

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## Very Important Porsches - 356 given the red-carpet treatment in Hamburg

### Lead

At the Automuseum Prototyp in Hamburg, a unique exhibition is celebrating the Porsche 356, featuring numerous lesser-known versions of what the Germans commonly refer to as the 'Ur-Porsche'. We sent photographer Rémi Dargegen to capture the exhibition and talk to museum curator Thomas König...



The Automuseum Prototyp in Hamburg is one of the finest of its type in Europe, particularly if you're keen on Volkswagen and Porsche. It's easy to lose yourself between the rare, historically significant and lovingly curated exhibits. Currently housed in the Baroque building's spacious halls is 'VIP 356'. It tells the story of a sports car icon, the Porsche 356, from the earliest Austrian Gmünd prototypes through the numerous coupés, cabriolets and Speedsters. The exhibition's curators Oliver Schmidt and Thomas König gave us a private tour, during which König answered our questions.





### How did 'VIP 356' come about, and what is the idea behind the exhibition's title?

The Porsche 356 was actually the first car with which Oliver and I jointly started our collection. It has a special meaning for us, in spite of the lingering hype surrounding the 911. There would have been no 911 if it weren't for the 356, hence the 'very important' name. We tried to gather a dozen of the most important 356s from around the world.

### What's your oldest memory of the Porsche 356?

My first conscious encounter with the Porsche 356 must have occurred when I was about 12 years old. I went to a workshop with my father to see his old Mercedes SL, and there was an early 356 parked alongside. I then knew what a car should look like.



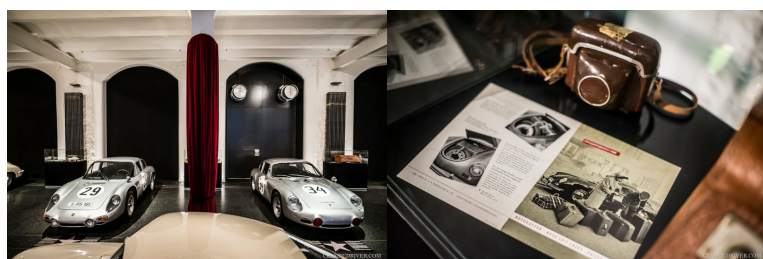
### Since then you've had many cars. Do you still have a special relationship with the Porsche 356?

Porsche 356s have always formed the core of our collection. They hold a special place in our hearts, and have always featured in the museum. Oliver even drove me to my wedding with our first joint car, a 356B. Last year was particularly important, as our Gmünd Coupé's restoration was finally completed and we found the oldest surviving Stuttgart-built 356.

### How did you choose and locate the models featured?

We wanted to tell the whole story, from the very beginning to the most exotic competition versions. Because we've been rooted in the 356 scene for the last 20 years, we knew where the most important cars were located and were able to persuade our collector friends to take part.





### Were you supported by the Porsche Museum?

We've worked with the Porsche Museum, in particular with archivist Dieter Landsberger, for years, and we help each other whenever we can. It's a great honour for us to borrow such valuable cars as the Abarth Carrera.

### Are there any important models missing?

We could have included more 'everyday' models, but unfortunately we just don't have the space.



### Which exhibit are you most proud of?

I'm delighted that we've got the earliest known Stuttgart-built 356, chassis number 5006, and an America Roadster. Both are mid-restoration, and have proved particularly popular with visitors, who are often keen to chat and learn more about them.

### Which model boasts the best story?

There are too many stories concerning these cars to tell them all. But the most recent – and interesting – anecdote is about how we found ‘5006’. We got a call from a chap saying he’d found the oldest Porsche in the world in a garden. For a long time we didn’t believe him, until we saw it for ourselves. The salvage of said car from the overgrown garden, which was also filled with various other abandoned Porsches, was so exciting. It was so difficult to access that a section of adjoining road had to be cordoned off, so we could set up a crane.



**Which is your favourite Porsche 356?**

Probably our Gmünd Coupé – it’s a pre-production prototype, and the true origin of the design icon.

**Have you planned the next special exhibition?**

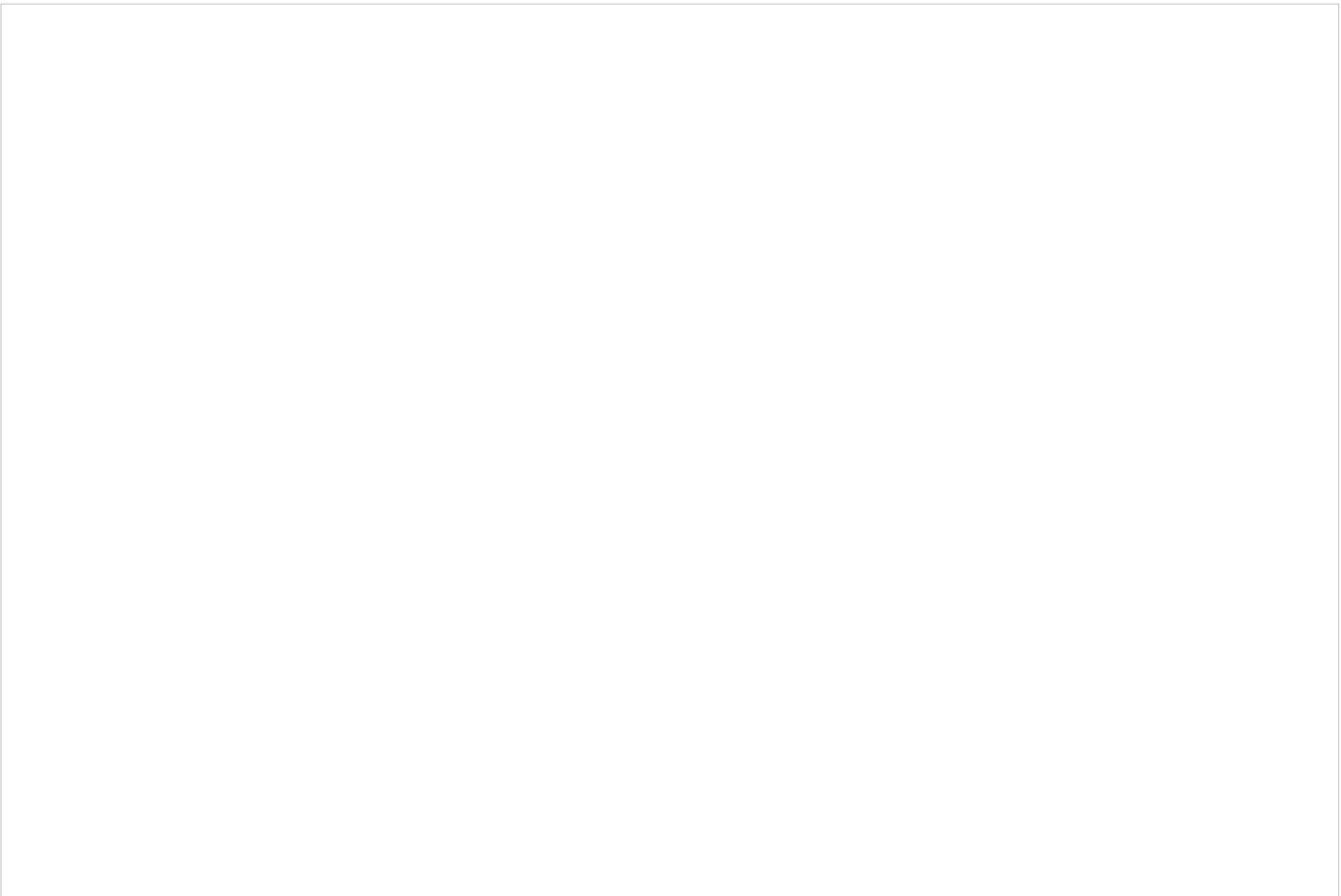
Yes, we’re already working under pressure to put together a BMW Art Cars exhibition for the end of 2016. It’s a whole new field for us, and we’re delighted that BMW has trusted us with this unique automotive art.

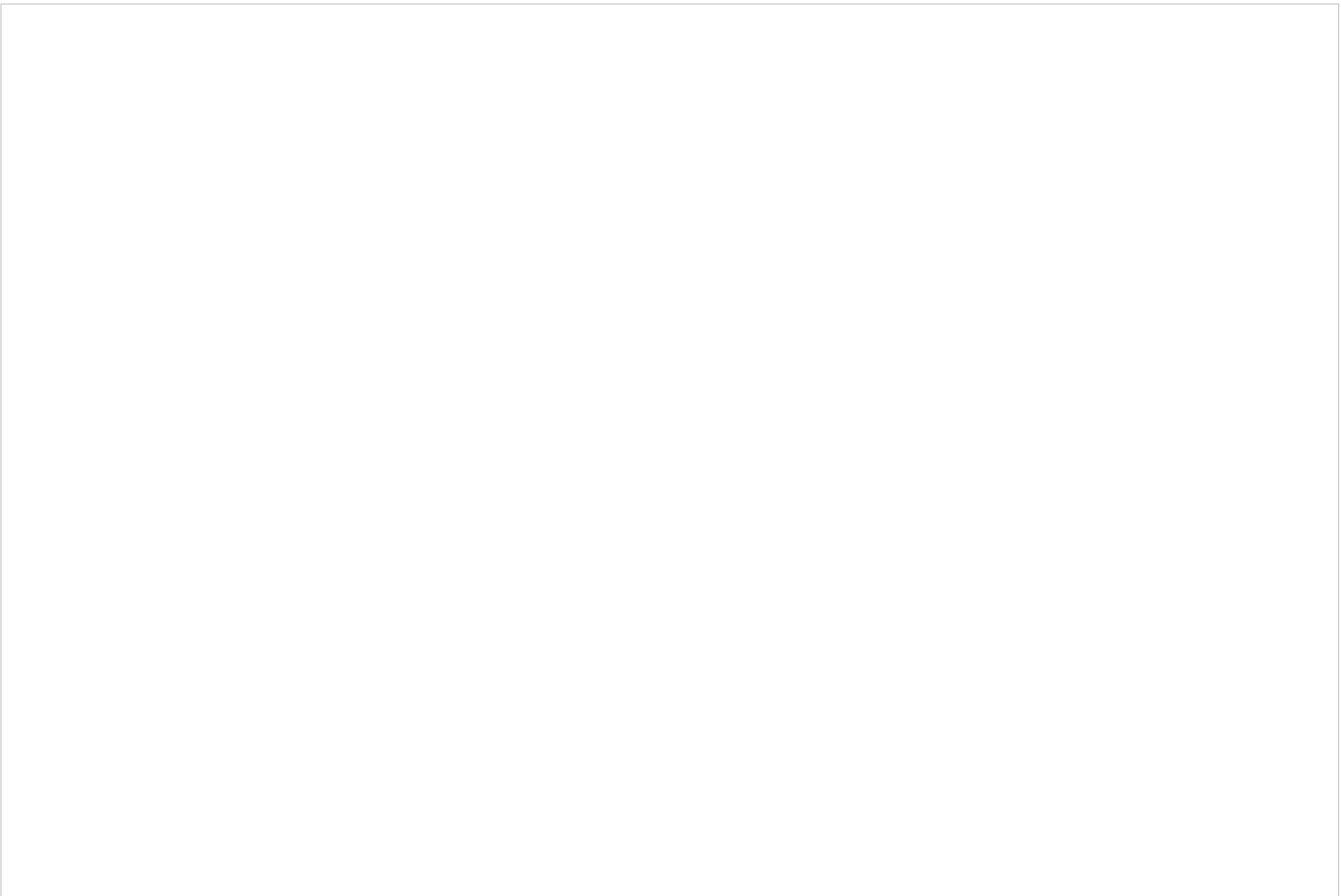
*Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2016*

**Gallery**





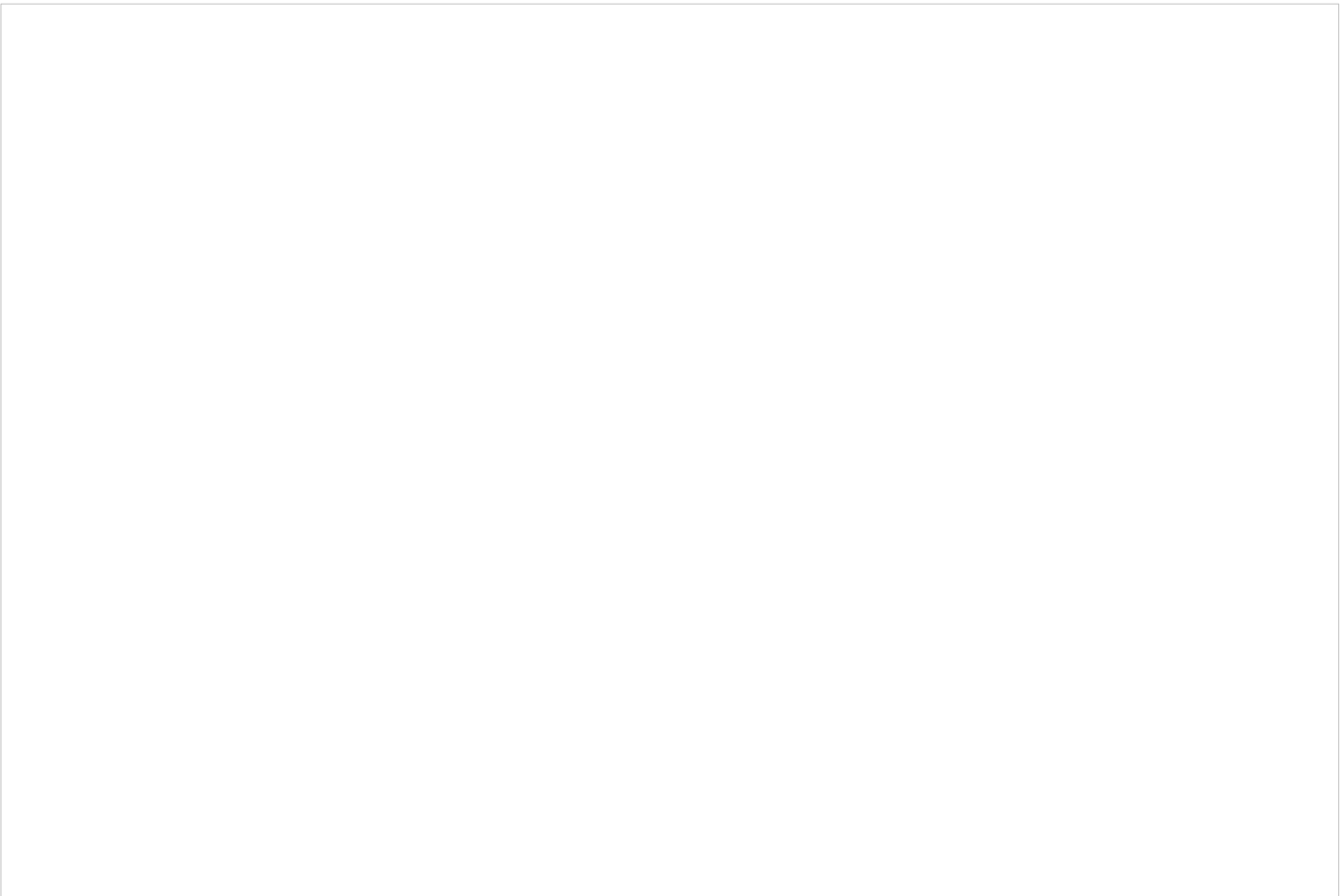












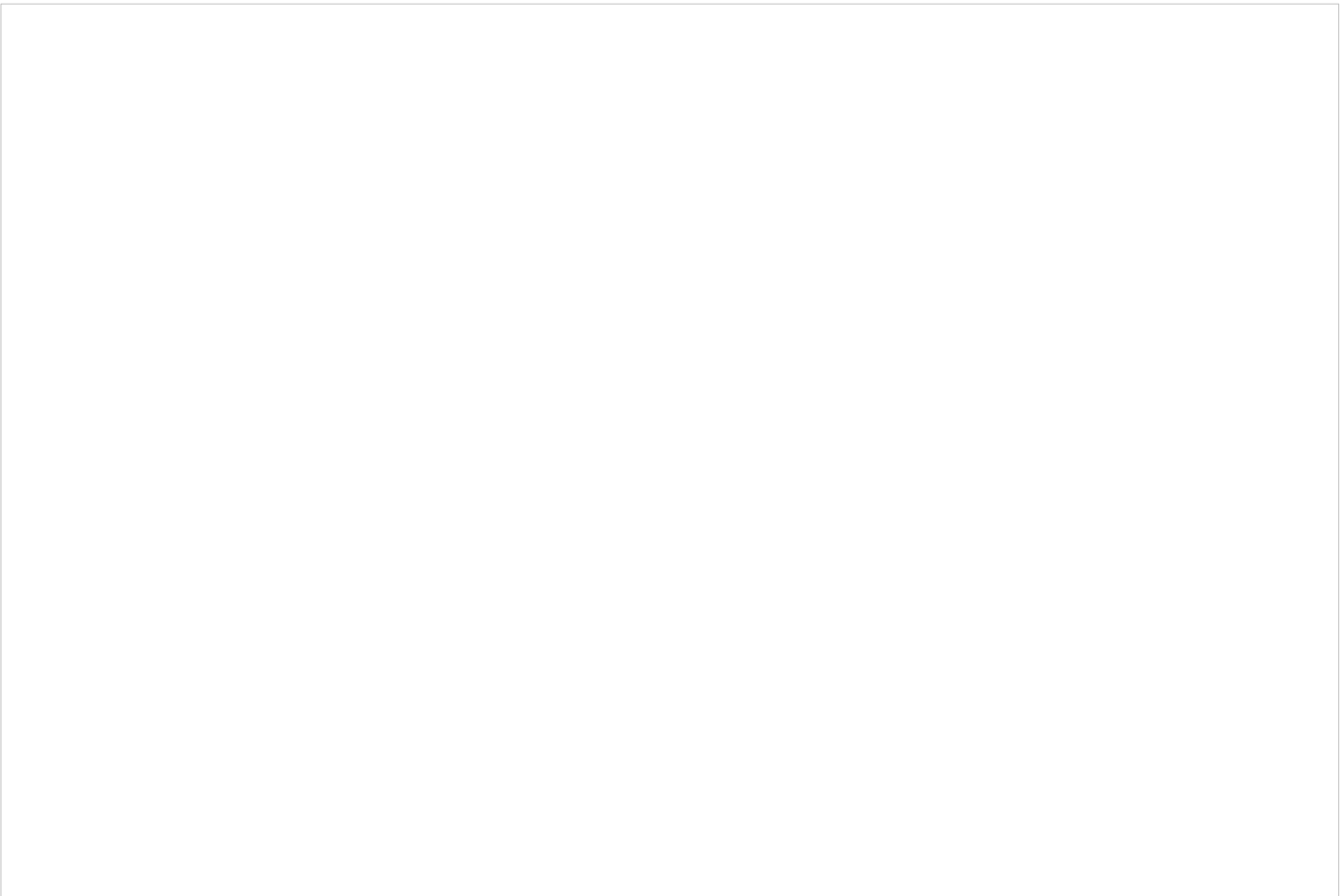










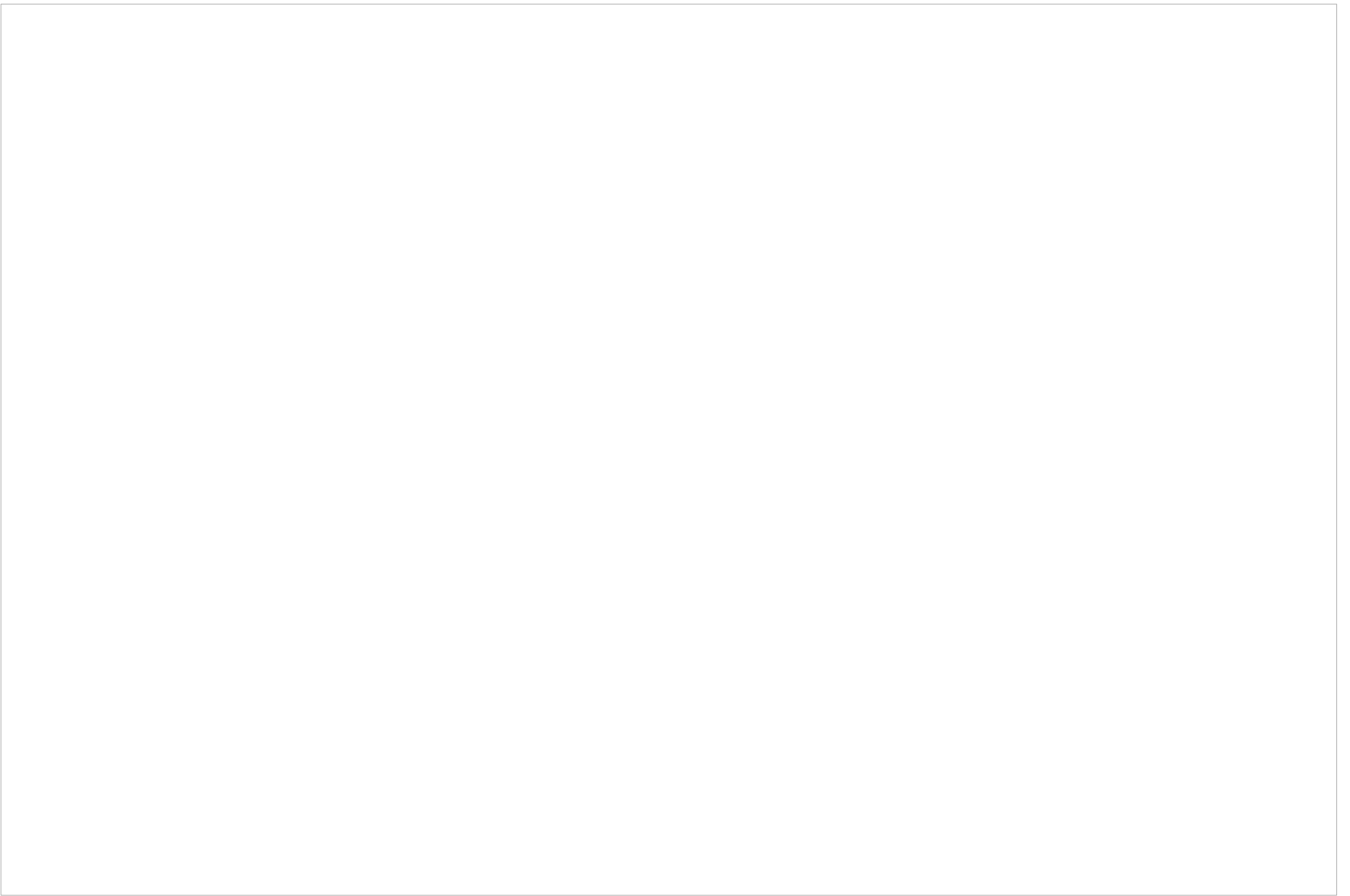


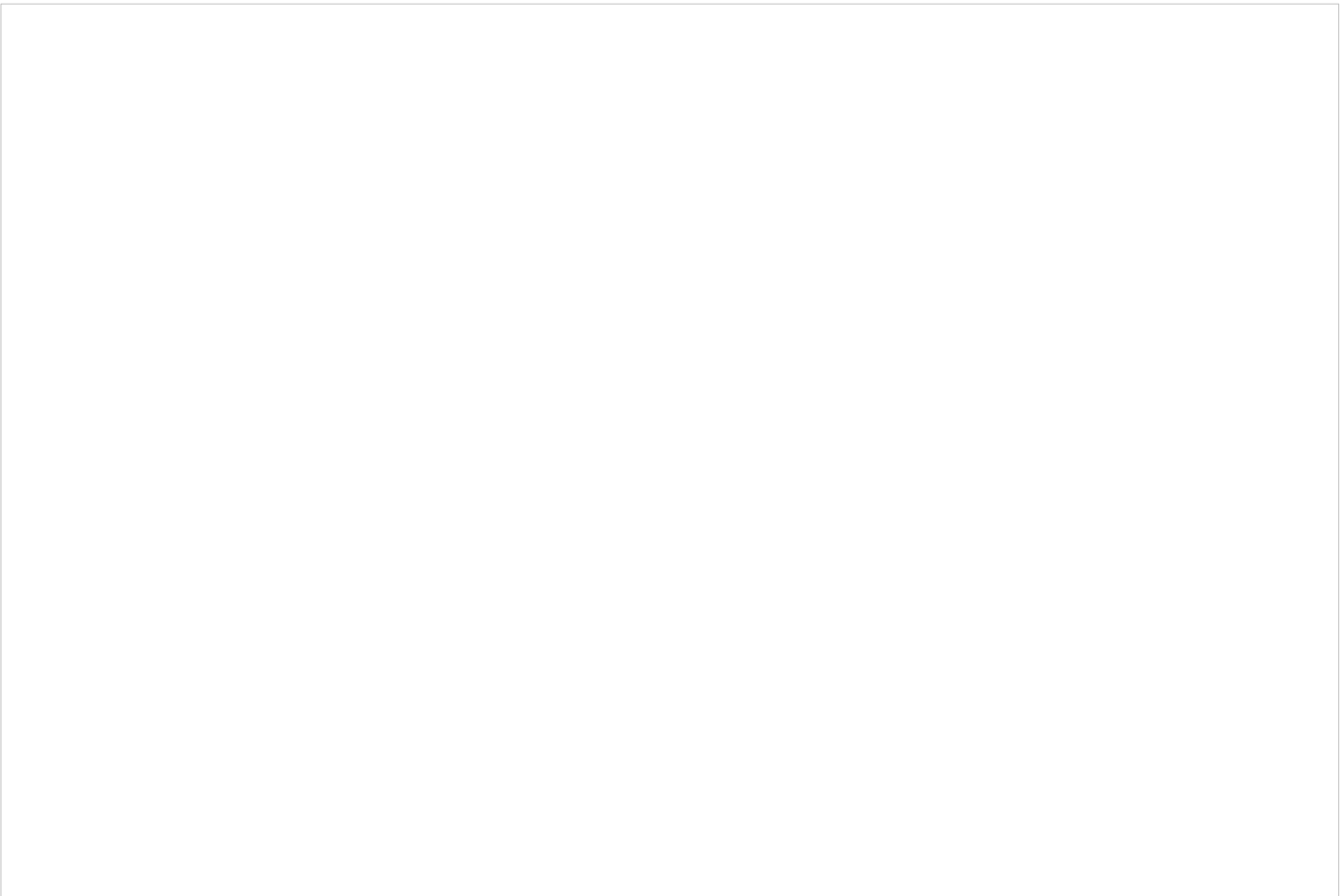






















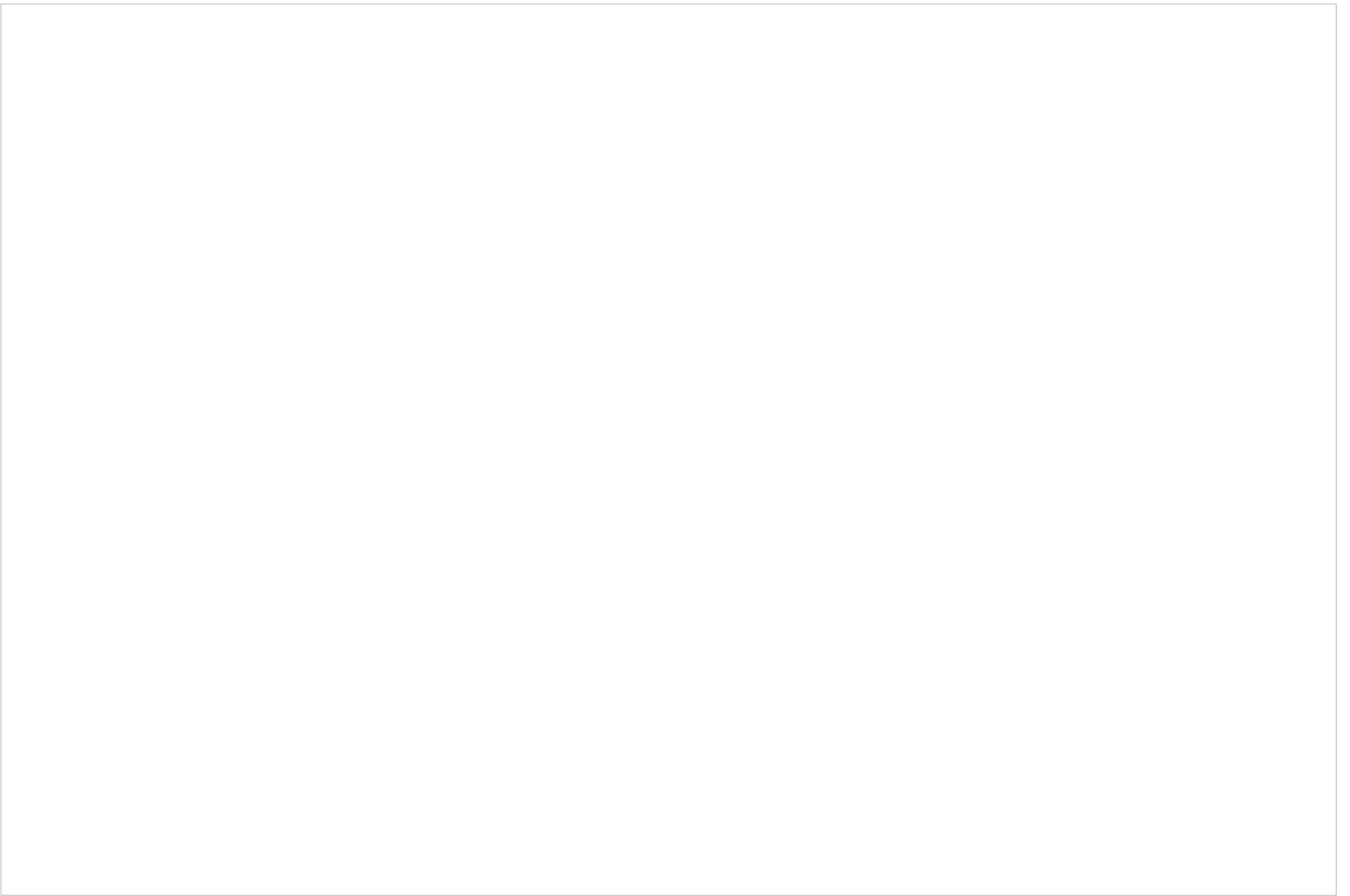














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