

Artists Explore The Largest Global Seed Vault

The DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague

The "Seed Vault" exhibit is part of the current **Big Bang Data** exhibition at the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art. It presents the results of an on-line residence by Norwegian artists **Jørn Knutsen** and **Einar Sneve Martinussen**, who analyze, visualize, and interpret data from the freely accessible digital database that belongs to the largest global seed vault in Norway's Svalbard archipelago.

The **on-line residence format** emphasizes a process-oriented and open approach, and refers to the theme of the Big Bang Data exhibition, i.e. to the digital age and its consequences. For the project's authors, the on-line environment becomes natural: through the screen, Jørn Knutsen and Einar Sneve Martinussen meet both with the subject of their research and with exhibition visitors.



The exhibit is a work in progress that is gradually transformed and supplemented as time passes.

At the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, this stand-alone exhibit presents **ongoing results of research into the freely accessible seed database at the Svalbard seed bank**. The artists focus mainly on visualization of various aspects of data, making it possible to view information in new contexts. Visitors can thus see a video recording in which the artists present the project and its objectives, examine a number of illustrations, photos, and other visually impressive materials, or search for information on individual seed samples in lists sorted by various criteria (species, family, country of origin).



The project takes its inspiration from the beginnings of modern botany and empirical natural sciences from the 18th and 19th century, such as detailed illustrations of seeds.

The authors are keeping a blog to document their activity and let visitors ask questions about the project as well as about the seed bank and its data. The artists designed several promotional materials for the project (for example materials for children, posters, etc.) in order to present this issue in an attractive manner to the general public.

The Global Seed Vault is situated in the permafrost of Norway's Svalbard archipelago in the Arctic Ocean. It contains the largest and most diverse seed collection in the world: it preserves duplicates of seed samples stored in gene banks around the entire world. Its huge ice vaults, which should ensure protection for the seeds for hundreds of years, currently contain over 930,000 samples. The facility is a secure storage facility in case of a regional or global crisis. But it also provides an opportunity for international cooperation, hope, and preserves the future of mankind and biodiversity. It was these aspects that the artists wanted to emphasize in their project, their aim being to show and describe new aspects of diversity and wealth that are not as frequently discussed in connection with the vault. At the same time, they wanted to deal with the economic and political impact of the entire "industry" that has arisen within this context.



The vault is an attempt to safeguard against the possible loss of seeds in other gene banks due to a regional or global crisis. Its total capacity is estimated to be approximately 2.25 billion seeds.



While only a limited number of people have access to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, its global on-line version (the seed database) offers maximum openness.

Jørn Knutsen and Einar Sneve Martinussen are part of the Voy design studio as well as working at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO). Their work includes visualization technology, films, interactive products, and exhibitions. In the past several of their projects have focused on investigation and visualization of extensive technological systems such as wireless networks and GPS.

The exhibit is part of the BIG BANG DATA, which is at the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art until 14 August 2017.

BLOG:

<https://medium.com/explorations-of-the-seed-vault>

BIG BANG DATA

<http://www.dox.cz/cs/vystavy/big-bang-data>

Photos in print quality are available for download at:

<http://www.dox.cz/cs/press/image-center/detail/online-rezidence-k-big-bang-data>

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Open: Mon 10–18, closed Tue, Wed and Fri 11–19, Thu 11 – 21, Sat–Sun 10–18.

BIG BANG DATA EXHIBITION/ 7 April – 14 August 2017

Co-organizers: CCCB – Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, Fundación Telefónica

In cooperation with: Fundació Banc Sabadell, Smart City Expo World Congress

Main Exhibition Partner: The AVAST Foundation

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