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NEWS

## Meat Sculpture? Seance For a Tree? Knockdown's Halloween Is a Real Stumper



*(Photo: Daniel Maurer)*

You might think you know what you're doing this Halloween, but unless it involves a candy maze and an edible meat sculpture, you may want to head to our favorite century-old factory building in Maspeth, Queens, instead. Friday, the Knockdown Center is hosting the opening of "[Maybe I'm Amazed](#)," an installation that, true to its name, will involve an actual maze made out of giant wooden planters loaded with Circus Peanut candies in lieu of soil. The maze (a tribute to Batty Langley, a Gothic landscape designer) is just the start of it. The real kicker is the séance involving a shape-shifting, globe-trotting tree trunk.

Because all of that is just a little confusing, we stopped by the Knockdown Center this past Sunday to find out what was up. Vanessa Thill—who is producing the event with Claire Mirocha, her partner in the [Sorry Archive](#) series of exhibits and happenings—was doing some prep work in the factory turned art center's courtyard. There, an intricately carved tree trunk sat atop a trailer rig. Thill explained that the Spruce tree was originally felled in the Swiss logging region of Appenzell, where every winter the last tree to come down is ceremonially paraded about and then sold to the highest bidder.



### *“A Way From Home”*

In 2011, the artist duo of **Com&Com** bought the trunk at auction, and the so-called **Bloch** has since traveled the world, hitting various locations in Switzerland, Germany, China, Singapore, Taiwan, and now the United States, where it recently visited a Native American reservation in North Dakota. More recently (thanks to a Silent Barn member named, improbably, Claire Wood) the tree paid a visit to The Silent Barn, where sound artists installed equipment that allowed it to be used as a musical instrument. (We **noted its presence** when we dropped into the Barn to check on its fire recovery.)

Over the course of its travels, hosts of the tree have embellished it with intricate carvings and attachments. Two weekends ago, after it was moved to the historic Onderdonk House, it got a slightly less elegant addition: it was crudely and unexpectedly tagged with the word RATS by hatchet-wielding Bushwick artist **Tom Koehler**. “It was a very controversial gesture,” admitted Thill. “But I think if the goal of this project is to foster dialogue, it kind of did that in a way, even though it was this very polarizing thing and a lot of people did not respond positively to it.”

Till said some at the event laughed it off while others tried to intervene. “It really was interesting to see the reaction and it continues to cause people to have an extreme response,” she said.

On Saturday, the tree’s dignity was arguably restored when it was pulled to the Knockdown Center via a proper **traffic-stopping parade** involving a drum line. Thill described the procession as “very weird but cool — it was this completely surreal thing.”

And there’s more surrealness to come. This coming Friday, from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., psychic medium **Joan Carra** will conduct a séance around the tree. It seems that in addition to the TED Talk, fashion show, and musical performances that have incorporated the trunk, it has been “part of some rituals that were completely undocumented,” according to Thill. Who knows, maybe its secret history will come to light.

But wait! There’s more. From 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., the meat sculpture will be unveiled (“Is it a human corpse or a delicious feast?” asks the invite. “Zombies welcome.”)



To add to all this, the Knockdown is also playing host to another quirky out-of-town visitor. Sitting in its courtyard is a salvaged steel tank that's been absurdly outfitted with fake brick, cheap siding, and a cat door by Brooklyn artist J McDonald. The trailer, built during a residency in North Carolina, is meant to be a commentary on pre-fab housing that's taking over once-industrial areas of Charlotte (sound familiar, Bushwick?), but it also serves as a mobile art space. This weekend marked the opening of "Things With Claws," an exhibit featuring McDonald's work along with that of John Furgason, Serban Ionescu, Carlos Little, Olga Sophie Kauppinen, and Jonah Emerson-Bell. We're told that in the coming weeks the tank, dubbed "[A Way From Home](#)," may host an installment of [chickenshit bingo](#) as well as a "honey library" gathering honey samples from various locations.

That's right, from the folks who brought you the meat sculpture, it's bingo with chicken poop. Never a dull moment at the Knockdown Center.

***Correction:*** *The original version of this post was revised to clarify that J McDonald is Brooklyn-based.*

TAGS: A WAY FROM HOME, ARTS + CULTURE, BLOCH, BUSHWICK, CLAIRE MIROCHA, ONDERDONK HOUSE, SORRY ARCHIVE, THE KNOCKDOWN CENTER, VANESSA THILL