

North Dakota Council on the Arts

For Immediate Release

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***BLOCH*: a global art project comes to North America**

BLOCH, a global art project, is coming to North Dakota from July 23 to August 4, 2014. At the heart of this unique multidisciplinary, interactive project is a large tree trunk connected to an ancient, annual carnival tradition from the Swiss region of Appenzell. When the last spruce tree is felled in the winter, the trunk – known as the *Bloch* – is pulled by twenty men from the village of Urnäsch to Herisau and back. At the end of this one-day procession, the trunk is sold to the highest bidder at auction in the village square of Urnäsch. Subsequently, it is processed into shingles or furniture.

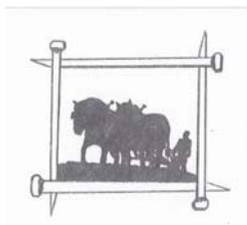
However, in 2011, the buyers were the Swiss artist duo known as Com&Com (Marcus Gossolt/Johannes M. Hedinger). The artists plan to give the trunk a new role. Instead of simply traveling the relatively short distance between the two Swiss villages, the *Bloch* will travel the world, stopping on every continent. Through the *Bloch*, their goal is to create dialogue among various people, traditions, and customs around the world in an interactive way by uniting contemporary art, folk culture, and folk art. It's about participation and cultural exchange, global art production, connecting artists and folk cultures to develop a worldwide conversation, and a broadened grasp of art and culture. The project will include the traveling tree log, related cultural and social events with local cultures and artists as well as public discussions and symposia. The project will result in a publication, a 90-minute documentary film (by Fabian Kaiser), and exhibit.

Bloch started its travels in Europe (Switzerland and Germany) in 2012. It then went to Asia (China, Taiwan, and Singapore) in 2013. And, in 2014, *Bloch* will continue its journey to the third continent, North America, by partnering extensively with the North Dakota Council on the Arts; Troyd Geist, state folklorist; and Barbara Hauser (from Zurich, Switzerland) who studied Fine Arts and Linguistics in North Dakota. Our area is appropriate for the visit as the state contains the geographical center of North America and Turtle Mountain where, according to Ojibway mythology, "Sky Woman" with the help of a muskrat caused "Turtle Island" (North America and the world) to re-emerge after the Great Flood. In collaboration with local artists, folk artists, and traditional craftsmen, the story of *Bloch* will continue to evolve and grow. Traditional/folk and contemporary artists, as well as the general public, will interact with the tree. *Bloch* is scheduled for Downtown Fargo Street Fair (July 17-19), Napoleon and the Nokota Horse Conservancy in Linton (July 25), Taylor Horsefest (July 26), Fort Totten Days, Spirit Lake Indian Reservation (July 27), Rugby (July 28), Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation (July 29-31), and the Hjemkmost Center in Fargo/Moorhead (August 3).

For further information and videos of *BLOCH*'s travels visit www.bloch23781.com. High resolution images are available at http://bloch23781.com/home/?page_id=26.



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The North Dakota Council on the Arts is the state agency responsible for the support and development of the arts throughout North Dakota, and is funded by the state legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts.