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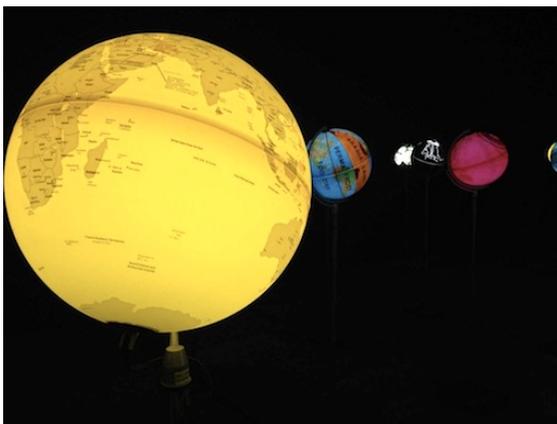
Thinking globally: Ingo Gunther's 'Worldprocessor'

A FotoFest installation sheds light on data

March 25, 2016, MOLLY GLENTZER



A globe from Ingo Gunther's "Worldprocessor" at the Silos at Sawyer Yards, one of the venues for the FotoFest 2016 Biennial, Photo: Molly Glentzer



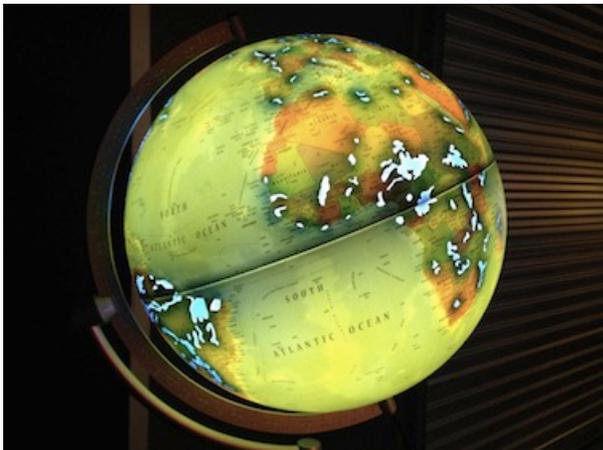
A globe from "Worldprocessor.", Photo: Molly Glentzer

We all know the environment is going to hell and humans are largely to blame. But it helps to see hard data.

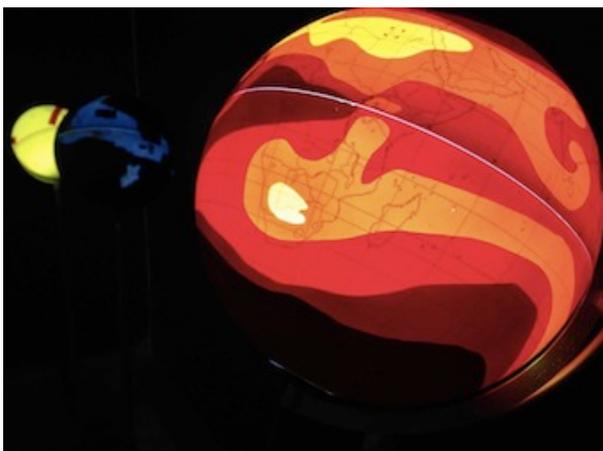
GALERIE BRIGITTE SCHENK

This is why we have a soft spot for Ingo Günther's "Worldprocessor" installation at the FotoFest 2016 Biennial, "Changing Circumstances: Looking at the Future of the Planet." Günther, an artist and journalist, creates data visualization sculptures using ready-made, lit-from-inside globes on metal stands. About 40 of them fill a dark room of the Silos at Sawyer Yards.

After you've meandered through long, white hallways of photo-based art that illustrates vulnerable environments more literally, "Worldprocessor" feels a bit like a playroom for geniuses.



A globe from "Worldprocessor.", Photo: Molly Glentzer



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Since 1989, Günther has created about 1,000 spheres depicting all manner of data to illustrate economic and environmental impacts on the world. He's traced migration patterns, ocean currents and arctic ice stations; imagined how many times all of our cars, placed end-to-end, would circle the planet; thought about the size of countries relative to the size of corporations.

FotoFest's installation is kind of a micro-view. The always-evolving "Worldprocessor" project has been shown in over 20 countries. Variations on it are installed permanently in Switzerland, Japan and Germany. You can keep up with the latest iterations at worldprocessor.com.



A globe from Ingo Günther's "Worldprocessor", Photo: Molly Glentzer

Here's Günther's explanation:

After dealing with time-critical mapping projects for reporting news in both print and television media in the mid-1980s, I "discovered" the globe as a communication medium in 1988. Especially in those pre-Internet days, I saw both the need for consolidating information about the entirety of the global condition and the possibility of mapping these data on a sphere. It was the quintessential medium to chronicle and represent the elements that condition the new emerging globality. And it was time to expand the 500-year-old world globe to serve the needs of the 20th and now 21st century....

Traditionally, I have relied exclusively on existing data to show what the world is like (beyond the geography provided on globes) and to give a useful sense of proportion and dimension. Recently, given the rapid change of development and therefore data, I came to the conclusion that historical data (even when they are updated) are no longer as

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useful as they once were. The scope and speed of change have accelerated, and analog/linear projections, while intuitive, are likely misleading. Change is now often exponential, especially since just about everything today is subject to datafication, connectivity, and some form of digital data quantification and control. No leveling off in this trend can be expected any time soon. In view of this, I am now starting to expand the project into a series of data projection and forecasting globes that deal with rivaling and contradictory prognoses and methodologies.

I am not in the business of propaganda or agitprop, and I strongly believe that people have to come to their own conclusions. As such, I offer information in the most palatable way, but try to avoid anything that could be understood as indoctrination or manipulation.