

Annual Exhibition News
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Issue 12, Spring 2014

£2



Chris Bramble



Membership of the Guild is open to anyone having an interest in pottery and sculpture and offers members many opportunities each year to see top potters and sculptors demonstrating their skills. In addition, an annual Open Day is held with demonstrations. Exhibitions, visits and workshops are also organised at various times.

# Membership Rates for 2013/14

Single £28, Family (one address) £37, Student (full time) £20. Newsletter only: £10 per annum.

Make your cheque payable to DCPG, and please send to Ingrid Thorstad, 5 Church Lane, Chearsley, Bucks HP18 0DH. Tel: 01844 208 702.

If joining after March, please phone for a reduced introductory rate.

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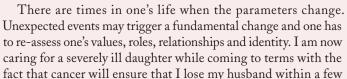
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# Notes from the Chair Ros McGuirk





months. Life can be cruel indeed. Well, I have realised that making music and potting are so much a part of me that though the potting shed will have to wait the rest will carry on, somehow.

I have just finished sweeping up the crumbs from the committee meeting held this afternoon in my kitchen. Tea and scones helped to fuel the meeting and we powered through the agenda in two hours.

Most of the items centred on the finances of the Guild. Our insurance policy needs renewing and Colin our treasurer has spent a considerable amount of time considering our options. Eventually he decided to simply renew the old policy as it was competitively priced and covers our needs, though the £500 or so it costs is considerable.

As I write the newsletter is nearly ready but its finances are in a mess. The handover from the old to the new advertising officer was slow and now Jill is in the US and cannot do the job. Bipin and Colin have kindly offered to take over for now.

The main item on the agenda was the move towards becoming an incorporated charity. This should give us several advantages, the main one concerning liability. We will need to change the constitution in the process and it will be put to the membership at the next AGM. A copy will be sent out by email beforehand.

Meanwhile Judi and Audrey have held a sub-committee meeting on exhibitions and have lists of ideas and potential galleries. Finding suitable galleries is tricky in our area, so if you know any that look promising and are within an hour's drive do get in touch.

John Higgins is organising our next Potters Open Day and as he has a residency in Australia in the autumn we have decided to hold POD in the following spring. The date is 14 March 2015. Please put it in your diary. Meanwhile we congratulate John and wish him well.

As programme secretary I will soon be starting to put together the programme for the next season. Let me know if you have someone or something you would like to be included.

As chairman I am most grateful for all the work done by the committee and the support we have from the members. Meetings and workshops have all been well attended and much enjoyed.

We still have a few posts unfilled, for example the committee were ruminating on possible poterawl agendas - if only we had an organiser...

Now that the spring is well under way we should all be making pots and looking forward to the summer shows, and firing our various kilns - raku at Pitstone, wood firing at Boxmoor and soda firings at Northfield Studio. Watch your email for dates of these events.

Good Potting.

Front cover Photograph by Lutz Krainhöfner 3



I am sure like me, your thoughts are with our chairman, Ros and her family at this very difficult time. I would like to send her our appreciation and gratitude for maintaining her commitment and work for the Guild when there will be so many other pressing demands on her time.

The guild's programme is progressing nicely with recent contributions from members Marshall Colman and Les Parrott and demonstrations by Kevin Millward and Chris Bramble and with

those by Kathleen Standen and Micki Schloesingk to look forward to.

With the decline of ceramic courses in schools and adult education establishments the work of the Guild provides a forum for sharing knowledge and learning from professionals in the field. Ours is a membership organisation, so if you are able to help at all with the Guild's activities please let a member of the committee know (details at the end of the newsletter).

Don't be shy, your Guild needs you!

# Welcome to four new members to the Guild by Ingrid Thorstad

Beccy Boxer I have returned to ceramics during the last three years after a 15 year break! I look forward to meeting other potters and people interested in ceramics. You can see my ceramics at beccyboxerceramics.co.uk

Ray Toms I have been making pots for two years and would like to try wood firing. I mix my own ash glazes in my garage/studio and have both gas and electric kilns.

Krys Kelly I started potting about 20 years

ago (City & Guilds) but circumstances changed and have only recently joined an evening class at West Herts College. I am interested in hand building, impressed texture, slip decoration and residual finger marks. My other interest is printmaking (linocuts).

Christopher Stent I've been making pots for six years or so and attended a number of courses and master classes. I now have a studio in my garage and a house full of pots.

# **Raku Firings at Pitstone Museum**

# by Ruby Sharp

Guild members can bring pots to fire and either use the glazes available or their own. We would love members to come and participate on an occasional or regular basis. We also give the public the opportunity to throw pots on the wheel and hand build. For further information please contact Ruby Sharp on 01494 728 364 or ruby@rubysharppottery.co.uk.



# Dates for 2014

Easter Monday 21 April May Day Bank Holiday Monday 5 May Spring Bank Holiday Monday 26 May Sunday 8 June Sunday 13 July Sunday 10 August Summer Bank Holiday Monday 25 August Sunday 14 September Sunday 12 October

# Kevin Millward Demonstration 6 December 2013

Kevin Millward is not only one of the finest potters in the country; he is also a marvellous teacher. Showing us so many useful techniques and tips, his very lively and exhaustive demonstration had us all so enthralled throughout the evening.

As if by magic, within seconds, pot after pot appeared effortlessly on the potter's wheel with precise explanations of every step of the making process.

Art school trained, Kevin worked for several potters including a spell with David Leach before setting up his own pottery.

For over forty years he has given lectures, workshops and demonstrations throughout Europe and the UK, including leading colleges and universities. So it was such a real privilege to experience Kevin's expert teaching; precise, clear, succinct, and to the point.

After stressing the importance of good clay preparation, Kevin impressed upon us the importance of the cylinder. Using a minimal number of tools, and with his 'pinch and lift' action, every pot, including a round bellied teapot, was formed from the cylinder. "Two or three lifts are all you need; otherwise the energy is taken out of the clay."

To avoid the dreaded 'S' crack, Kevin advised that the bottom of each pot should always be consolidated by compressing it at least three times before continuing with the rest of the pot.

"To knuckle up, thumb behind first finger at base of pot, twist up and round and lift."

All the clay on the wheel head is used for each pot. The only wastage of clay is the small amount at the base, trimmed with his special 'D' shaped metal kidney, before



wiring off the pot. "Turning should only be for refining a pot, not for removal of weight."

Many styles and shapes of pots were thrown; jugs, plates, vases and bottle shapes, with tips on forming necks and spouts.

A series of bowls followed, emphasising the importance on refining the rim. Altering the thrown form, but, advised Kevin, "First of all, learn to make pots properly. Then alter them if you want."

One cylinder he threw, thicker than usual and faceted with a stiff wire, metamorphosed into several different shapes, culminating with a final teapot body.

Once again we were treated to an absolute master class in throwing. Like re-reading a book, watching a favourite film or listening to an album for the umpteenth time, I could never tire of watching Kevin throw pots. There is always so much to learn.

I could hardly wait for the next day. I was booked to take part in the afternoon session of the workshop held at West Herts College.

To conclude the demonstration, a quote from the thank you speech given by our president John Higgins: "That was a case of poetry in motion!"



# Kevin Millward Workshop at West Herts College 7 December 2013



Kevin has his own unique approach to throwing. His background has taught him that, at best, we need to be at one with the clay and with a minimum of physical effort, we can achieve improved results.

We started by letting him see how we were throwing. Naturally, we each had our own idiosyncrasies. His teaching was clear and explicit, he explained how we could improve what we were doing and along with that, why and how the changes would facilitate improvement.

We start with the wedging and clay preparation. Taking the time to ensure that the clay is in an even condition with no air pockets is something any thrower knows and does, but we learned how to carefully form each ball, turning the clay rhythmically in one direction as we pass it from one hand to the other until it feels ready to work. The idea is that the way we do this, sets up the clay molecules to be receptive to the movement of the wheel.

Centring the clay has never been so relaxing. No strength, no pressure, no push, no pull! The more relaxed we could be, the easier it became, certainly opposite to anything I have learned in the past, but very effective. The key is in using the heel of the left hand to lean into the side of the clay and the side of the right hand along the central axis on the top. Leaning into the clay through each hand alternately teases the clay into the centre of the wheel. The more relaxed we could be, the easier it became.

A lot to unlearn.

Rather than keeping the diameter of the base the size we think we want our piece to be, we were instructed to take the walls further out, setting and compressing the base and preparing to lift the excess width of clay into the walls of the pot with Kevin's famed 'pinch and lift' action.

An action that can't be explained in words but it works, we pick up the excess width, lift it into the wall and suddenly we get height.

Knuckling up to lift the next stage, with a swivel of the wrist the process becomes more efficient.

Using his own special tool, for sale from Kevin, £10 each, he compresses the walls.

No more than 3 lifts and a cylinder is formed. I certainly achieved taller cylinders than ever before given the weight of the clay used.

Then, what we can do with it... shaping to create concave and convex curves to form, in theory, pretty much anything we want to, however, this is where more instruction is needed.

First shaping the rim, then working on the form, using gentle pressure, by hand and tool, inside and out, with the help of

# by Danielle Bunker

a damp sponge if necessary, to build, in this case, a vase.

What a great day - ideally to be followed up with a week's workshop to carry on. I feel as though I have touched the start of something, a working method that I'd love to learn more and develop further. Three hours just isn't enough.

Because of his background knowledge of industrial ceramics processes, Kevin is able to successfully take the best from the world of industry and combine it with studio practice; I can't wait to learn more.





# Guild Annual Exhibition Letchworth Arts Centre by Audrey Hammett and Judi Tribe

This year the Guild will be returning to Letchworth Arts Centre for its annual show which will run from Tuesday 9 December to Monday 22 December (setting up on Monday 8th taking down on Tuesday 23rd). The event is already listed on the Arts Centre website, so take a look at www.letchwortharts.org

The Guild last exhibited in Letchworth in October 2012 when members enjoyed the large gallery space and made a good number of sales. This year our exhibition is just before Christmas so should benefit from other festive activities taking place in the Arts Centre, as well as from being in a busy town centre shopping area. The Arts Centre is open Monday -Friday 10am to 5pm and on Saturday 10am to 3pm and is free for visitors. There is a cafe which is open each day until 3pm. Letchworth itself is easy to reach, being close to the A1 just north of Stevenage.

The exhibition will be manned by the Arts Centre staff so we will only need to set up and take down the exhibition. For those unable to set up or take down their own work, we will make arrangements for work to be collected and transported by other members.

We would like as many members as possible to take part in this event. Even if you have never shown your work before, please do consider joining in - it's a great experience and a good way to meet other members of the Guild.

Please put this event in your diary and if you think you may like to exhibit, just register interest by emailing Audrey on audreyhammett1@btinternet.com. Nearer the time of the exhibition, we will firm up on details and be looking for volunteers to help make the exhibition happen.

Thank you

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Members Les Parrott and Marshall Colman gave the Guild interesting presentations on how they became full time potters later in life.



**Les Parrott** 

As a child Les always liked making things but after obtaining a Civil Engineering degree, his first job was with the Patent Office. Next came building research work for the cement industry. During this time he was attending evening classes at Harrow College. Eventually he was able to become a full time maker.

Every one was impressed by his methods of recording all that he does. Each pot has a unique number to the base and is also photographed at completion. Les draws a plan for the loading of the gas kiln before he makes anything, so that when fired it will be fully loaded with pieces fitting tightly between the shelves. The composition of his glazes are calculated and recorded together with all the firing times of the kiln, oxygen rates, temperature gradients and the effect the gas flow has on the oxides during reduction.

Again everything is photographed including the stages of unloading the kiln. So at the

end each pot has a record of the glaze used, the clay, the position in the kiln and the firing conditions linked to a photograph.

Influences are diverse from Chinese porcelain to a tall stoneware brewing vessel which still stands in his garden. For glazing Les highly recommends the 'Complete Guide to High-fire Glazes' by John Britt. His clays include porcelains and white/red stonewares from which he creates various clay bodies.

One tip was to use a smooth concrete paving slab for drying or damping the clay.

The slides showed the range of his work which is mainly thrown but with some hand built. Pots are often textured and impressed to induce variations of glaze thickness and thus colour. He fires in reduction to cone 12 around 1300°C and the glazes include a range of fluxes with iron, copper, chromium or titanium oxides. In particular the copper reds and purples feature strongly in his functional pieces and Les likes to use the same glaze on a range of clays for different effects. As the glazes tend to run he creates a 'stop' to the base of his bowls, which results in a greater depth of colour.

Finally he enjoys doing shows as this is where he can interact with the public and get feedback on his work.







**Marshall Colman** 

Marshall studied history at Keele University, but on leaving became an apprentice to Judith Partridge who specialised in tin glazes at the Rodmell Pottery. He found that he could not afford to carry on as an apprentice and so worked for local government for 25 years.

After studying on the Harrow ceramic course at Westminster where he covered everything including building a two chamber kiln, he set up his studio in St Albans in 2009.

In essence Marshall describes himself as a painter who pots and includes amongst his influences the painters Picasso and Franz Klein, 1950s textiles and 16th century Japanese ware. As there were few potters working in tinglazed earthenware, he decided to continue to specialise in this area. He limits his overall glaze palette to around 6 primary colours, which he mixes himself using raw oxides which give freshness to the colours, which tending to blur and run on application. He decorates his pots boldly with flat layered patterns in two or three colours using a range

of brushes from stiff to soft sable. Marks are made to the pots to create rhythm and contrast between form and function and between painted and unpainted areas. In particular Marshall favours the blues from cobalt oxide providing him with a wide variation and depth of colour, which he tones down with the introduction of other oxides. Initially he dips his pots in a white tin glaze to produce a smooth surface which he then fires to a temperature which just fixes the glaze. This allows him to draw outlines and use wax resist to build up the foreground colours on a contrasting background firing finally to 1120°C.

On slides Marshall showed how he is currently making two handled pots by throwing cylinders which he cuts off and manipulates into an oval when firm enough. A base is rolled out and the oval cylinder placed on as a template for cutting out. The join on the base is scored and wetted only. A curved join is provided to the inside of the pot.

With reference to the Gazelle vases at Alhambra, Granada, the handle 'ears' which do not match each other, are created from left over bits and joined in a similar manner. The oxides painted on the white tin glaze give the pots a vibrant and an abstract quality.

Thanks to Les and Marshall for an interesting evening providing insight into their inspirations, work, and methods.



by Bipin

Chris Bramble began the evening with the customary slide show, relating how his work has been influenced by sculpture and African art and crafts. After studying at Glasgow School of Art, he spent a couple of years in Zimbabwe. He set up his studio in Kilburn on his return back to London. Chris exhibits his work throughout the UK and abroad, combined with running workshops and teaching in schools and colleges across London.

Having seen Chris demonstrate his work in the past, I could hardly wait for the rest of the evening. I was looking forward to watching him make those large pots, with the beautiful carved decoration that would follow. And to watch him make his trademark, very elegant and beautifully sculpted faces that sit on top of his pots...

No, there was none of that!

But instead of being disappointed, were in for a fabulous treat.

Having seen several demonstrations by potters over the years, this was by far the most unique. Unique because Chris came to share with us his 'work in progress'.

New work that is still in its infancy. Ideas still rattling in his head. Ideas that are still mere doodles on the back of an envelope perhaps. Drawings in a sketchbook. Chris showed us new experimental pots that literally came out of the kiln less than twenty four hours earlier. It was almost like being at the kiln opening.

He shared with us problems he has encountered that needed solving. Even asking the audience, "Come on, help me out. What do you think I should do about this?"

That set a marvellous tone for the whole



evening. A ding dong verbal match, at times quite hilarious, between Chris and the entire audience. Chris's reply to a suggestion from the audience: "You could try this method" was "Thanks, I will. I never thought of that. Any more ideas will be most welcome."

Most artists demonstrating their working methods in public often spend hours and even days carefully and diligently preparing, practising and honing their methods to avoid

any mishaps on the day. Most would only show methods tried and tested over many years of practice, willing only to show methods that definitely work for them.

Of course, we all know the old saying, "There is nothing new in ceramics", but not all of us will ever experience all of the making processes and problem solving. So we will always have something new to try.





at Tate Britain

Chris is experimenting with vessels that draw the eye inside. Light reflecting on the inside of the pot. A pot within a pot. Holes cut on the outside that reveal an inner pot, sometimes lustred with gold.

"Thinking about Faberge now, it would be nice to do a whole show carrying just a suitcase!"

Porcelain and stoneware glazed in white with simple line drawings. One humorous pot, as seen on the front cover, depicted quirky drawings of dogs, through which could be seen the inner pot depicting fleas!

"This came out of the kiln only yesterday! Oh I'm so excited!" Chris's enthusiasm for his new work reminded of Steve Harrison.

Chris then assembled and sealed together two leather hard cylinders, one inside the other. He then carved to decorated it with images inspired from looking out of the window of a train travelling through the countryside. Telegraph wires and posts, electricity boxes, signs, hill and trees.

Chris then realised his mistake. The outer pot should have been cut with holes before assembling it with the inner! He still managed to cut holes in the shape of trees without damaging the inside pot. I think Chris forgot due to so much banter.

The evening was one of the most enjoyable Friday meetings I have had the privilege to attend. There was lots of fun and laughter. Lots of banter from the audience.

For a moment or two it seemed like Arthur Ball was among us. Alas, it was his good friend and sidekick, Paul Rowbottom!

A huge thank you to Chris Bramble for a wonderful evening.

This is a major exhibition of Richard Deacon's sculptures which includes large ceramic forms.

The forms are often geometric as in Tropic (2007) and large as in the Fold (2012), which stands in the back entrance fover space of the Tate. It is a fascinating exhibition and worth visiting not only to see Deacon's large sculptural ceramics but to see his huge laminated wood and steel pieces.

Take a look back through the doorways and you will see a different perspective of Deacon's sculptures in the gallery you have just been to. Some smaller pieces look more interesting from a distance than they do close up. Another tip is to retrace your steps i.e. go back through the galleries to the beginning of the exhibition and you can refresh your connections of his old works to his newer pieces.

For details of exhibition opening time, entrance prices and bookings see: www.tate. org.uk/visit/tate-britain

The permanent galleries of Tate Britain have recently been re-hung and are very exciting. The downstairs cafe has also been refurbished - much larger space, brighter decor with windows and doors to a small outside seating area.

All well worth a visit.

**Judi Tribe** 



# Ben Boswell Photography workshop 8 March 2014

by Judi Tribe



A presentation of Ben's documentary portraits of past and present studio potters, plus a workshop session taking photographs of members' pots.

On a bright and warm Saturday March morning, members of the DCPG were treated to a very special illustrated talk by Ben Boswell about his life-long interest in pottery and ceramics and how his boyhood passion for photography gave him the opportunity to take some very sensitive documentary photographic portraits of a large number of the most influential 20th century potters working in their studios. Thirty years on, Ben now has the chance to return to take more recent photographs of these potters as well as adding to his collection the next generation of ceramic makers.

Ben was given a David Leach bowl as a birthday present when he was fourteen but it was some years later, after watching Mick Casson's BBC TV series - The Craft Potter-that he really began to appreciate studio pottery and started to collect individual pieces for himself. Another significant moment was Ben's 18th birthday when his grandmother decided to take him to Lucie Rie's studio to choose a pot as a present.

After some deliberation between two bowls Ben finally chose one, the right one in Lucie Rie's opinion, an experience which Ben was able to remind Rie of when he returned to photograph her in her studio a few years later.

Unfortunately collecting pots became too expensive, so Ben looked to another hobby of his, which was photography, and in the early 1980's, aged nineteen, he began to take photographs of potters working in their studios. Ben's father was a professional photographer and Ben had grown up taking photographs and developing black and white prints. Combining both these interests Ben started to seek out craft potters and take documentary portraits of them working in their own surroundings, as well as sensitively capturing their concentration and moods while making their pots.

The first potter who welcomed Ben into his studio was David Frith and this in turn opened the door to more studio potters of the time, which was a real boost as Ben's project which was all self-funded. He continued to take photographs of potters around the UK including Clive Bowen and Svend Bayer.

In 1982, Ben was given the opportunity by Michael Cardew to photograph him in his studio. Ben's photographs captured Michael Cardew working at the wheel, pulling handles and reading a paper by his kitchen window. These photographs are more than a description of the way a potter makes and rests; they are incredibly sensitive to the subject and portray the quiet essence of this great potter. Michael Cardew liked Ben's photographs and this really created a path into many other famous potter's studios; Katharine Pleydell-Bouverie, Michael Leach, Janet Leach and he re-visited Lucie Rie to list

only a few. Many of Ben's photographs have been used in national newspaper obituaries, articles and exhibitions.

Ben always used natural light with no flash. He made sure that he merged into the background, quietly taking his photographs while the potter was working. Conversations would sometimes start up and it was only then that Ben would take photographs of his subject looking at him, he would never ask the potters to stop and pose. Ben's website: www.benboswell.co.uk shows many of these amazing photographs.



After a few short years of being involved with his 'hobby', Ben's working and family life took over and now 30 years on, he is beginning to have the time to "pick up the project again" and return to many of the potters he once was fortunate to photograph as well as having the opportunity to capture the potters and ceramic artists who are working today e.g. Lisa Hammond, Chris Keenen, Seth Cardew, Sue Binns and Phil Rogers. Ben is now visiting their studios as well as shows - Oxford Ceramic Fair and

Ceramic Art London where he is taking photographs of the work which is on display as well as their makers on their stands. You can see these recent photographs on his Facebook page.

During the second part of the morning, some of the DCPG members had the opportunity to have their pots photographed by Ben. He set up a small photographic studio area in the hall which consisted of a backdrop, two side lights and a light from underneath the table.

There were also hand-held white boards to help deflect the light where needed. Ben explained individually to each member how he was taking the photographs and what kind of exposure and depth of field he was using. Instead of a scooped background, Ben prefers to have a horizontal line as he feels that this gives a more interesting background to the image; he uses two pieces of card one vertically mounted and one on the table to give this effect. Ben also likes to take the best possible photographs at any shoot and he uses Photoshop to the minimum. As you can see, Ben has taken some very detailed and exciting images and close ups of the member's pots.

The whole Saturday morning was so fascinating especially to hear Ben's stories about how he came to photograph the most influential studio potters of the late 20th century as well as taking up his passion thirty years later and continue with the photographic recording of present day ceramic makers. Ben is hoping to develop a book from this amazing collection. The added bonus to the morning was to have our members pots photographed in a such professional way.

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# Obituary Sue Jarvis by Mike Strange



We are very sad to announce the death of Sue Jarvis who attended Guild meetings and Potters Open Day over the last five years.

Mike Strange taught her Politics and Sociology at St Albans College of Further Education in the 1980s and regained contact with her at an exhibition at Barnfield College where she studied Art and 3D design.

Marshall Coleman studied with her at Harrow where she began to develop her slip-cast porcelain pieces called "Pillow Talk". He describes her work as "talented and innovative". Her pieces were also displayed at a Guild exhibition at Letchworth organised by Sue Lines.

Sue Jarvis was a very lively and creative person with an infectious sense of humour who will be sadly missed.

# HARROW OPEN STUDIOS

2014

Artists from Harrow Borough open their doors to the public

7 - 9<sup>th</sup> June 2014 14 - 15<sup>th</sup> June 2014 Open from: 11am to 6pm

Join us for our annual event, where over 30 artists open their studios over two weekends in June

- Work on display: ceramics, jewellery, paintings, prints and textile arts
- Meet the artists
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See our website for more information, or to download our brochure.

www.harrowopenstudios.com







Copy deadline for the summer issue of the newsletter is Friday 30 May. Please send to lynne.mcgechie@btinternet.com and to bipin@thedcpg.org.uk

# NORTHERN KILNS GAS-Raku Flatpacq GAS-Rocket fibre **GAS-Rocket brick** GAS-Rakroomy GAS - Meteor GAS-Easy fire fibre GAS-Easy fire brick **GAS-Burner tech** Bespoke kilns NKSTL Studio **NKCTL Chieftain** NKOTL Chieftain **NKSQTL Champion NKFL Studio** NKFL Champion NKFL Champion truck Choice of Wheels SlabRollers & PugMills made by us with guarantee Satisfaction Hobby & Plug in Anv size Control to any kiln Reconditioned Service to any kiln Weekly service runs help on YouTube. www.northernkilns.com info@northernkilns.com pillingpottery 01253 790307 northernkilns like us & share!



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