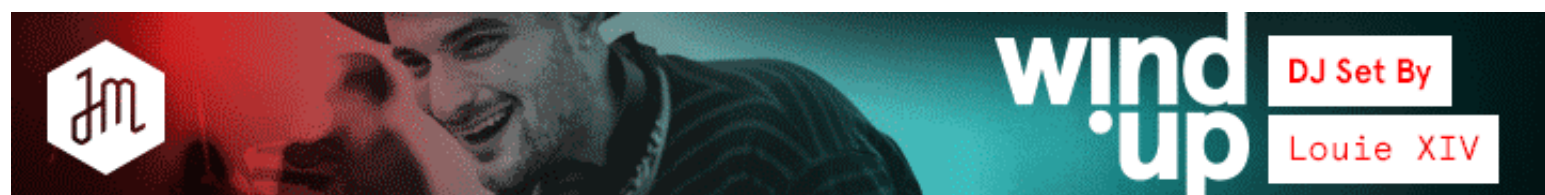




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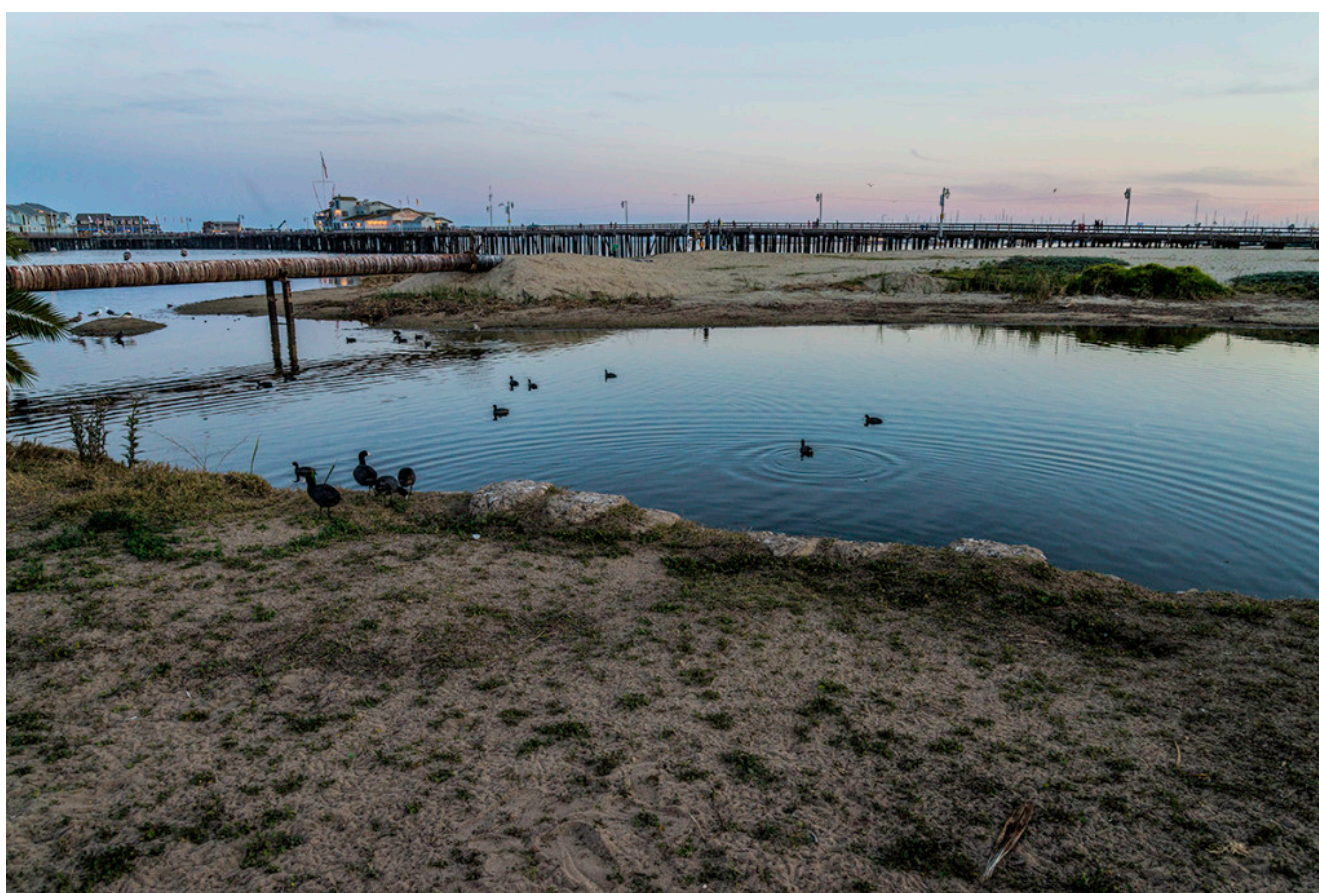


Photo: Thomas Bovo

Photographer Tom Bovo hails from New York City, but has an undeniably strong fascination with the ocean, specifically the California coastline. His fixation isn't the product of scientific interest or a desire to chart waters in a sailboat, but rather is the multitudes in which nature can alter the ocean's various aesthetic incarnations. He sees thick, rolling fog as brooding and mysterious, and views glimmering sunshine and vibrant seashores as similarly enigmatic. In conversation, Bovo invokes the writing of Joseph Conrad when discussing the ocean, referencing the great writer's quote that the sea is "too great, too mighty for common virtues; the ocean has no compassion, no faith, no law, no memory."

Bovo's interest in the ocean's many moods translates beautifully in his photos, and he's showcasing a special exhibit of his work called "The Other Side of Summer," at the [440 Gallery](#) in Park Slope from July 9-August 9. The exhibit hones in on one of Bovo's favorite settings, the coast and harbor of Santa Barbara, California. In the Q&A below, Bovo tells us exactly what it is about the beach town's charm that drove him to forge his very first photo series outside of New York City.

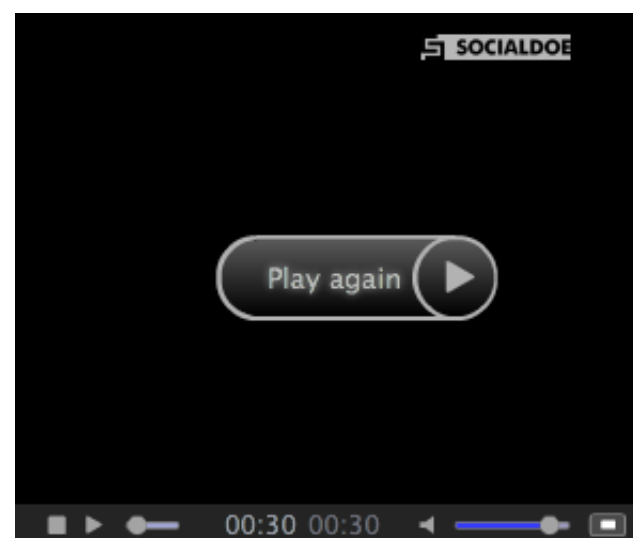
Brooklyn Magazine: What was it about Santa Barbara in particular that you found interesting? Do you think it has its own distinct character, or is it similar to a lot of other California beach towns aesthetically?

Tom Bovo: Santa Barbara is a place where you can find such diverse elements as a classic 50s era diner, a museum dedicated to the history of deep sea diving, public open air bus transportation, expensive shopping, wine-tasting bars, and California Mission-style architecture, but all in a very modern city. The place reflects a little bit of everything that one can imagine as "California."

I have spent some time in other places along the California coast, but Santa Barbara has an iconic beach town aesthetic and feeling that is unique, and is unlike San Diego or Los Angeles, which are too large and populated. It seems as if the mountains that surround Santa Barbara have frozen time so the beach culture lives on and preserves an aesthetic from a past era. It is not an accident that some episodes of the old TV series, *Sea Hunt*, were filmed on nearby Catalina Island.

Being a New York City-native, have you always found the serenity and calm of the ocean appealing? Why or why not?

There is something that can be quite calming about the ocean, that seems to drain tensions away. In New York you have to seek out the times and places for that experience, but in Santa Barbara it seemed much more easily accessible—there was always a quiet place just a short walk down the beach. Joseph Conrad wrote about the ocean, "As if it were too great, too mighty for common virtues, the ocean has no



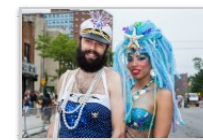
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compassion, no faith, no law, no memory." In some places, at some moments, you can really feel how accurately Conrad expressed that idea.

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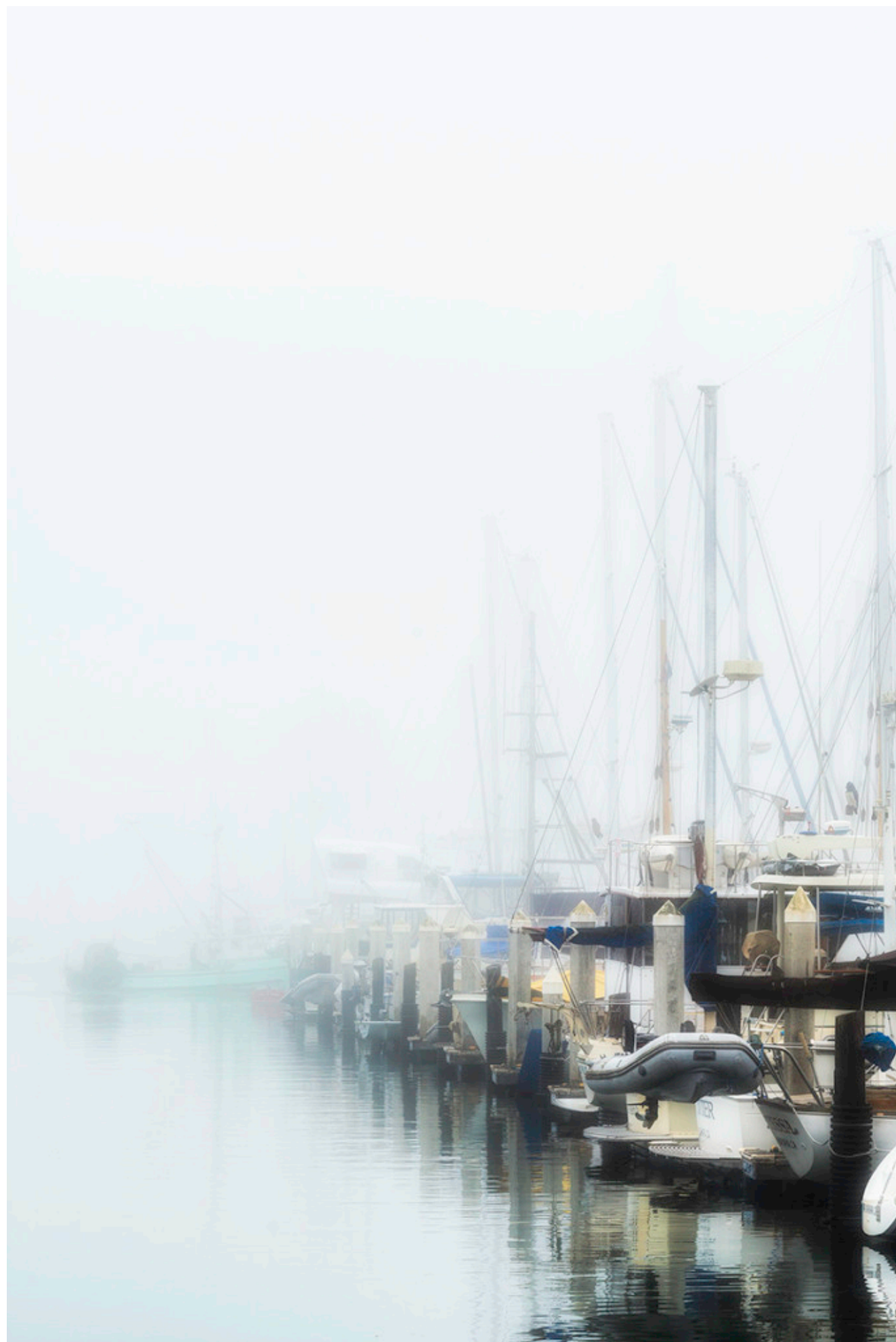


Photo: Thomas Bovo

How is this exhibit a departure from your other work?

This work is different in two ways. First, this is the first time I have shown work that was not created here in New York. I have based nearly all of my past exhibited work on subjects and ideas that are very New York-centric, such as industrial landscapes, street photography, still lifes of leaves collected in New York, and even rural landscapes of Rhinebeck. This exhibit was a chance to explore a new in a different place.

Second, my work has been growing, and this exhibit has pieces that are physically larger than I've previously shown. This show gives me a chance to present pieces that are more challenging in their technical aspects. Although I did my own printing for some of the work, I needed to work with a printer for the larger pieces. It isn't easy to let any aspect of the work out of my hands, but I am learning to collaborate.

What motivated you to undertake this project? What are you trying to convey with these images?

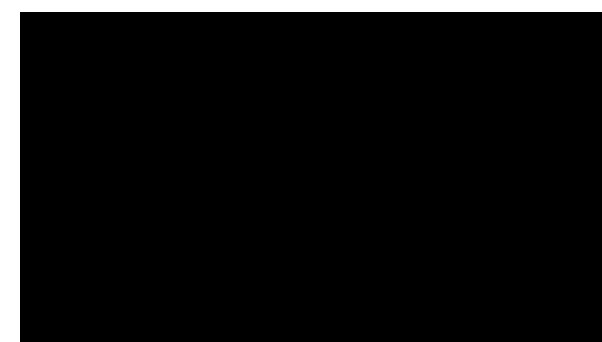
In typical California style, much of Santa Barbara is spread out. The architecture favors one and two-story buildings and homes with large yards, so there is a very spacious feel to the place, except at the harbor. Santa Barbara Harbor is one of the larger marinas in Southern California, with about 1,200 slips for boats up to 100 feet long, but there is a waiting list to get a slip, and some people have been on that list for over 20 years. That sense of crowdedness reminded me a bit of New York, and when I saw that harbor during several foggy mornings, I was sold.

The enormous wealth and privilege that is represented by having a boat at the harbor in Santa Barbara represents a powerful force, but seeing how the fog and ocean can alter the mood of the place, you can really feel how we as people must answer to the forces of nature. Looking out at the harbor or beach with the fog closed in all around, the scale of the seascape is much smaller and much more personal.

When and why did you start taking pictures?

I learned about photography from my father, who was an amateur photographer. As I was growing up, he saw that I was visually curious, and liked to draw. I had gotten a simple camera as a gift and started carrying it with me wherever I went, and he helped me by paying for me to send my film out to be processed. I guess he was impressed enough by what I did with that simple plastic camera, so he started to teach me to use his 35mm camera, and even taught me a little about developing my own film. Over the course of a few years, I took over all his camera equipment and he even bought me a 35mm SLR. Photography just seemed to be a part of who I was and what I did—always

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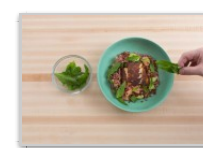


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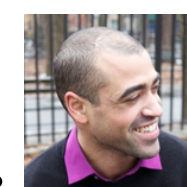
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looking for a compelling image in the places where I found myself.



Photo: Thomas Bovo

What do you hope people take away from these photographs?

This work is seeking out a more restful and serene experience than my usual. It is very much about releasing pent-up tension and finding a satisfying and restorative experience in interacting with the place where you are. Each piece is a kind of mandala, or meditation. The hope is that people will see the images and sense a wisdom or guiding principle in them.

Why is this exhibit called "The Other Side of Summer"?

Santa Barbara represents a playground where people can enjoy the surfing, boating, the diving, and all of the water culture. Many of the summer leisure pleasures we seek out are available there on an almost year round basis. It is a place of endless summer adventure. But there is another side to that playground, where that world is quieted, and slowed down, and that alternate view is what I am seeking with this work.



Photo: Thomas Bovo

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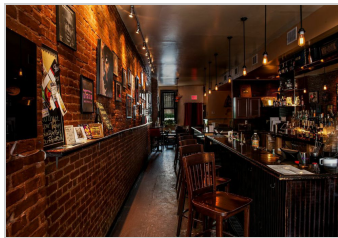
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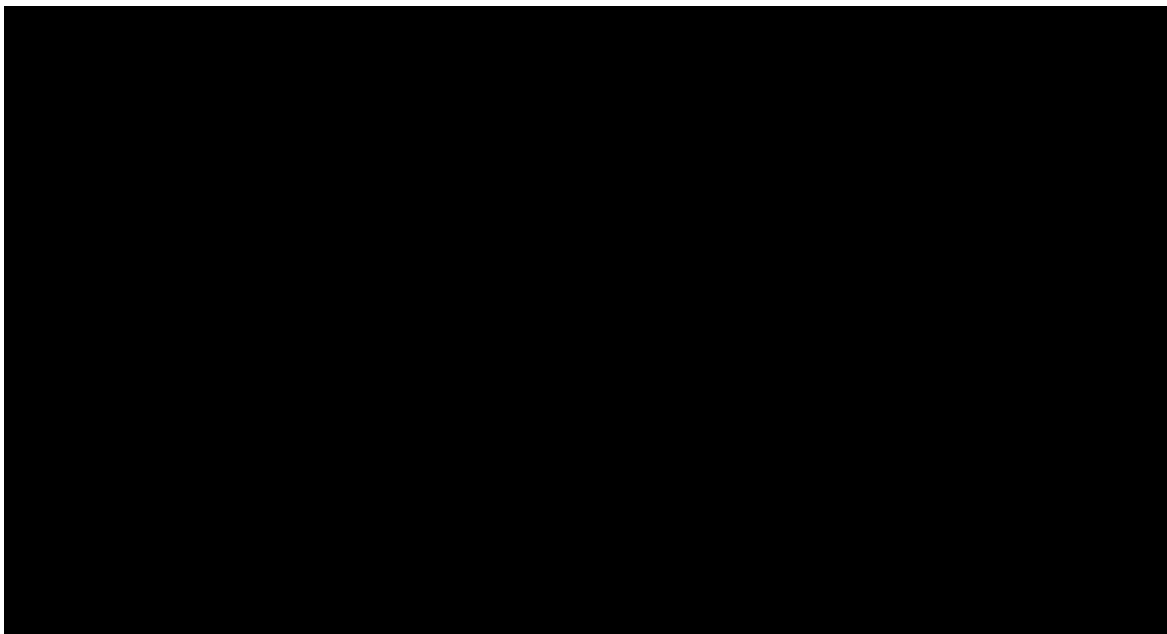
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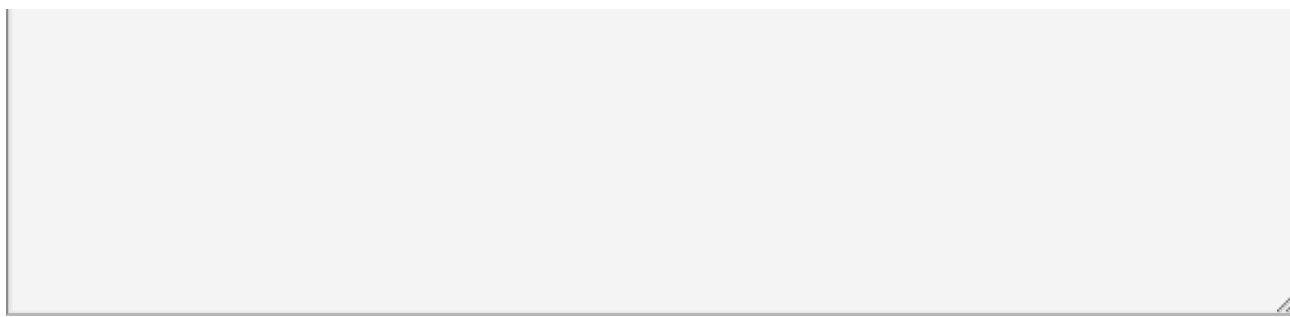
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