

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE
FOR AGES 13 AND ABOVE

TRANSMISSIONS FROM THE
**WUJIANG
SPACESHIP**

Commissioned by



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*MOVEMENTS STALL. TIME WARPS...
A THEATRE RISES FROM THIS STAGE,
SALVAGED FROM MAKESHIFT
MATERIALS, BARRICADES, AND
DEBRIS OF THE TYPHOON...*



A WAYANG SPACESHIP HAS LANDED ON OUR SHORES!

Located next to the container port just behind Singapore Art Museum (SAM) at Tanjong Pagar Distripark, *Wayang Spaceship* is Berlin-based Singaporean artist Ming Wong's latest public artwork.

During the day, the *Wayang Spaceship* seems dormant, as if it is asleep—one hears only the occasional stray radio transmission that seems to be relayed from another dimension.

Who is trying to connect with us through the spaceship?

CUE:

THE SCHOLAR-WARRIOR

The captain of the spaceship, a scholar-warrior, travels between the past, present and future. The *Wayang Spaceship* has witnessed the industrial, technological and ecological crises that have taken place throughout time.

Much like travelling Chinese theatres where performances take place only at night, the *Wayang Spaceship* comes alive once the sun sets with a symphony of light, sound and film. It streams the memories of the scholar-warrior, inviting you to commune with this time traveller and listen to the stories shared.

Learn more about artist Ming Wong and the *Wayang Spaceship* with this guide in hand. We will be exploring how we can understand more about our world through art, and how art allows us to express our creativity and draw on our imagination.

ARE YOU READY FOR AN ADVENTURE? >>>

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ABOUT THE ARTIST



The world of cinema is Ming Wong's gateway to the imagination. He is particularly interested in Cantonese opera, having grown up with it in Singapore.

Since 2012, he has studied the modernisation of Cantonese opera in the 20th Century, as well as the relationship between Cantonese opera films and the development of science fiction. Alongside *Wayang Spaceship*, other works that address this theme include *Windows on The World* (Parts 1 & 2) (2014), *Blast off into the Sinosphere* (2014), and *Scenography for a Chinese Science Fiction Opera* (2015).

Ming Wong represented Singapore at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009 with his solo exhibition, *Life of Imitation*, which won a special mention.

ABOUT THE COLLABORATORS



Ming Wong had a team of collaborators working on *Wayang Spaceship* with him. From lighting to sound designers, technical producers to master *wayang* stage builders, you will also get to know more about them and their contributions to the *Wayang Spaceship* in this guide!

LET'S LEARN ABOUT DICHROISM (DI•CHRO•ISM)

Take a closer look at the *Wayang Spaceship*, especially when it comes alive at night. What do you notice at the wings and above the stage? How would you describe what you see?

In order to create the futuristic environment of the *Wayang Spaceship*, Ming Wong and his collaborators experimented with **diachroic film lightboxes** to produce a holographic and iridescent feel to the spaceship, signalling that it comes from a different time and space.

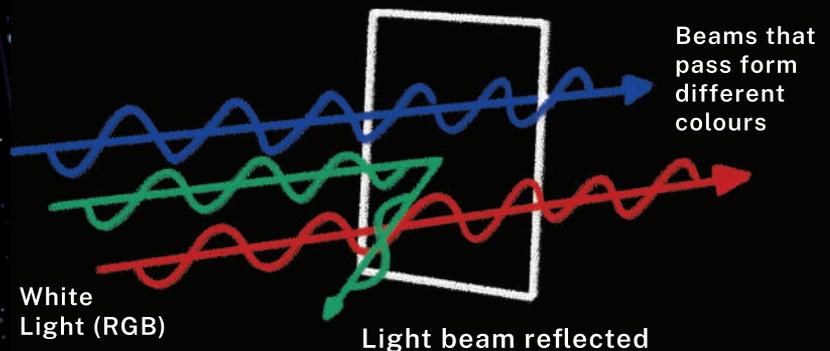
The word “dichroism” comes from the Greek words “**di**” (two) and “**chroma**” (colour).

A material with dichroic properties has the ability to **split a beam of light into two beams** with different wavelengths, allowing certain colours to pass through while reflecting others.

This is how Ming Wong and his collaborators achieve a multicoloured effect when the clear fluorescent tubes shine on the various dichroic films inside the lightboxes.



Illustration of light passing through a dichroic film:



ACTIVITY: MATERIAL HUNT

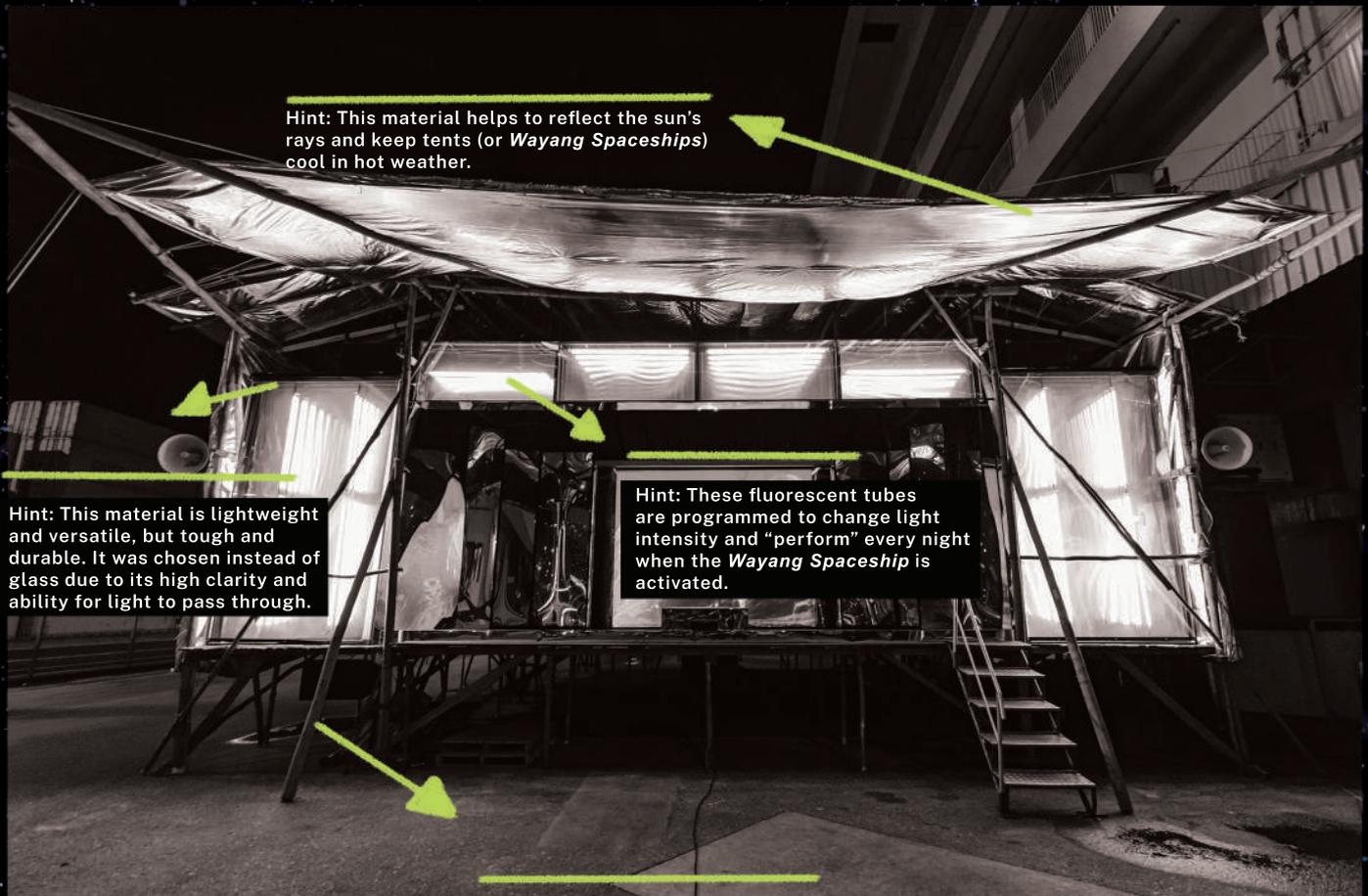
Sometimes, creating art is also a science. By understanding how dichroism works, we see how Ming Wong and his collaborators had to get creative and experiment with different materials in order to represent the unique characteristics of the *Wayang Spaceship*.

Besides the dichroic film lightboxes, can you identify other kinds of materials used to create the *Wayang Spaceship*?

How would you describe their colour, shape and texture?

Do these materials have any other unique properties, and how do these properties contribute to the look and feel of the *Wayang Spaceship*?

The choice of materials in art creation is an important step in realising the artist's intention behind an artwork. Each material contributes to the overall effect and in turn, influences how the viewers perceive the artwork.



Hint: This material helps to reflect the sun's rays and keep tents (or *Wayang Spaceships*) cool in hot weather.

Hint: This material is lightweight and versatile, but tough and durable. It was chosen instead of glass due to its high clarity and ability for light to pass through.

Hint: These fluorescent tubes are programmed to change light intensity and "perform" every night when the *Wayang Spaceship* is activated.

Hint: This material is also used to build traditional *wayang* stages, as it is light enough to be assembled and dismantled for travelling street opera performances

SOUNDSCAPE DIARIES



Now, after observing the visual elements of the *Wayang Spaceship*, close your eyes and listen carefully.

During the day, as the *Wayang Spaceship* remains dormant and is camouflaged within its surroundings,

what can you hear?

Certain noises are being transmitted intermittently from the *Wayang Spaceship*. Are you able to describe what they sound like? In fact, when you stand before it, with the container port on your left and the highway on your right, you may notice that it is never truly quiet.

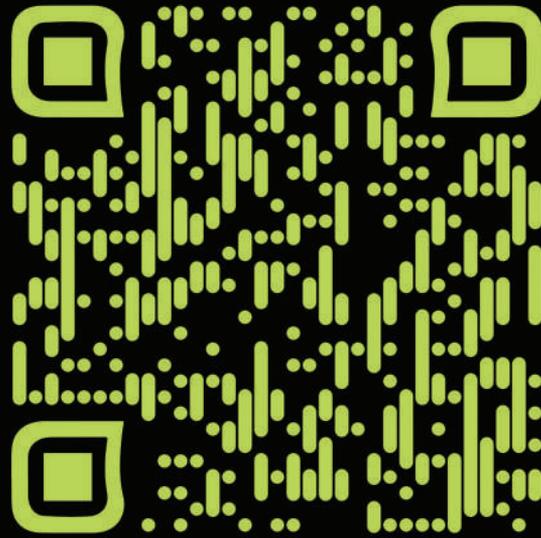
What other sounds can you identify that come from the environment around the Wayang Spaceship?

In an immersive environment, a **soundscape** is sometimes used.

It is made up of sonic or musical elements that help to create a particular atmosphere. Sound can be **manmade**—for instance, when an artist uses items to recreate an intended sound effect—or it can be a **field recording**, which is recorded from the environment around you.

There are many powerful recording devices that help to capture clear, crisp sounds from your environment, but nowadays a mobile phone is all that you need to do so.

**SCAN
ME!**



Check out **SoundscapeSG** from the National Archives of Singapore website. It is a platform that invites anyone to record a sound bite from their daily lives, and the National Archives collects these sound bites as sonic representations of Singapore's heritage.

Can you identify any familiar sounds on this platform?
What images come to mind when you hear these recordings?

This is the power of a soundscape—it helps the artist **convey the story** they would like to share, and thus realise their intention behind the artwork.

Even though you do not see the scholar-warrior in the artwork, **you can hear them** trying to reach out to you via the *Wayang Spaceship*. The soundscape evokes **a sense of mystery** around the scholar-warrior figure, and suggests that the scholar-warrior is not from our time or space.

How else has artist Ming Wong used sound to characterise the *Wayang Spaceship*?
Can you try to recreate these sounds with objects found at home?

ACTIVITY: CREATE YOUR OWN SOUNDSCAPE

Now, tune in and try creating a soundscape of your neighbourhood!

1. Head down to a location of your choice in your neighbourhood.

Bring along a pen and paper.

*You could go to a nearby playground, bus stop, hawker centre,
or even just stay in your room and sit by a window.*

2. *If you have a phone or a recording device*, bring that along with you.

Remember to keep it safe and if necessary, carry out this activity with an adult who can help you!

3. Take a seat and close your eyes. What sounds do you hear?

Make a list of these sounds and describe what is producing each sound:

Are friends playing and screaming out of excitement?

Are there birds chirping?

Are leaves rustling in the wind?

4. With your phone or recording device, try and record these sounds.

You can have fun layering these sounds together or changing their volume, tone and pitch using audio software such as Audacity (free to download). Explore this with an adult and have fun!

5. If you do not have a phone or recording device, try and use objects

in your home to recreate the sounds you have listed down. Get creative and try to use as many materials as you can!



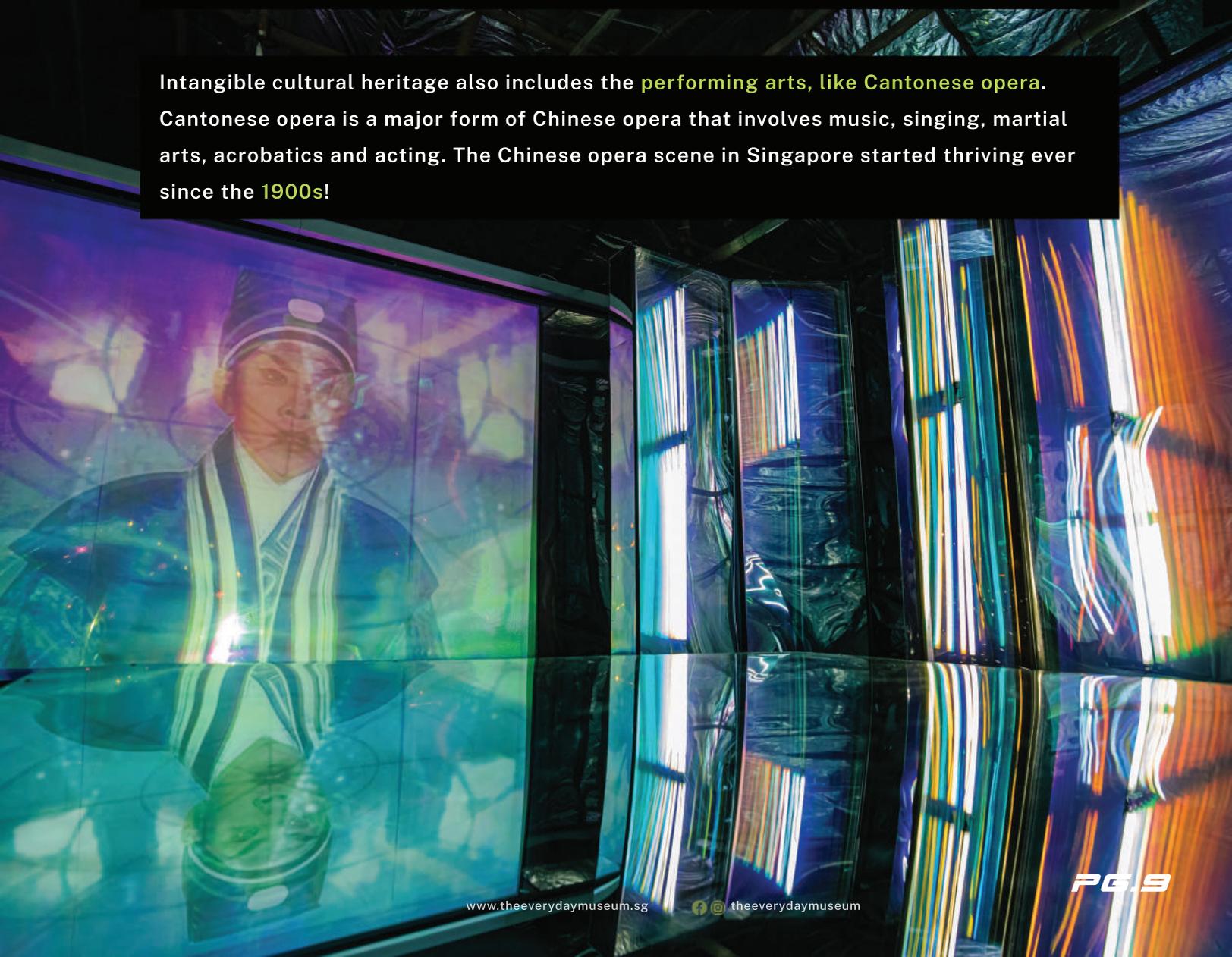
WHAT IS INTANGIBLE HERITAGE?

We may associate heritage with **monuments, museum artefacts** or **heirlooms** that have been passed down through generations as a way of sharing important histories and values from the past, but what is **intangible** heritage?

The word “intangible” refers to something that **cannot be touched** because it is not a physical object.

Intangible heritage therefore refers to **parts of our culture** such as **social practices, oral traditions, pieces of knowledge** and **traditional craftsmanship**. Some examples of intangible cultural heritage in Singapore include **dikir barat** (a Malay art form that involves singing, movement and playing of instruments), **making kueh** (a local snack often made with glutinous rice, coconut and *gula melaka*), and even **growing orchids**.

Intangible cultural heritage also includes the **performing arts, like Cantonese opera**. Cantonese opera is a major form of Chinese opera that involves music, singing, martial arts, acrobatics and acting. The Chinese opera scene in Singapore started thriving ever since the **1900s!**





Artist Ming Wong grew up watching Cantonese opera and has great interest in the traditional art form, as well as Cantonese opera films.

The term “*wayang*” comes from the word “*ma hyang*” which means “a journey towards land of spirituality”. It can also be said that “*wayang*” comes from a Javanese word meaning “shadow”, hence the popular Javanese puppet theatre termed *wayang kulit*. Today, watching or attending *wayang* could mean either attending puppet theatre, or watching an operatic show with actors on stage. It could also suggest watching a film in a cinema.

With the *Wayang Spaceship*, artist Ming Wong reimagines not only Cantonese opera as intangible cultural heritage, but also the many meanings and cultures associated with *wayang*, and how these traditions could be passed down to future generations.

Can you identify the similarities and differences between a traditional *wayang* stage and the *Wayang Spaceship*?

Besides the materials used, think about:

1. THE SIZE OF THE STAGE

Upon entering *Wayang Spaceship*, you will notice a large space behind the screen. What do you think this space was used for during a Chinese opera performance?



2. THE DESIGN OF THE STAGE

While lightboxes take up the sides and top of the stage, what kinds of images would you see on a traditional *wayang* stage? Do you know what they represent?

AND ONE MORE THING... >>>

3. THE “ACTORS”

There are four main characters in Chinese operas—*sheng* (male), *dan* (female), *chou* (clown) and *jing* (painted face). These roles can be further broken down by status—*wen* (scholar) or *wu* (warrior).

For the *Wayang Spaceship*, Ming Wong combines these two categories to imagine a scholar-warrior figure. Even though you do not see any actors on stage, the scholar-warrior’s presence is felt through the sounds you hear during the day, and the moving images you see at night.

Through a futuristic *Wayang Spaceship* that seeks to tell the stories of past, present and future, Ming Wong hopes that we can continue to talk about Cantonese opera and our intangible cultural heritage, even as times change.

ACTIVITY: CREATE YOUR OWN SPACESHIP!

Now is your chance to choose an intangible heritage to be preserved!
Can you create your own Spaceship to represent it?

Learning from the past two activities, design your own futuristic spaceship and think about:

1. The kinds of materials it would be made of
2. The soundscape that would make up its environment
3. The captain of your spaceship

Draw your ideas below and start creating!

***MY _____ SPACESHIP
WILL LOOK LIKE THIS...***

**WE HOPE YOU HAD AN
AMAZING ADVENTURE
EXPLORING MING WONG'S
WAYANG SPACESHIP!**

***SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS IN A
LETTER TO THE SCHOLAR-WARRIOR:***

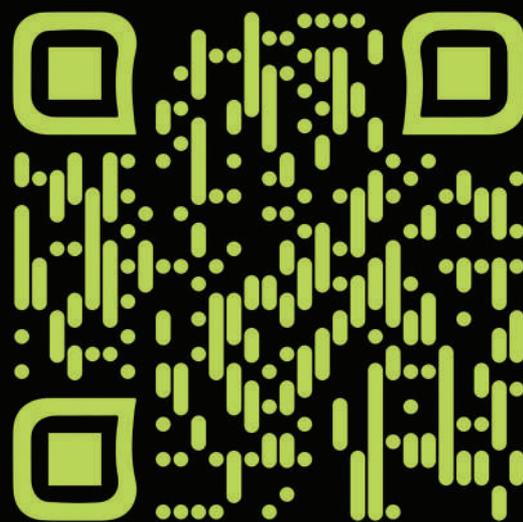
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



1. Watch *Making of the Wayang Spaceship* and hear from artist Ming Wong himself on how much the *Wayang Spaceship* means to him.



Catch him and his collaborators in action, and see the *Wayang Spaceship* being built before your eyes!



SCAN TO WATCH!





2. Witness the *Wayang Spaceship's* awakening at 7.15pm every night.

Watch the aural-visual symphony unfold live, just behind SAM at Tanjong Pagar Distripark. Be sure to look out for the details you have learnt from this guide!

SEE YOU ON THE NEXT ADVENTURE...

END



Wayang Spaceship is commissioned by The Everyday Museum, a public art initiative by Singapore Art Museum dedicated to supporting artistic practice in public spaces. The Everyday Museum is a platform for creative production and experimentation that transforms everyday experiences into meaningful encounters and offers new perspectives on the conditions of our time.

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