



# BLOCH

The Global Talking Stick

An intercultural art project  
by Com&Com (Gossolt/Hedinger)

The global, long term and transdisciplinary Swiss cultural project that has been uniting contemporary art and folk culture, and creating an environmental dialogue and exchange with people, traditions, and customs around the world since 2011. The latest chapter in India plans a diverse program in five regions over 15 months (11.2024 - 3.2026).

**Bloch** - a five meter long and 2 tons heavy tree trunk - is based on an old Swiss custom and symbol for of Swiss alpine tradition and culture that has been traveling all over the world, transforming into a global story. The Bloch tree trunk becomes a medium and connects people and their stories ("Global Talking Stick"). Over the past thirteen years, numerous cross-disciplinary and trans-cultural collaborations have been initiated around Bloch at the interface between east and west, tradition and modernity, folklore and contemporary life, engaging in land and environmental themes and conversations.



Bloch in Urnäsch (AR), 2011



Bloch in Berlin, Germany, 2012

# Bloch World Tour (2011 – 2023)



<b>2011</b> Urnäsch, CH St.Gallen, CH Zürich, CH	<b>2012</b> Bern, CH Berlin, DE Basel, CH Karlsruhe, DE Shanghai, CN	<b>2013</b> Shanghai, CN Teufen, CH	<b>2014</b> Fargo, ND, US Taylor, ND, US Spirit Lake, ND, US Lena, CN Fargo, ND, US	<b>2015</b> Moorhead, MN, US Cincinnati, OH, US New York, NY, US	<b>2016</b> New York, NY, US	<b>2017</b> Cape Town, ZA Karoo Desert, ZA Johannesburg, ZA Graskop, ZA	<b>2018</b> Cape Town, ZA	<b>2019</b> Antofagasta, CL San Pedro de Atacama, CL
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**Origin:** The Bloch originally comes from an old carnival custom from the Appenzell region (eastern Switzerland). When the last spruce is felled in the winter logging season, the trunk (so-called 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 on the village square in Urnäsch. In 2011, the Swiss artist collective Com&Com bought Bloch at this auction and decided to send it on a journey around the globe, with stops on all continents, to collect and exchange over local stories.

**Journey:** So far, Bloch has worked with over 600 collaborators on five continents. The journey has taken Bloch from Europe (2011-12), a first time to Asia (2013), North America (2014-15), Africa (2017-18) and South America (2019-20). From 2020-23, Bloch was in prolonged lockdown on the edge of the Atacama Desert in Chile.



Bloch in Shanghai, China, 2013



Bloch in North Dakota, USA, 2014

**Collaboration:** In the places and cultures visited, Bloch collaborates with local creatives, the wider population and other representatives (Human and More-than-Human). The stories of previous places are told, and new ones are collected (“Bloch Archive”) and taken along on the journey. In this process, the original custom and its meanings are constantly changing. These collaborative productions are sometimes embedded in existing local cultural events (festivals, concerts, theater, exhibitions, etc.),



often take place in public spaces and are accompanied by an educational program and research initiatives (workshops, talks, field research, a.o.).



Bloch in New York, USA, 2015



Bloch in Oudtshoorn, South Africa, 2017

**Change:** Since Bloch started his journey in 2011, the state of the world has changed significantly, and with it the relevant issues, discourses and urgencies: be it the geopolitical shifts, the pandemic or the climate emergency (to name just three). One of the natural reactions is the need to connect with and protect what we are rapidly losing as humankind. Because as (environmental) conditions continue to deteriorate, our culture and centuries-old traditions, the history(ies) of our planet and all beings are also at stake. The Bloch project offers a platform for exchange and reflection.



Bloch in de Aar, South Africa, 2017



Bloch in Atacama Desert, Chile, 2019

**Indian Chapter:** On its tour through India, Bloch addresses several key topics, such as the climate crisis, indigenous knowledge, decolonization and care work, and combines them with previous focal points such as folk culture, nomadism, transcultural production and intercultural communication. It will also experiment with alternative, eco-friendly and traditional travel methods (transportation with animals, by water) in order to explore different landscapes and cultures and thus create an exchange with regional and, in particular, rural and indigenous ways of life.

**India Tour:** Bloch's journey begins in October 2024 in southern India, first in Goa with a project and residency at the *Sunaparanta Art Center Goa* followed by a series of performances at the *Serendipity Arts Festival* (December 2024). In February 2025, Bloch will collaborate with the *Science Gallery* in Bangalore, before traveling on to Buxar/Bihar (March 25) for a collaboration with Indian artist *Dharmendra Prasad*. After a collaboration with the *Harvest School* in Nadaon, and a rural tour using oxen, Bloch will travel on to Assam to partner with the *Know School* by the *Anga Art Collective* in the Rani Forest (April 25). For summer and fall 2025 a residency at the *Saagwala Collective* near New Delhi is planned, as well as a performance at the *Swiss Embassy* in New Delhi before Bloch heads south to Mumbai. After some final activities the tree trunk will set off on its last chapter to Australia in early 2026, before it is expected back home in 2027.

## Short Bio Com&Com

The artist collective Com&Com was founded in 1997 by Marcus Gossolt (\*1969) and Johannes M. Hedinger (\*1971). They currently live in Zurich and St.Gallen and work in situ.

In addition to cross-media, participatory and collaborative long-term projects, Com&Com also produces individual works in classic media such as drawing, painting, sculpture, photo, video and performance. Their early work can be attributed to conceptual and media art and experienced a first high point with the solo exhibition at the Kunsthaus Zürich ("C-Files: Tell Saga", 2000), followed by Harald Szeemann's invitation to the 2001 Venice Biennale.

The following projects made use of public and media space: the monument dispute over "Mocmoc" (since 2003), which made it to the referendum, and the human Ready-Made Dada ("Gugusdada", since 2004) for the reopening of Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich. With the multimedia road movie "The Big One" (2005), the "Post-ironic Manifesto" (2008) and the first retrospective ("La réalité dépasse la fiction", 2010), Com&Com's work experienced a programmatic reorientation. These include the series of sculptures "Tree" (since 2010), the wandering Land Art installation "Bergkanzel" (since 2016) and the international travel and exchange project on the Appenzell tree trunk "Bloch" (since 2011), which to date has over 600 collaborators in connects twelve countries on five continents.

For some years now, Com&Com has been increasingly joining forces on transdisciplinary projects with partners from science and research (sociology, political science, history, etc.), such as in the survey projects "Point de Suisse" (2014/15) and "NEXPLORER" (since 2019), the pilot project for the next swiss national exhibition (2028).

Participation in nine biennials (among them Venice, Shanghai, Moscow, Singapore, Sharjah, Urals), solo exhibitions at the Kunsthaus Zürich, KW Berlin and the Knockdown Center New York; Group exhibitions at the Center Pompidou Metz, ZKM Karlsruhe, 21st Century Minsheng Art Museum Shanghai, Pratt Manhattan Gallery New York, Kassler Kunstverein, Kunstmuseum Bern, Migros Museum Zurich, among others

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LEFT: Com&Com (Hedinger/ Gossolt) - RIGHT: Indian Curator Shazeb Shaikh with J. Hedinger from Com&Com