pm

Panel Discussion *Collaborative
Working Methods Today*
Wednesday, 1 July 2026, 6:30 pm
With Nicole Bachmann, Otto
Grimm and Simone Holliger. The
artists work together in collectives,
studio communities, and other
collaborative forms. Collaborative
artistic working methods will be
discussed from a contemporary
perspective.
Moderator: Anouchka Panchard,
Curator of the exhibition

Panel Discussion

Coming Together at Ziegelrain

Thursday, 20 August 2026, 6.30 pm

In cooperation with the SIKART
Lexicon of the Swiss Institute for
Art Research (SIK-ISEA)

In 1967, seven artists founded the
Ziegelrain studio collective in
Aarau, which gained recognition
far beyond the cantonal capital in
the 1970s. Its members were part of
the Swiss artistic renaissance during
those years. We take a special look
at this unique place of artistic free-
dom and the artists who shaped it
through a panel discussion and a
dive into the SIKART Lexicon.

Information regarding additional
events can be found at:
aargauerkunsthaus.ch/agenda

Relations. Collection 26 II

Works selected from the Aargauer
Kunsthaus collection are displayed
on the upper and lower floors to
provide a resonant space for the
exhibition *Together apart*. As visitors
make their way through, they may
encounter works such as Hans
Schärer's *Madonnas* or Balthasar
Burkhard's *Self-Portrait*.

Rathauspark

In the Rathauspark behind the
museum, sculptures by Herbert
Distel, Gillian White, and Albert
Siegenthaler from the 1960s and
1970s are on display.

Acknowledgements

The Aargauer Kunsthaus would like
to thank the Canton of Aargau, the
Aargau Art Association, the City of
Aarau, the Federal Office of Culture
and our media partner, the Aargauer
Zeitung.

Opening Hours

Tuesday – Sunday 10 am – 5 pm
Thursday 10 am – 8 pm
Closed on Mondays

Thursdays 5 – 8 pm
Free admission

Opening Hours on Public Holidays

Eve of Maienzug	2.7.	10 am – 5 pm
Maienzug	3.7.	10 am – 5 pm
Swiss		
National Day	1.8.	10 am – 5 pm
Assumption Day	15.8.	10 am – 5 pm

Aargauer Kunsthaus
Aargauerplatz, CH-5001 Aarau
T +41 62 835 23 30
kunsthaus@ag.ch
www.aargauerkunsthaus.ch

The exhibition is generously
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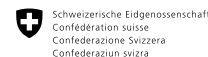
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