



BLOCH

2011–2017

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Bloch is a multidisciplinary art project created and initiated by Swiss artist duo, Com&Com (Marcus Gossolt / Johannes M. Hedinger). The project combines contemporary art with traditional popular culture and fosters dialogue between people, by sharing traditions and customs from different cultures.

A *Bloch* is the lowest, branch-less, piece of a large tree trunk. According to an Appenzell carnival custom bearing the same name, the stump of the last spruce to have been felled in winter is drawn back and forth between the two villages, Urnäsch and Herisau, by 20 men. At the end of this day-long procession, the *Bloch* is then auctioned off to the highest bidder in Urnäsch village square. As a rule, someone from the region will acquire the *Bloch* and use it to produce a special piece of furniture or tiles and shingles.

In 2011, Swiss art duo Com&Com (Johannes M. Hedinger/Marcus Gossolt) were the first Non-locals to purchase the *Bloch* tree trunk at a historic peak price of CHF 3000.—. They explained that they did not wish to use it as construction material but wanted it to travel around the world, making at least one stop on every continent.

The *Bloch* has been on its journey since 2012: After first stations in Europe (amongst others in Bern, Basel, Berlin, Karlsruhe, St. Gallen and Zurich) and Asia (Shanghai, Taipei and Singapore), in the mean time, the *Bloch* has arrived in North America (North Dakota, Minnesota). Over the course of the next three years, it will travel to further destinations on the South American, African and Australian continents before returning to Switzerland.

The *Bloch* and the tradition behind it will thus be exported globally, its story spun further. Obviously, the goal is not to spread a custom or a production across the globe as a form of cultural imperialism. The *Bloch* and its story to date are an experiment a lab, an invitation to work together, to take up an active dialogue, to participate, partake and foster cultural exchange.

Bloch is a production with several different chapters and an open ending. What actually happens on the journey and during the encounters between people and cultures will only be revealed during the journey and in the actual moment. The sole aim, other than this journey across six continents, is the *Bloch*'s final return to its place of origin, where artists, musicians and project partners from all stops will come together to celebrate within the scope of a final festival. This will be accompanied by a documentary film, an exhibition, a symposium and a publication.

www.bloch23781.com

GESAMTKUNSTWERK

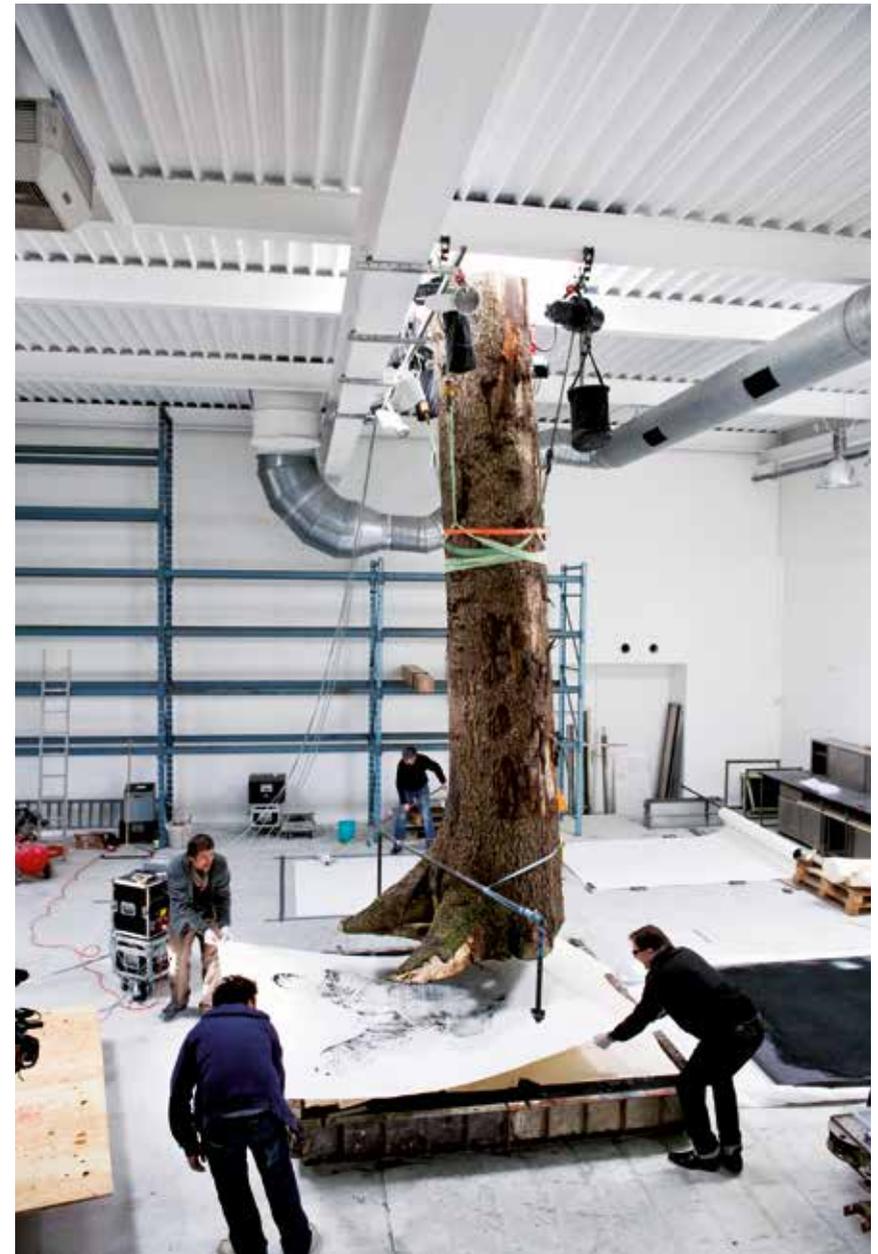
Bloch has no linear story, has many protagonists and hundreds of collaborators, who contribute to the synthesis of the Gesamtkunstwerk Bloch in the most different media and channels. From several perspectives, the story of an Appenzell spruce is told (and its underlying customs) on its journey around the world, its experiences with other cultures and its encounters with those people.

The tree works with it as own medium and core of crystallization, asks questions and enables communication and collaboration. At each place, new actions, works and productions are developed in cooperation with local artists based on their traditions and customs. Up to know, these partnerships took on very different forms : Partly they were of physical nature (works of arts as printings, woodcarving, installations and attachments), partly productively installed (Bloch as exhibition or filmset), partly performatively (Bloch as stage for concerts, theatre, opera, performance and fashion show) or discursively (Bloch as setting for conferences, talks and publications).

The tree is accompanied on its journey by the Swiss artist-duo Com&Com, who purchased the tree by auction 2011 as part of the local custom in Urnäsch. Partly, they use Bloch as a tool for producing works of art, but first of all they figure as ambassadors, mediators and curators of the several actions and cultural productions that are initiated around Bloch on its world-tour through six continents. The collaborators originate from very different fields/backgrounds : visual artists, musicians, performers, philosophers, sociologists, historians, educators, et al.

A further companion on the journey is a documentary and reportage team, who records the incidents and who regularly publishes videos, pictures and texts on the project-website and on social media channels. In this way, also not present but interested people can experience where Bloch is being at the moment and what it is experiencing right there. Furthermore, with it the particular places is linked to each other and an additional exchange is enabled (networks). All pictures, videos, texts, works flow in a media archive, that will also be accessible online in the second half of the project and will be the basis for the closing documentary film, the closing exhibition and final publication.

At the end, the project BLOCH will last 8 years. But, the way will always be part of the final product and therefore aim. For, the experience of an event with Bloch and the with it linked encounter of people and cultures are currently taking place.





Bloch Urnäsch, Procession (2011)



Bloch Urnäsch, Auction (2011)

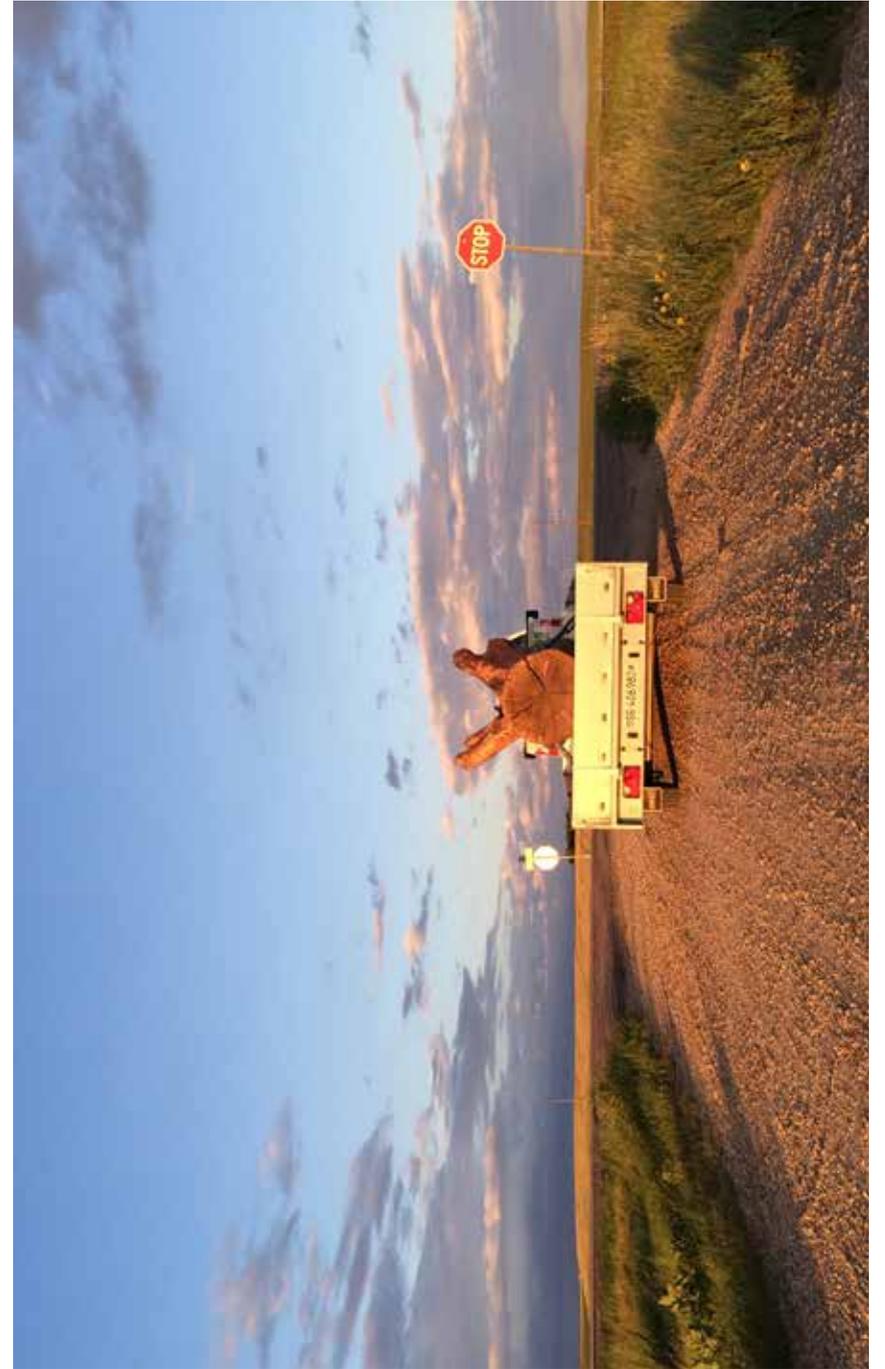
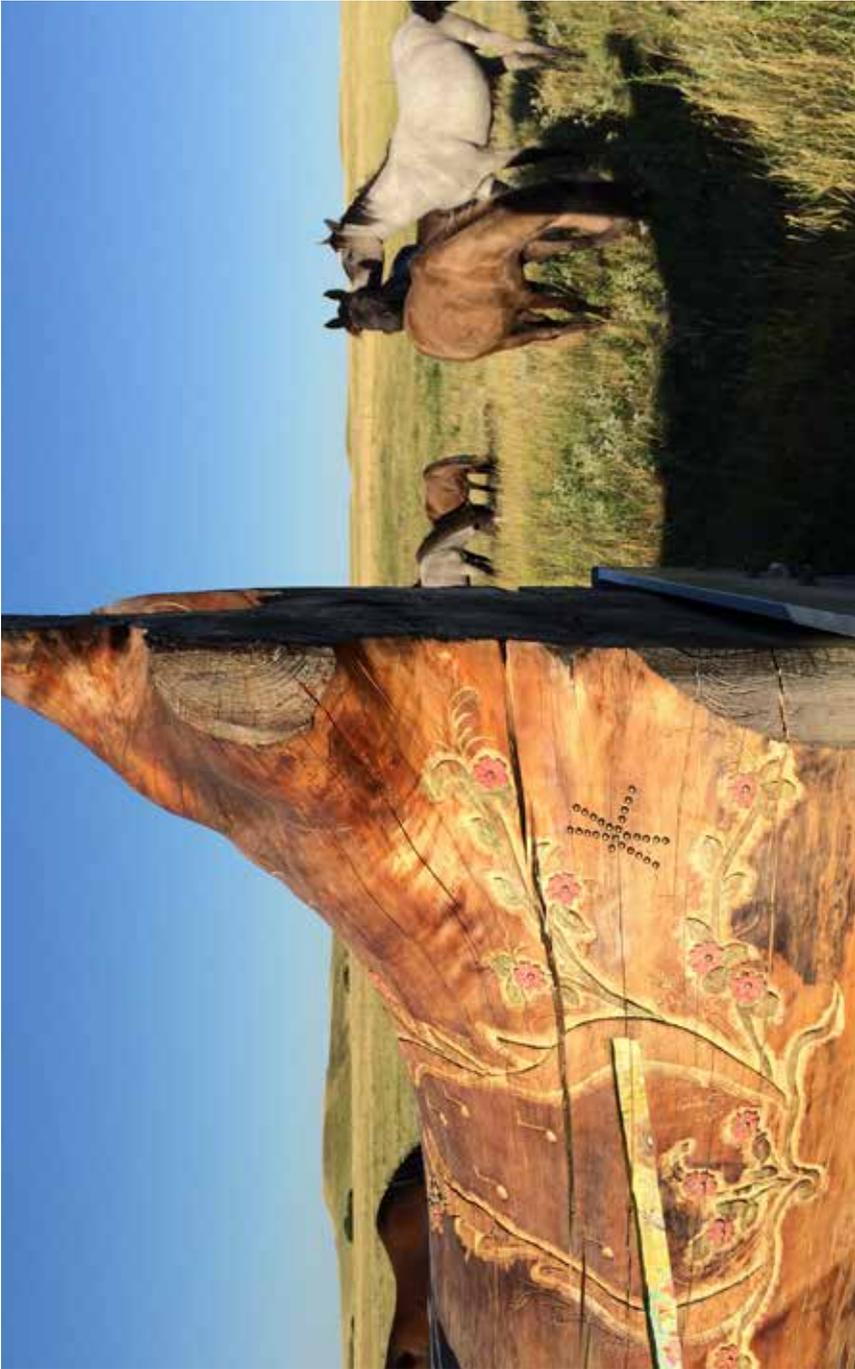




Bloch Berlin, Procession (2012)



Bloch Shanghai, Performance (2013)





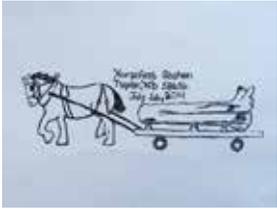
















BLOCH WORLD TOUR

EUROPA

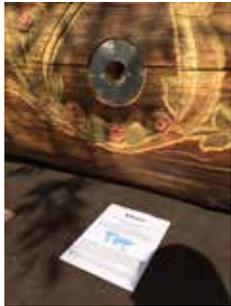
- Urnäsch** / Switzerland (March 2011)
- Zurich** / Switzerland (TEDxZurich, October 2011)
- Genf** / Switzerland (Fonderie Kugler, November 2011)
- St.Gallen** / Switzerland (Kunstgiesserei, March 2012)
- Bern** / Switzerland (PROGR, April 2012)
- Basel** / Switzerland (Swiss Art Awards, June 2012)
- Berlin** / Germany (Denkerei, June 2012)
- Karlsruhe** / Germany (ZKM, July 2012)
- Zürich** / Switzerland (Helmhaus, July – September 2012)
- St.Gallen** / Switzerland (Lagerhaus, August – September 2012)
- Teufen** / Switzerland (Zeughaus, June 2013 – May 2014)
- Heidelberg** / Germany (Heidelberger Kunstverein, November 2014 – February 2015)

ASIA

- Taipei** / Taiwan (Juming Museum, October 2012 – January 2013)
- Shanghai** / China (9. Shanghai Biennale, October 2012 – March 2013)
- Singapore** / Singapore (DAW, Japan Creative Center, May 2013)

NORD AMERICA

- North Dakota** / USA (Fargo Street Fair, Fargo, Napoleon, Nokota Horse Conservancy Linton, Taylor Horsefest Taylor, Fort Totten Days Spirit Lake Indian Reservation, Geographical Center of North America Rugby, Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation, July – August 2014)
- Moorhead** / Minnesota USA (Hjemkomst Center, January – March 2015)



PARTICIPATORY SOCIAL SCULPTURE

Bloch is a transdisciplinary and transmedial Gesamtkunstwerk with a production and activity period of approx. 8 years. The work of art duo Com&Com as well as contemporary art production in general will thereby explore new territory.

In current art productions, focus is placed increasingly on production processes involving both artists and recipients and less so exclusively on the art objects themselves. The journey takes you from the object to the subject, from the artefact to the referential, from research to process and from interaction to action, and the situation. Although the Bloch is a physical object (a tree trunk), it is also a vessel for what it triggers and makes possible, i.e. processes, experiences, and new production forms.

Works of art based on relationships between individuals and groups; between artists and observers and the world, are defined by Nicolas Bourriaud as «Relational Art». Artistic practices working with human interaction and within a social context are described as «material». Bourriaud describes them as follows: «This chance can be summed up in just a few words: learning to inhabit the world in a better way.» As early as in his theory of “Social Sculpture”, Joseph Beuys already integrated human action into art production, thereby aiming at encouraging society to design actively.

Umberto Eco described interaction between the artist and recipients as the basic prerequisite for artistic creation, which explains why every work of art should be considered unfinished. Eco foresaw a term often overused today, i.e. “participation”. Observers are given the opportunity to participate actively in the creation of a work of art; as co-producers, they are made part of the artistic process or then, social exchange replaces the work of art.

Participatory projects often follow a similar course: Once the playing field has been put in place and the rules and players determined, the ball enters into the game. The players and recipients then contribute a large share of the production (for instance, everyone contributing at the various different Bloch stops as well as the media, scientists and participants, via social media channels). This process could also be referred to as “post-production” – thanks to different adaptations and interpretations, a cultural object already coined by a traditional custom is continuously repositioned and developed farther.

Although strategically planned in part, as of a certain point in time, participative processes such as Bloch can only be steered and corrected to a certain degree. The more incomplete or open an installation, the more you need to plan for unforeseen developments and results that, however, also always bear opportunities and potential. A live situation

will lead to an art form that is simultaneously a social experiment with an emancipatory character. Once a project has been launched – following its design, planning and initiation – Com&Com will often “only” be able to monitor and curate its course, collecting results, documenting, possibly interpreting, and then sharing them.

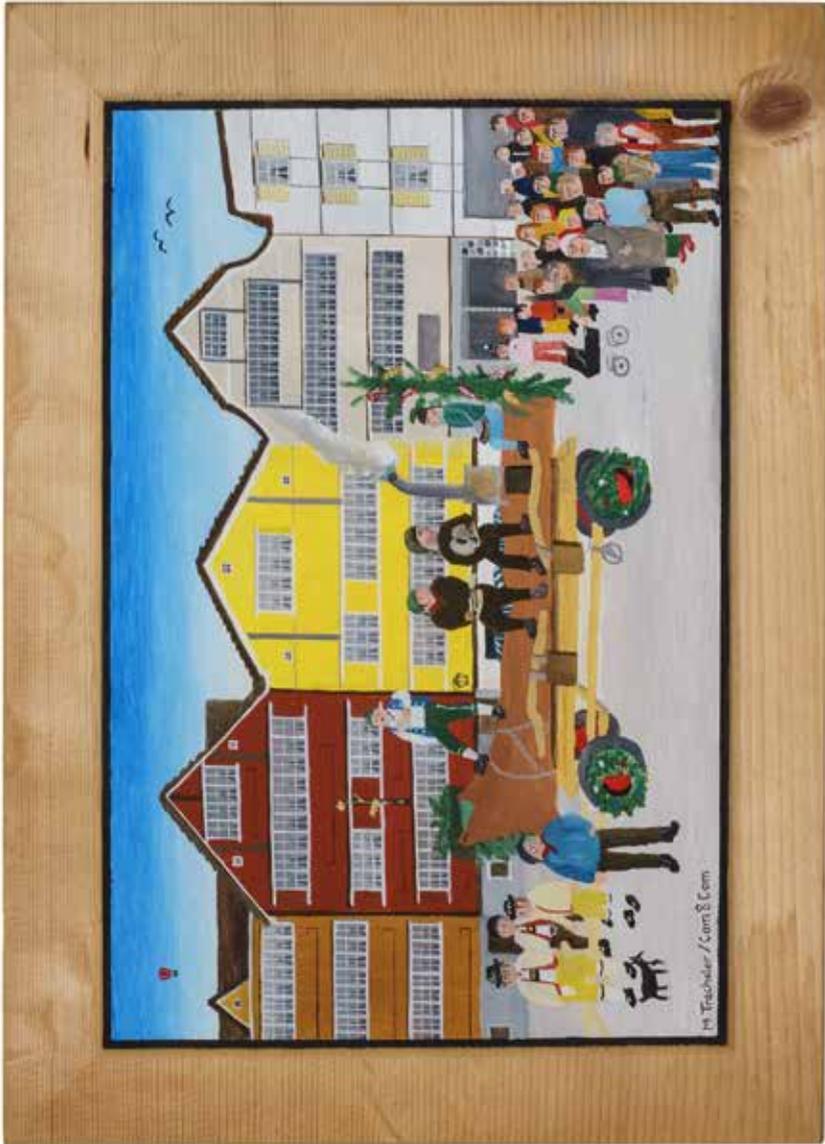
This leads to a shift away from and an extension of the traditional core competences of an artist in contemporary art production. According to Com&Com: «We went from being artists that make things – to being artists that makes things happen».

Primarily, the BLOCH project is to generate social capital. BLOCH is about knowledge production and “sense making-machine”. BLOCH attempts to transcend national, cultural and continental borders within a globalised world and to thus foster dialogue. This is achieved by means of art and cultural production, communication and exchange; or in a nutshell, by creating a social sculpture.

BLOCH as a trigger: A fairly unknown Appenzell custom will be carried out into the world in form of a tree, in view of inspiring people from different cultures to react to it with their own customs, images and ideas and to thus create something new and contemporary. BLOCH combines intercultural dialogue and transcultural art practice. BLOCH calls for intercultural dialogue and initiates a debate on your own tradition and the traditions of others. This contributes to an understanding of the differences and points in common between different cultures and will encourage interaction with other cultures, with different popular traditions, art forms, media, and requirements.

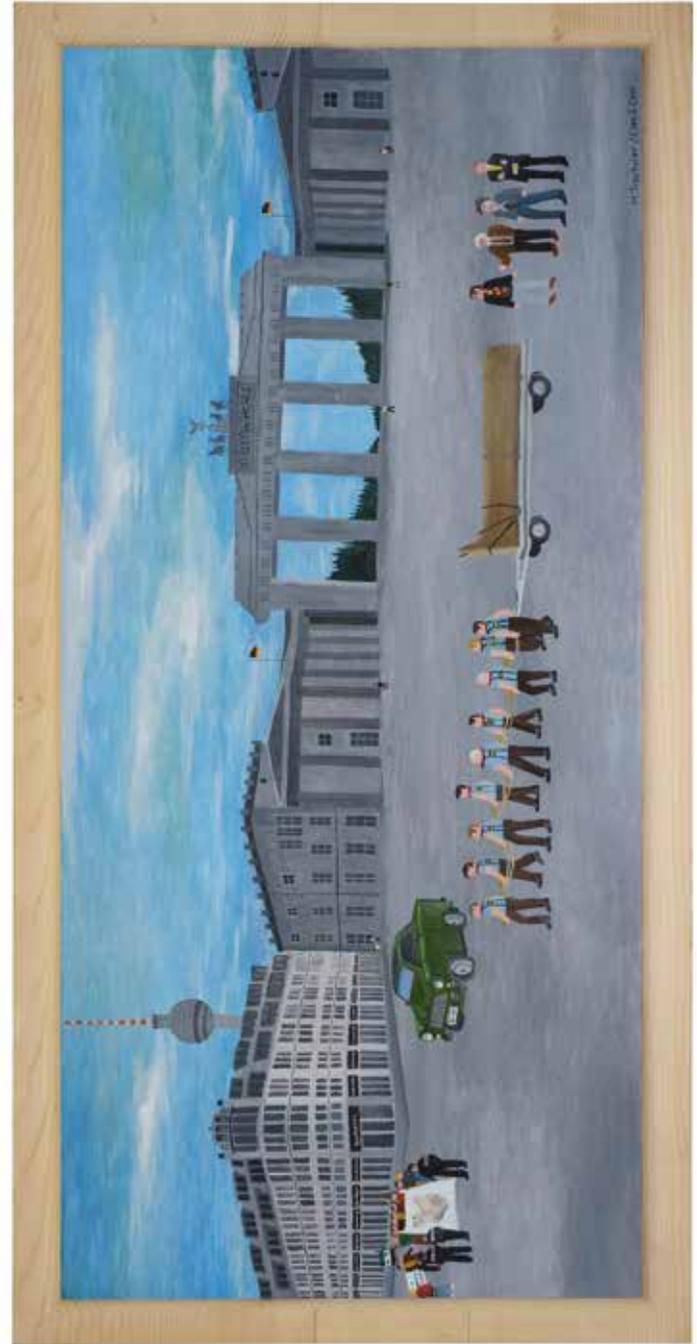
Com&Com

The Swiss artist duo was launched by Marcus Gossolt (*1969) and Johannes M. Hedinger (*1971) in 1997. They live and work in Zurich, St Gallen and New York. Participation in eight biennial arts festivals (Venedig, Shanghai, Moscow, Singapore, Sharjah et al.) and solo presentations in Kunsthau Zurich and Kunst-Werke Berlin; totally over 190 exhibitions and 25 short films. From Com&Com coins also the „Mocmoc“ (2003-08), Gugusdada (since 2004) and the project „Point de Suisse“ (2014/15). Currently, they travel around the world with the Appenzell trunk « Bloch » (since 2011).
Web: www.com-com.ch, www.bloch23781.com



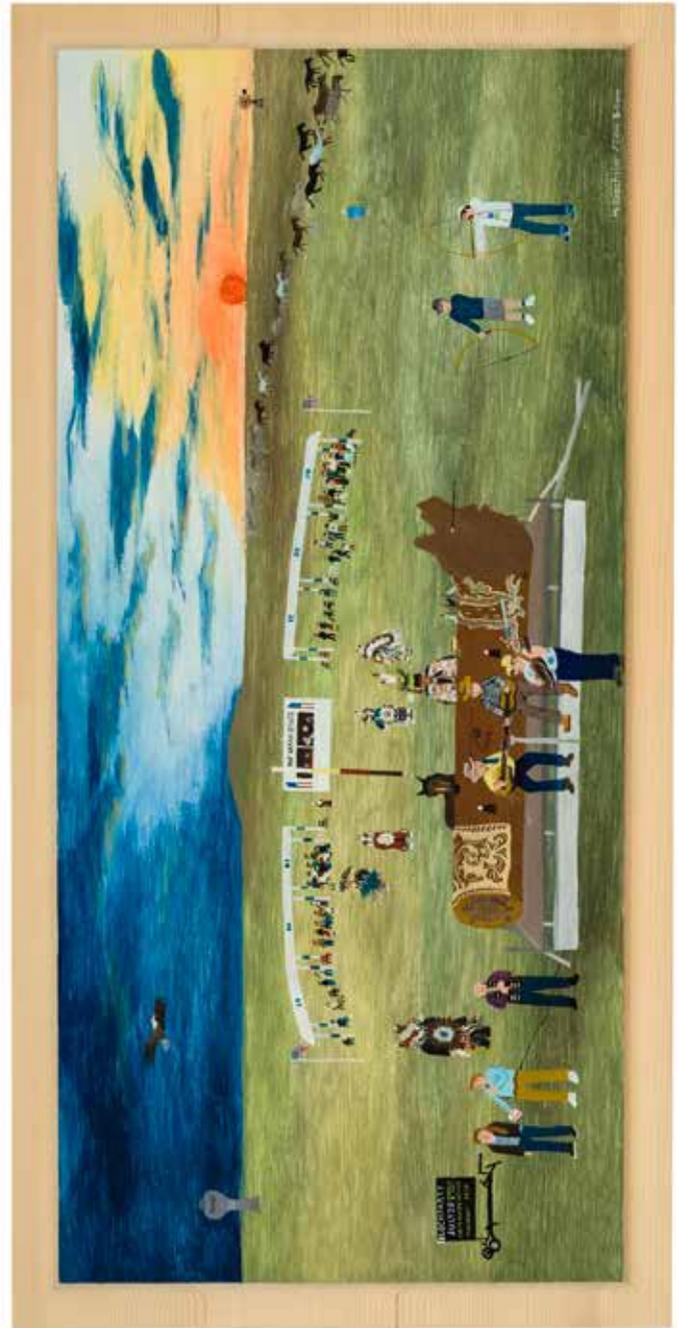


Folk Art Painting, Bern (2014)





Folk Art Painting, Shanghai (2014)



Folk Art Painting, North Dakota (2104)

