org is an online platform, collecting, describing, presenting and generating documents of all sorts. It documents documents.

Your path through the collection lead along Residu, Subtractive Writing, Potholes, pgealerts.alerts.pge.com/, View, Red Skirt Popular on the Street, Traces of logging on Mount Egaleo, Strings, Frame of Accountability, Temporary Photograph, 2017, The Authenticity in the woods of the Bosque Protector de Arraiján, Gold Varnish, Roofing (2), Roofing (1), Detail of a wall, Salzmünde (Saxony-Anhalt), June 2023, LIGO

What constitutes a 'document' and how does it function?

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the etymological origin is the Latin 'documentum', meaning 'lesson, proof, instance, specimen'. As a verb, it is 'to prove or support (something) by documentary evidence', and 'to provide with documents'. The online version of the *OED* includes a draft addition, whereby a document (as a noun) is 'a collection of data in digital form that is considered a single item and typically has a unique filename by which it can be stored, retrieved, or transmitted (as a file, a spreadsheet, or a graphic)'. The current use of the noun 'document' is defined as '*something* written, inscribed, *etc*., which furnishes evidence or information upon any subject, as a manuscript, title-deed, tomb-stone, coin, picture, etc.' (emphasis added).

Both 'something' and that first 'etc.' leave ample room for discussion. A document doubts whether it functions as something unique, or as something reproducible. A passport is a document, but a flyer equally so. Moreover, there is a circular reasoning: to document is 'to provide with documents'. Defining (the functioning of) a document most likely involves ideas of communication, information, evidence, inscriptions, and implies notions of objectivity and neutrality – but the document is neither reducible to one of them, nor is it equal to their sum. It is hard to pinpoint it, as it disperses into and is affected by other fields: it is intrinsically tied to the history of media and to important currents in literature, photography and art; it is linked to epistemic and power structures. However ubiquitous it is, as an often tangible thing in our environment, and as a concept, a document *deranges*.

the-documents.org continuously gathers documents and provides them with a short textual description, explanation, or digression, written by multiple authors. In *Paper Knowledge*, Lisa Gitelman paraphrases 'documentalist' Suzanne Briet, stating that 'an antelope running wild would not be a document, but an antelope taken into a zoo would be one, presumably because it would then be framed – or reframed – as an example, specimen, or instance'.
The gathered files are all documents – if they weren't before publication, they now are. That is what the-documents.org, irreversibly, *does*. It is a zoo turning an antelope into an 'antelope'.

As you made your way through the collection, the-documents.org tracked the entries you viewed. It documented your path through the website. As such, the time spent on the-documents.org turned into this – a new document.

This document was compiled by ____ on 03.10.2025 16:47, printed on ____ and contains 16 documents on 35 pages. (https://the-documents.org/log/03-10-2025-6667/)

the-documents.org is a project created and edited by De Cleene De Cleene; design & development by atelier Haegeman Temmerman.

the-documents.org has been online since 23.05.2021.

Notes

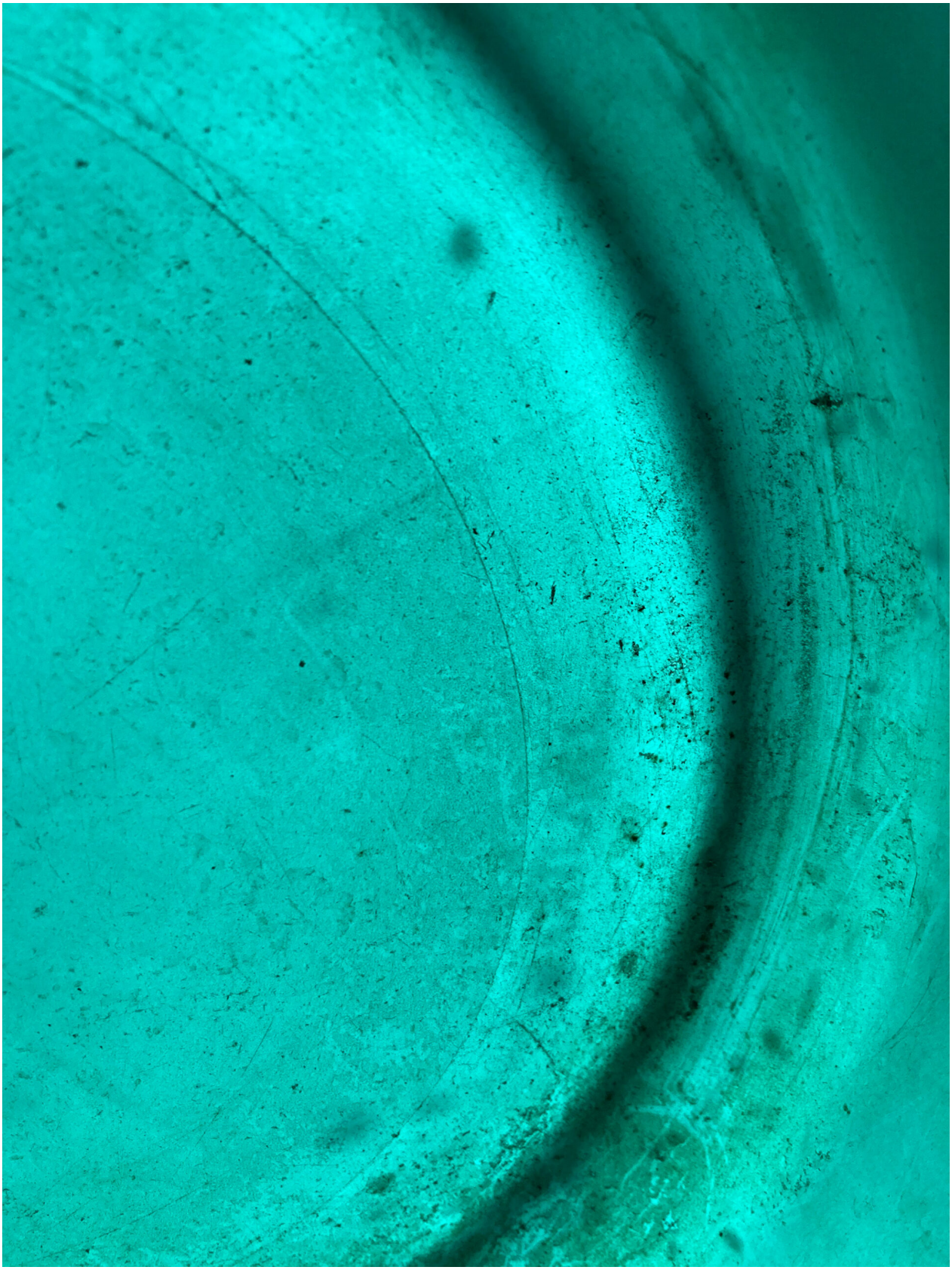
- De Cleene De Cleene is Michiel De Cleene and Arnout De Cleene. Together they form a research group that focusses on novel ways of approaching the everyday, by artistic means and from a cultural and critical perspective.
  www.decleenedecleene.be / info@decleenedecleene.be
- This project was made possible with the support of the Flemish Government and KASK & Conservatorium, the school of arts of HOGENT and Howest. It is part of the research project *Documenting Objects*, financed by the HOGENT Arts Research Fund.

Sources

- Briet, S. *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?* Paris: Edit, 1951.
- Gitelman, L. *Paper Knowledge. Toward a Media History of Documents.* Durham/ London: Duke University Press, 2014.
- *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Accessed on 13.05.2021.

The last couple of days have been dry. Rain is expected for the weekend. The office buckets are in place and are empty, except for some residue. Dirt, sand, a few hairs. Some particles must have come along with the drops when they made their way through the roof.

the-documents.c



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	07.08.2025	IMG_5108.HEIC	3,3MB	Arnout De Cleene

category
architecture, collecting, data storage, precipitation, leakage

15:41:47

In an attempt to make it his own, Gino – it might also be Dino – has taken a can of bright pink spray paint to his hard hat and – as the paint was drying – dragged his gloved finger from top to bottom. G – or D –, I, N, O. In the dust on a demolished floor tile, someone has written 12,10. Perhaps a measurement, a quantity, a position, a date, a reference.

Subtractive writing is not uncommon. With the tip of a passer-by's index finger 'WASH ME' is subtracted from the dust on a dirty car. In freshly poured concrete, a name is embedded forever with a twig. In hot and soft roofing drawings and obscenities are scratched. Styrofoam lining a brand new elevator gets impressed with names, jokes and knuckles.

In the twenty-third canto of Ariosto's Orlando Furioso (1516), Orlando comes across the name of his love and another man, carved in the bark of a tree. He doubts. But that night, a gossiping shepherd tells him he's seen Angelica and Medoro together. Orlando returns to the forest, and in a four-day frenzy, he uproots every tree and pollutes the rivers forever.

CXXXI
For he turf, stone, and trunk, and shoot, and lop,
Cast without cease into the beauteous source;
Till, turbid from the bottom to the top,
Never again was clear the troubled course.
At length, for lack of breath, compelled to stop,
(When he is bathed in sweat, and wasted force,
Serves not his fury more) he falls, and lies
Upon the mead, and, gazing upward, sighs.[1]

Sources

1 Ariosto, L. *Orlando Furioso*. Translated by William Stewart Rose, Echo Library, 2006, p. 267.



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	05.08.2025	IMG_8280.jpg	1,70 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
architecture, construction site, dust, sign, waste

16:44:39

Holding two cans of spray paint, a city employee walks through a sweet chestnut grove on the graveyard. He’s looking for potholes.

the-documents.c

org Potholes



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	15.07.2021	IMG_7751.HEIC	4,7 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
fissure, government, sign, tree

16:46:43

On a windy morning in April, I was on a video call with a friend, curator Maziar Afrassiabi. He listened patiently from Rotterdam as I labored over a direction for my research. It concerned a device I installed in his art space, Rib, six months prior, that monitored blackouts across California by scraping real-time data from utility companies. When a county experienced a significant blackout, it would cut Rib's electricity in kind—causing Rib to inherit and adapt to conditions that shape Californian infrastructure. During its operation, I'd been researching the grid—learning what it is, why it fails, and how communities respond when it does.

We took a short break. Maziar, with tired eyes, stepped away for a smoke. While waiting, I watched the power lines outside my window sway limply in the breeze. In spite of its apparent lifelessness, I've always thought of electricity as a psychological force. My mind wandered through a cursory model of the grid, idiosyncratically cloudy and detailed.

Energy simultaneously generated and used, cascading infrastructural operations in a blink. Outlying stations burning, vaporizing, absorbing fuel, spinning vast electromagnetic turbines. Oscillating current. Neighboring transformers boosting volts to kilovolts, compensating for lost energy coursing through long-distance transmission supported by pylons peppered across Menlo Park.

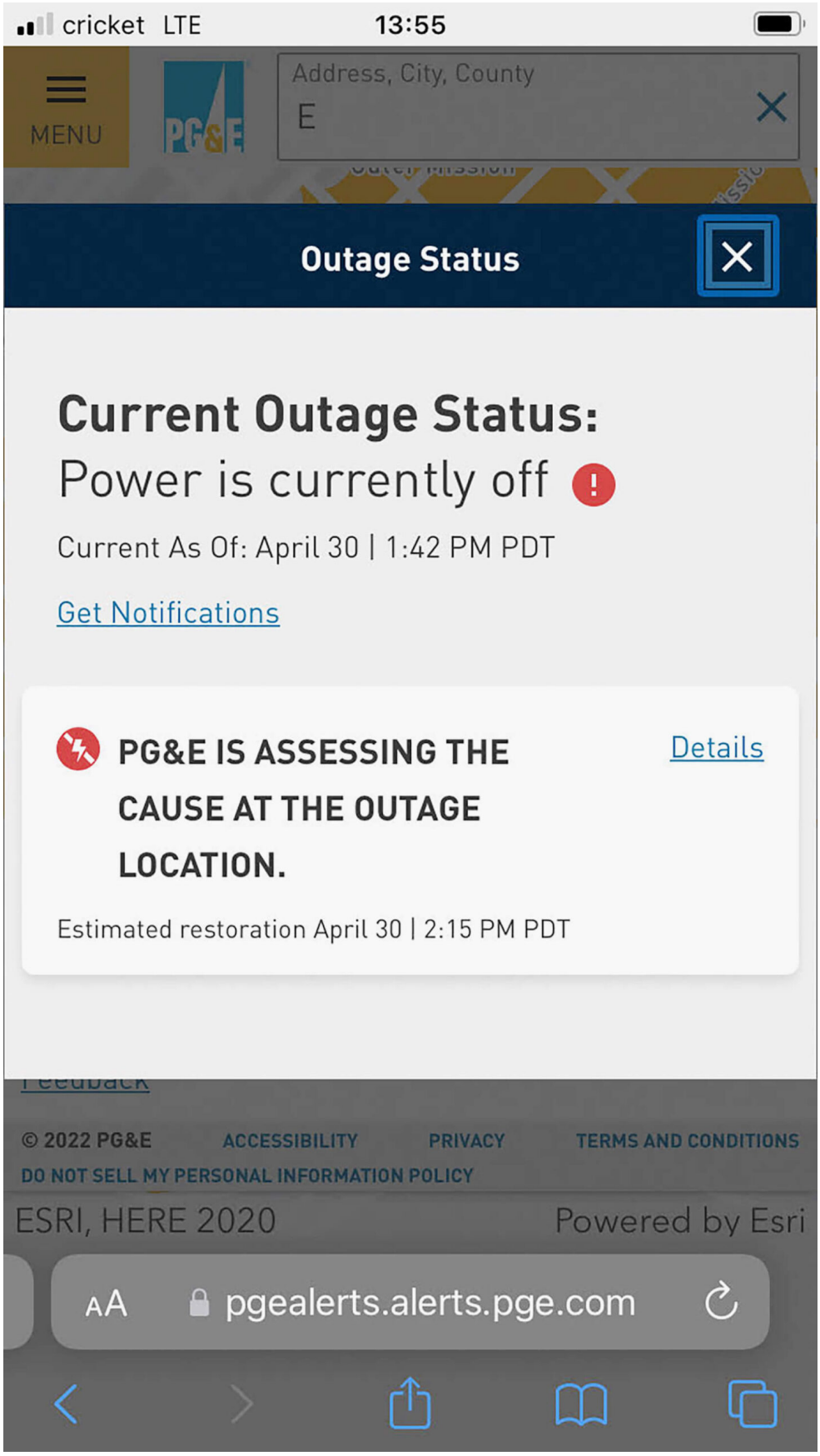
Current flows into enclosed substations. Transformers, insulators, resembling a kind of industrial Watts Towers—though uninhabitable and anonymous by comparison—step voltages back down to levels safe enough for wires traversing the city. They branch out through streets via buried cables or, like the lines outside my window, are strung atop Douglas fir utility poles at roughly 30-meter intervals…curious vestigial markers. I'd read somewhere they were provisionally pitched when Samuel Morse found that telegraph signals wouldn't transmit through the earth.

Each pole divides vertically into distinct zones, spaced apart for safety. Treacherous high-voltage wires from substations pass along the top, while safer signals—cable internet and landlines—hang nearest to the ground. The high-voltage wires enter through a barrel-shaped pole-mounted transformer. Within, submerged in oil, two tightly wound copper coils magnetically harmonize, delivering 240 and 120 volts to three exiting wires, each connected to the electrical meter attached to the building…

A blackout in my neighborhood cut my thoughts and the meeting short. The sudden silence in my apartment indicated Maziar was also in the dark. I received a text message from him and the utility company.

Notes

- Mathew Kneebone is an artist based in San Francisco. His interdisciplinary practices takes different forms, all in relation to an interest in electricity and technology. He teaches studio and thesis writing at California College of the Arts.



type	date	filename	size	author
screenshot	18.02.2023	unnamed.jpg	84 KB	Mathew Kneebone

category
house, interference, technology, tree, wind

16:47:01

According to art critic Rosalind Krauss, nineteenth-century stereographic images presented ‘views’, not ‘landscapes’. Looking at a stereographic image through a stereoscope involves a particular experience that is altogether different from looking at other types of photographs, or paintings, as it is defined by ‘the isolation of the viewer with an image from which surrounding interference is masked out‘.[1] An image of a violent and sudden eruption, higher up on the mountain, hanging next to a stereographic image of a petrified lava flow, would not be perceived.

Sources

1. Krauss, R. *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths.* Cambridge, Mass./London: The MIT Press, 1986, 139.



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	03.04.2022	Foto_2022-02-17_110818.jpgFoto_2022-02-17_110818.jpgFoto_2022-02-17_110818.jpg	1,8MB	Arnout De Cleene

category
impact, landscape, seismology, technology, trompe l'oeil, Vesuvius

16:47:04

Set in the fictitious Shanghai-based Dafeng Cotton Mill, *Red Skirt Popular on the Street* (1984) follows the story of an enterprising model worker as she navigates the challenges of young adult life, from workplace conflicts to choosing what clothes to wear on her days off. In the reflection of the emerging consumer consciousness of the Reform era, many of the film's key moments happen not on the factory floor, but in the changing room where the workers seek to express themselves through their choice of dress. To this end, the film can be regarded as a document of the fashion trends being introduced into the country at the time, as best observed in the spellbinding array of colours on display as the workers leave the factory at the end of a day's work.

The textile mill used as the setting for Dafeng Cotton Mill is Shanghai No. 1 Cotton Mill. Originally occupied by the no. 13 and 14 mills of the Japanese-owned Naigaiwata Company, the mill was formally established as the China Textile Construction Company Shanghai No. 1 Cotton Mill after the Second World War. It was located at the T-shaped intersection on Changshou Road, with the gate facing Jiaozhou Road. At that time, the area on the north side of Changshou Road extending from No. 1 Cotton Mill formed a continuous industrial zone encompassing many other factories and warehouses, all of which have since been converted into the private residences and creative parks.

Notes

- Ho Rui An is an artist and writer working in the intersections of contemporary art, cinema, performance and theory. Through lectures, essays and films, his research examines the relations between labour, technology and capital across different systems of governance in a global age.
- In spring 2024 the-documents.org and Trigger co-publish a series of online articles with a focus on the meeting ground between photography and the document.

Red Skirt Popular on the Street









type	date	filename	size	author
collage	05.06.2024	redskirt.jpg	4,89 MB	Ho Rui An

category
architecture, conflict, economy, factory, fashion, Trigger

16:47:07

‘The saw cuts are sloppy and appear to be made in a haste.[1] The cuts are situated at a height of approximately seventy centimetres from the ground. The hill’s protected woods have seen an increase in these scattered traces of illegal logging since a rise in tax on heating fuel in October 2012. Many Greeks set about logging illegally in protected woods, mostly in the colder North of the country, but also here in Egaleo, a western suburb of Athens.’

Notes

1 

- First published in: De Cleene, M. *Reference Guide*. Amsterdam: Roma Publications, 2019

Traces of logging on Mount Egaleo



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	03.02.2023	mt_eg_003.tif, mt_eg_004.tif	88 MB, 86,40 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
economy, encounter, government, landscape, Reference Guide, tree

16:47:10

the-documents.c

Traces of logging on Mount Egaleo



The weeds and bushes on what over the years has become savanna are being chopped to clear the ground to replant trees and reinstate the forest. During the dry season, forest fires are frequent. In between the future lots of planted trees, firebreaks are made to keep fires from spreading. Wires are used to measure the required distance between plant beds and to keep a straight line. The sun is sinking. In a bit, the workers will return home and the field will empty out. In a couple of years, the Acacias, Ebben trees, Millettia laurentii and Umbrella trees will testify to the strings.

Sources

https://www.fajalobi.org



type	date	filename	size	author
video	10.06.2021	MVI_2082.MOV	285MB	Arnout De Cleene

category
RDC, botany, tree, landscape

16:47:11

‘Dust particles flew off the box, disturbed by my opening. Adding to the sense that this archival material was vibrating under the weight of its unknown importance. Amidst the boxes of ‘Top Secret’ British governments documents, I find a map labelled ‘Syria’ 3.6.41.’

Screenshot from film chapter *(Un)Touching Ground* . A decolonial audio visual translation of an archival map reveals the effects of the Allied military campaign into Lebanon and Syria in 1941. *Frame of Accountability*, 01:00:00, Helene Kazan, 2024.

Through film, installation, writing and public engagement *Frame of Accountability* investigates ‘risk’ as a lived condition, produced through the co-evolution of capitalist systems and violent conflict. The project focuses on the effects across Lebanon and Syria, with a view to understanding the wider regional and global consequences. Using poetic and critical-legal methods, the work explores ways of dismantling violence perpetrated through colonial mechanisms of governance, towards wider frameworks of accountability and justice. The work is produced in multi-part, non-linear formation.

Notes

- Helene Kazan is an artist, writer and educator. Her work investigates ‘risk’ as a lived condition produced through the conjoined violent effects of capitalism and conflict. This is observed in the colonial roots of international law and its material formation of the lived-built environment. In response, she uses decolonial, feminist, poetic and critical-legal approaches in her work, which explores ways of dismantling the ongoing effects of neo-colonial violence towards wider frameworks of accountability and justice.
- In spring 2024 the-documents.org and Trigger co-publish a series of online articles with a focus on the meeting ground between photography and the document.



type	date	filename	size	author
screenshot	24.05.2024	HKazanFoA_001.jpg	952 KB	Helene Kazan

category
archive, government, Trigger

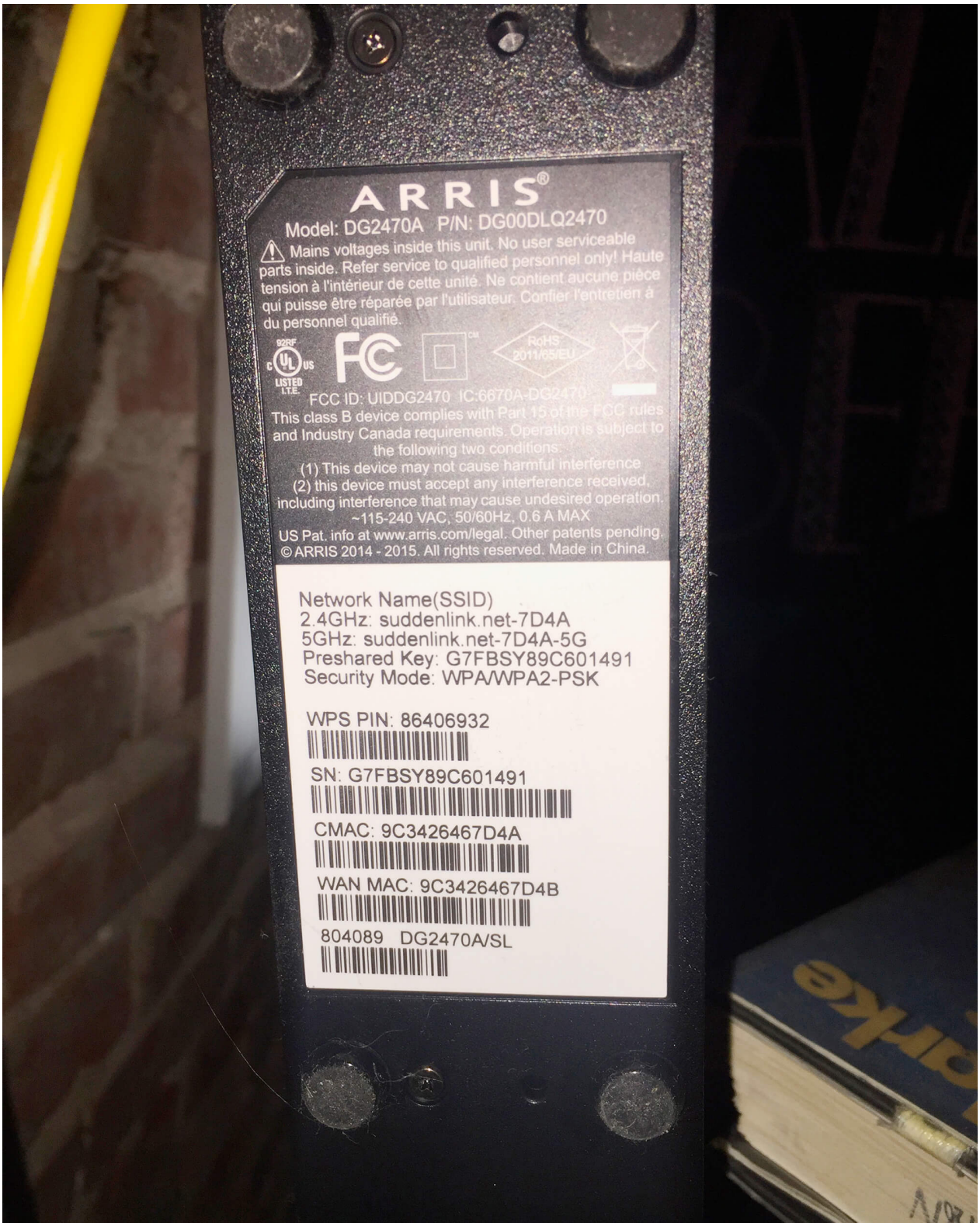
16:47:19

The bartender didn’t remember the passcode, so he pointed out where I could find it: on the bottom of the router box. Instead of trying to read the tiny numbers on the router label in the dark, while at the same time awkwardly typing it into my small, cumbersome smartphone keyboard, I decided to photograph the label. This allowed me to retreat back to my seat, zoom into the image and easily enter the code into my phone. The photograph immediately lost its value the moment this action was completed.

Notes

- Max Pinckers (°1988, BE) and Victoria Gonzalez-Figueras (°1988, CA) are based in Brussels, Belgium. They have been working together for the past ten years on documentary photography projects. Victoria works in the cultural field as a researcher and producer. Max is a speculative documentarian, teacher and occasional writer on photography. They are married, in love, and have a son. Victoria has consistently assisted Max in his projects as a production manager, but they have recently been making new work together as co-authors. “Double Reward” is the first such project.
- In spring 2024 the-documents.org and Trigger co-publish a series of online articles with a focus on the meeting ground between photography and the document.

org Temporary Photograph, 2017



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	30.05.2024	IMG_0058.jpg	3,8 MB	Max Pinckers

category
technology, Trigger

16:47:21

The Authenticity bunkered crude fuel in the Panama Bay. She navigated back and forth between the artificial island Isla Melones and ships leaving or waiting to enter the Panama Canal. On February 14th 2015 she had been moored for a couple of days near the Centennial bridge when the AIS-transponder momentarily signalled the ship's position in the woods of the Bosque Protector de Arraiján. Afterwards no signal of the ship was received for 41 days, until she reappeared near the port of Bahia Las Minas, at the other side of the Panama Canal.

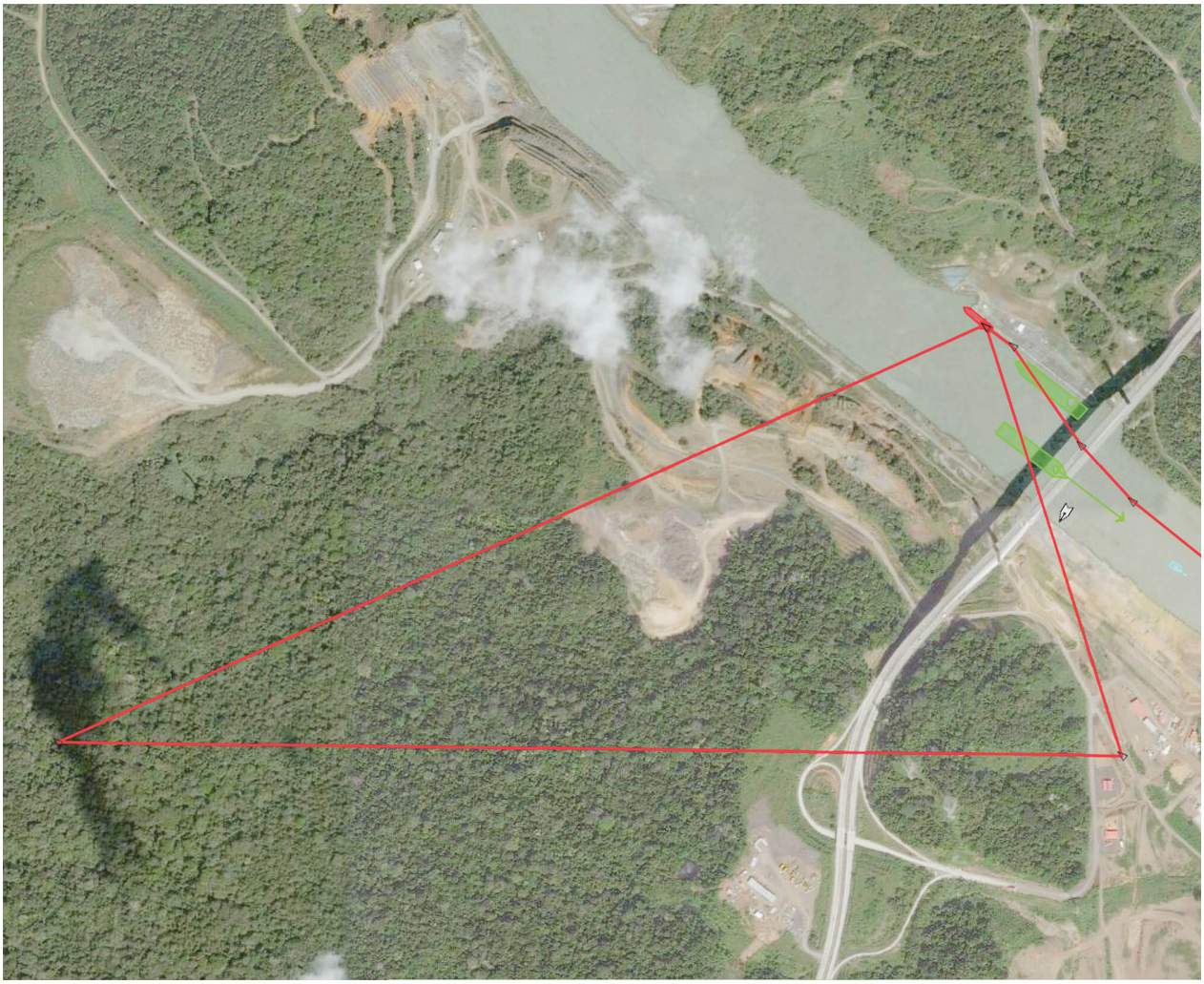
Notes

First published in: De Cleene, M. *Reference Guide*. Amsterdam: Roma Publications, 2019

Sources

Marine Traffic, Authenticity (Caribe Trader, PA), latest position, 09°01'40,71" N 79°38'18,59"W, viewed 14.02.2015, http://www.marinetraffic.com

The Authenticity in the woods of the Bosque Protector de Arraiján



type	date	filename	size	author
screenshot	10.05.2021	caribe.jpg	17,33MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
economy, encyclopaedia, interference, landscape, map/plan, Reference Guide, sea, technology, tree, data storage

16:47:23

I’m taking a scan of a family photo album given to me after my grandmother passed away, wanting to write something about the marvelous portraits inside. The genealogy is only partly clear to me: I recognize my dad as a kid, my uncle, my grandmother, her brother in the laboratory he (said he) ran. He smelled of cigars and severe perfume. The older photographs present people I don’t know, but must be my ancestors. My grandmother told me stories[1] that, historically, reach further back than the figures I recognize in the photographs. There are no names and no dates in the album. The first two pictures seem to be the oldest ones.[2] I retract them from the album pockets in which they were slid to check if something is written on the backside. When I take the album away from the scanner’s glass plate, particles of leather, gold varnish and sturdy cardboard come loose. I place a sheet of paper on the glass plate and press ‘scan’ again.

Notes

1 Once she (my grandmother) went home from school, sick, with her bicycle. She studied to become a nurse. The school was in Brussels, about 60 kilometers from her native village M. The milkman’s van tipping over in front of my grandmother’s parental house. A milk covered street. My great-grandfather, physician and mayor at M. Something happened during the Second World War having to do with telephones or radios when she was still a kid.

2 



type	date	filename	size	author
scan	20.06.2021	Handgeschreven_2021-06-18_110124.jpg	1,9MB	Arnout De Cleene

category
book, family

16:47:25

Five white boulders close off a shortcut for motorists who attempt to cut the bend in the road. The southernmost roof’s pitch runs opposite to the landscape’s slope. The lower roofline is, therefore, only about one meter above a small, triangular patch of grass which is hidden from view by a hedge. In summer, when the roofing gets hot and soft, text and drawings get pressed or carved into it.

Sources

Google Earth

Roofing (2)



type	date	filename	size	author
screenshot	14.04.2021	Schermafbeelding 2021-05-05 om 22.37.00.png	16,98MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
automobile, crash, landscape, map/plan, parking, roofing, sign

16:47:27

Seven very similar and rudimentary buildings take in a trapezoid plot of land in Gilly. They are located between the school on the Rue Circulaire and the houses along the Rue de l’Abbaye. The structures are built of orange brick, concrete structural elements, whitish steel gates and roofing. Every garage has its own number, hand-painted in white on the concrete lintel above each gate. In summer the roofing gets hot and soft.

the-documents.c

Roofing (1)



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	14.04.2021	_44a9887.dng	56,68MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
automobile, brick, landscape, parking, roofing, sign

16:47:31

Bricks and stones of various origin (aerated concrete blocks, clinker bricks, quarry stones).

Notes

- From *Fortlaufend/Ongoing*
- Stephanie Kiwitt (1972) is an artist based in Halle (Saale), Germany. Utilizing a large number of images, various perspectives and also textual elements, she is known for her insightful photography that explores spaces emblematic of contemporary phenomena. Over the past three years, she has focused on evolving habitats in rural areas, photographing traces of transformation and conducting interviews in Saxony-Anhalt, the region she moved to in 2020. From 2018 to 2020, Kiwitt was a guest lecturer at the LUCA School of Arts in Brussels.
- In spring 2024 the-documents.org and Trigger co-publish a series of online articles with a focus on the meeting ground between photography and the document.

Detail of a wall, Salzmünde (Saxony-Anhalt), June 2023



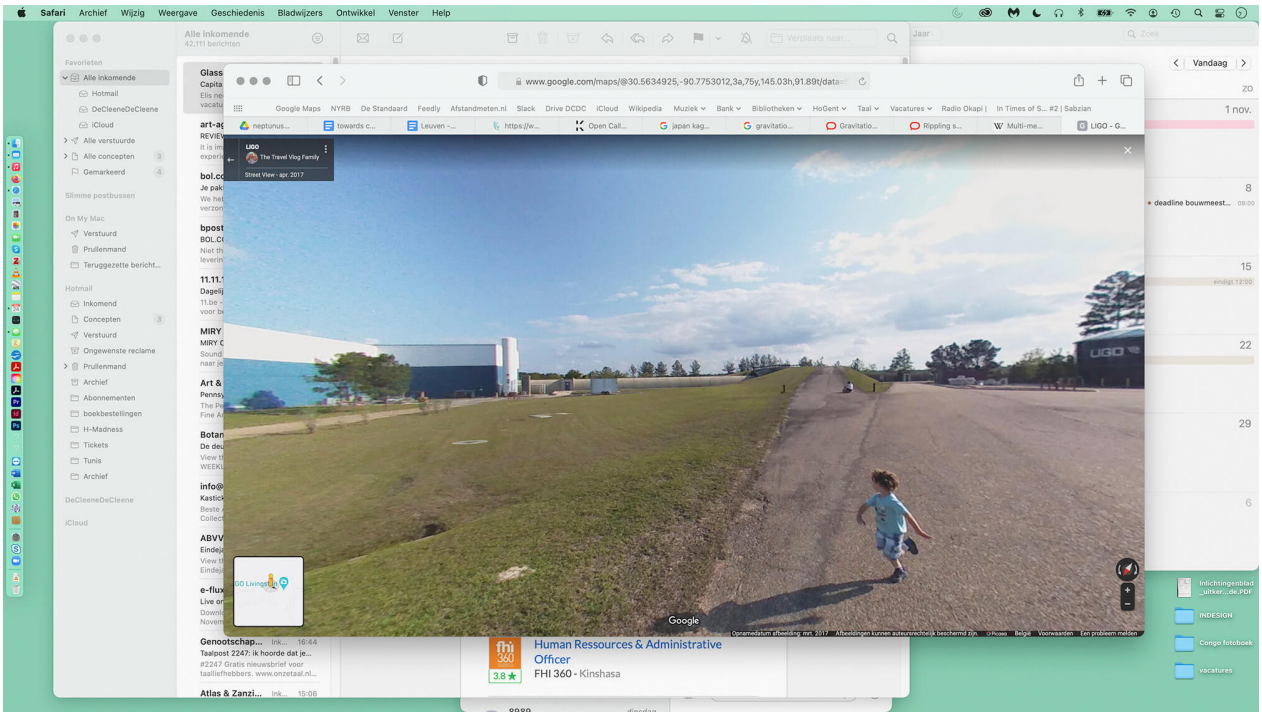
type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	11.06.2024	CF015874.jpeg	54 MB	Stephanie Kiwitt

category
architecture, brick, fissure, repair, rural area, Trigger

16:47:44

To detect gravitational waves, physicists built enormous research centers, amongst others at Livingston, Louisiana. The facility mainly consists of two tunnels in an L-shape. Mirrors inside provide data. Disturbances from gravitational waves are miniscule. To prevent interference from outside, such as vibrations caused by people passing in the neighbourhood, the mirrors have to be detached from the earth. They ‘float’, suspended by glass fibers in a pendulum-like construction.
As I was watching my screen, a courier was on his way to deliver a book (Noel-Todd, J. *The Penguin Book of the Prose Poem: From Baudelaire to Anne Carson*. London: Penguin, 2019).

org LIGO



type	date	filename	size	author
screenshot	24.11.2020	LIGO.png	6,9MB	Arnout De Cleene

category
physics, seismology, mirror, interference, book, architecture, mistake

16:47:46