

'Planet Earth: from Space to Place'
An Interdisciplinary Exhibition anticipating the
International Year of Planet Earth in 2008
34th session of the UNESCO General Conference in 2007
16 October – 3 November 2007

Announcement of a Side Event

Tuesday, Oct. 30th 2007

6:00 pm – 7:00 pm



Cueva de los Cristales, Naica, Mexico

A forest of crystals, the biggest ones on the Planet.

An unreal world, beyond imagination, beyond dream.

A cave with a temperature of 50° C and 100% humidity; an infernal place, where man can survive just a few minutes. Still unexplored.

A wonder of nature discovered by chance, fragile and mysterious; something we risk to

lose at any time.

And that will soon turn inaccessible again, hidden in the heart of the Earth.

Naica's Crystals Cave is a small window onto the immense geological time; a window man can now open thanks to a new, exclusive technology.

A high risk "astronautics" exploration, beyond human limits, in order to understand, study, document and save. Before it becomes too late.



Naica's Crystals Cave, maybe the most amazing underground wonder on Earth, was discovered by chance inside the deep mine of Naica, in the State of Chihuahua, Mexico. It is a true geode: a cave completely covered with transparent selenite crystals (that is extremely pure gypsum), some of which are more than 12 m in length and by far the biggest ones in the world. They are astonishing structures; that seem to deny the unceasing trend of the Universe toward disorder, disintegration, and

chaos. On the other hand, Naica's macrocrystals show that, similarly to what happens on the surface as regards life, also happens deep in the Earth where some processes take place, tending to create ordered structures. The matter now is to understand how this can happen. The project involves researchers from several Italian and foreign universities, coordinated by the association La Venta and its Mexican partner Speleoresearch&Films. Naica's Crystals Cave is an extraordinary example of Earth's natural and geological diversity; a clear evidence of the variedness of the underground world.

Speakers:

Giovanni Badino, Association La Venta, University of Torino

Paolo Forti, La Venta, Association La Venta, University of Bologna

Tullio Bernabei, Association La Venta

Tuesday, Oct. 30th 2007

7:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Caves of Sky – A journey in the heart of glaciers



Glaciers are the most ephemeral part of the landscape, the only bit of geology capable of displaying visible variations during the short time span of one's life.

On the other hand, they are formed by the accumulation of ancient snowfalls and therefore they are the most conspicuous and durable witness of climatic vicissitudes.

A piece of sky plowing the mountains.

It has been known for a long time now that the rivers that flow on them are engulfed by blue chasms and are lost in the depths of the glacier. Yet, it is only recently that glacial-speleologists learnt to follow their paths, slowly deciphering the complex internal structure of glaciers.

These caves, ever-changing like clouds but at the same time as stable as the whirlpools of a river, are

extraordinarily beautiful, like abysses carved into a shred of sky.

This session tells their story.

On occasion of the 2007-2009 International Polar Year, La Venta shares the precious memory of more than 20 years of impassioned exploration of the inside of glaciers all around the world. La Venta describes through breathtaking images the blue world of glacial caves and the fundamental role ice caps and glaciers are playing in the hydrological cycle.

La Venta's research is meant to raise awareness about these fragile systems and, through this, give new impetus to monitoring, research and dissemination efforts in the field of glacial hydrology and the assessment of climate change effects on the hydrological cycle, and more generally in the search for sustainability.

Speakers:

Giovanni Badino, Association La Venta, University of Torino

badino@to.infn.it

Antonio De Vivo, Association La Venta

www.unesco.org/fr/general-conference/exhibition-planet-earth