



Disney's **THE LITTLE MERMAID**
FINAL BROADWAY PERFORMANCE AUGUST 30!

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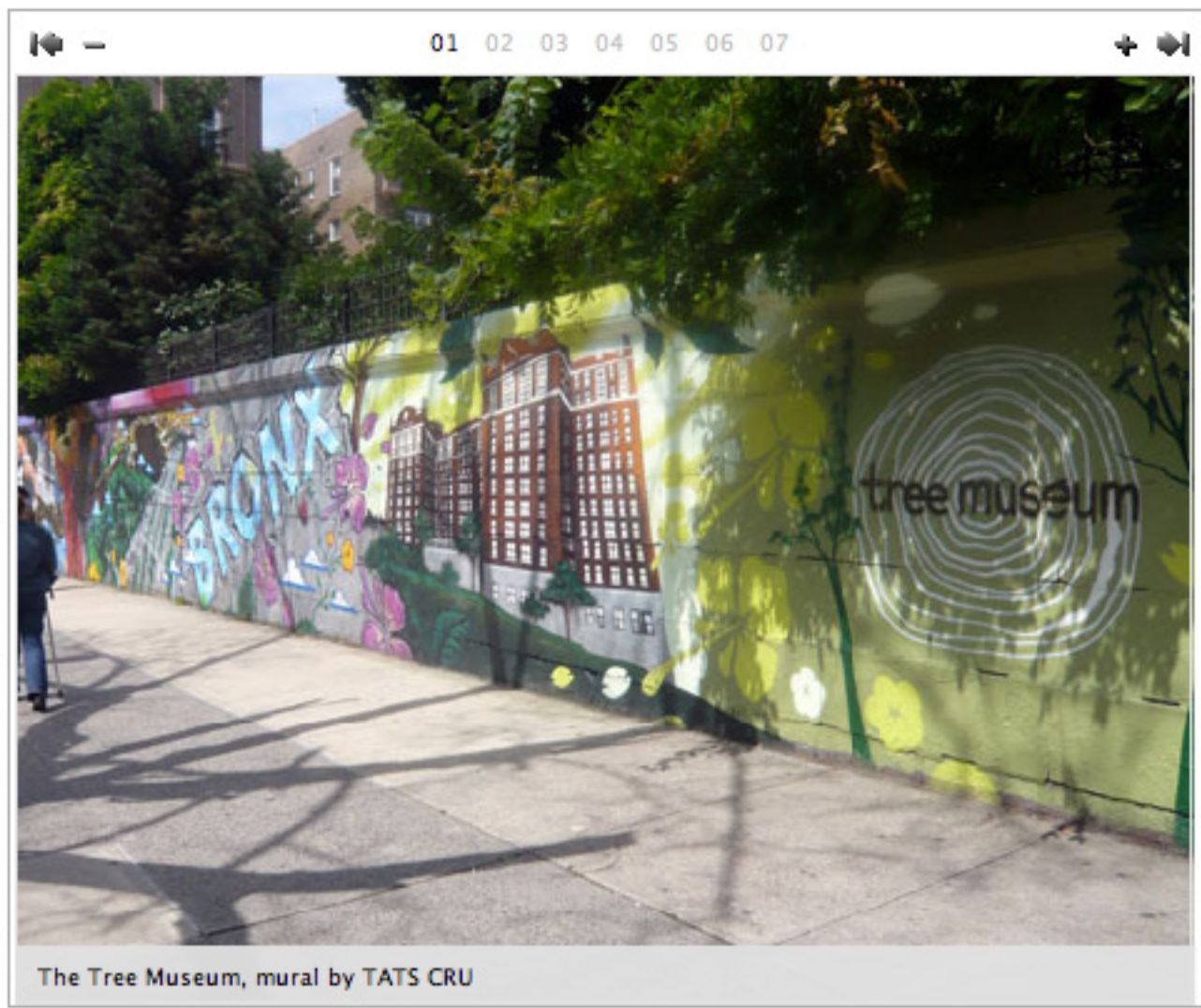
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Museums & Sights

Review

The Tree Museum on the Grand Concourse



At 158th Street and the Grand Concourse in the Bronx, a tree stump marks the corner of Franz Sigel Park. It's unremarkable but for a circular yellow plaque on the sidewalk, printed with the Tree Museum's logo and phone number—and the stump's extension. I take out my cell phone and dial. "Hello, stump?"

A recording of John Pywell, a forester with the Department of Parks and Recreation, answers. The stump, he explains, is all that's left of an elm tree that was more than 75 years old when it died. "It was a sapling during the Great Depression, when parades traversed the Concourse to brighten those dark days," Pywell says.

The [Tree Museum](#), which was conceived by artist Katie Holten and joint commissioned by [Wave Hill](#), the [NYC Department of Parks and Recreation](#), and the [Bronx Museum of the Arts](#), is a bit of a misnomer; it's certainly not an institution. Instead, visitors get a tour of the Bronx's legendary 70-block thoroughfare with the trees serving as the hook for an audio history lesson. One hundred trees are marked with plaques emblazoned with phone extensions, and every number yields a different story from one of the diverse speakers (artists, activists, academics) who flesh out the area's past and present. Kids will enjoy hunting for the plates along the Concourse and calling in at each stop, but some of the speeches may confound younger listeners. If possible, bring a phone with a speaker so you can listen together; it should save a lot of "whys" as you journey on.

Finding the trees isn't always easy. A [map plots their general locations](#), but you'll have to scour the ground surrounding them for the markers. Once you've found them, however, the call-in lectures illuminate the neighborhoods with a richness that's hard to understand unless you're standing in an elevated park, overlooking a pharmacy and a bus stop, learning about the ginkgo tree in front of you. To get an idea of the experience, dial the Tree Museum (718-408-2501), followed by a tree's extension (any number from 1 to 100, then pound), which is exactly what you'll do on the Concourse.—*Jessica Gross*

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