



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

**Your path through the collection lead along** Sea glass, A smoker's history of energy, Antlers, Bent Concrete, Measures, Dome, Straight in the morning, curvy in the afternoon, It's Pouring, Album, It's Pouring, A Bibliographic Reference, Directory, Hitch My Wagon To A Star, Plaster, March, Pipe

## 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 05.05.2022 18:12, printed on \_\_\_\_\_ and contains 16 documents on 34 pages. (<https://the-documents.org/log/05-05-2022-3999/>)

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.decleenedecline.be](http://www.decleenedecline.be) / [info@decleenedecline.be](mailto:info@decleenedecline.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.



Flanders  
State of the Art



howest

At the beach of Cap d'Antifer in Normandy one can find 'sea glass' between the pebbles: pieces of broken glass that have naturally weathered by being tumbled by the ocean, over and over. Sharp edges and smooth surfaces vanish. The historical origin of the glass pebbles (glass bottles, a shipwreck) erodes. Only the colour of the pebbles gives an indication of their history, be it vaguely. Varieties of green sea glass are common, but other colours, such as red (Shlitz beer bottles) or yellow (interbellum Vaseline containers), are more rare and have to be sought after attentively.

It's 4.15 PM. The tide is pushing three people towards the cliffs.



type  
photograph

date  
02.05.2022

filename  
\_44A9615.psd

size  
115,50 MB

author  
De Cleene De Cleene

category  
collecting, sea, waste

18:11:08

A mostly empty book designed to collect cigar bands. The bands are glued to the paper at their left side, so the information on the backside, explaining the image and referring to the series it belongs to and the number of different labels the series contains, can be looked up. The book has complete and incomplete series on Christopher Columbus (complete), tanks (incomplete), the origins of civilization (complete), Ancient cultures (incomplete), fashion (complete), South-American sculptures (complete), Ancient columns (incomplete), Nobel Prize Winners (incomplete), an unclarified series of seven men, most of whom are ‘prof.’ or ‘dr.’ (complete / incomplete), design plates (incomplete), famous Belgians (complete / incomplete), statesmen (incomplete) and football players (incomplete). The first page in the book is used to present two series. The left column presents the Egyptian dynasty (incomplete). The middle and right column present a series of bands by the brand Jubilé on the history of energy in telling scenes and pieces of machinery.

Series: Energy

Middle column, top to bottom:

- The writing telegraph. Hughes
- Experiment with a sulphur globe. William Gilbert
- Primitive telephone. Philipp Reis
- Wireless telegraph.<sup>1</sup> Guglielo [sic] Marconi
- The arc of Volta. Sir Humphry Davy
- Fire in the wagon. Thomas Alva Edison
- Experiments with lightning. Benjamin Franklin
- Cathode for creating X-Rays. Wilhelm Röntgen
- Rotating magnetic field. Galileo Ferraris

Right column, top to bottom:

- Electric discharge. William Watt
- Magnetic telephone. Antonio Meucci
- Muscels reacting to electricity. Luigi Galvani
- Voltaic pile. Alessandro Volta
- Oscillating circuit. Guglielo [sic] Marconi
- Development of the telephone. Graham Bell

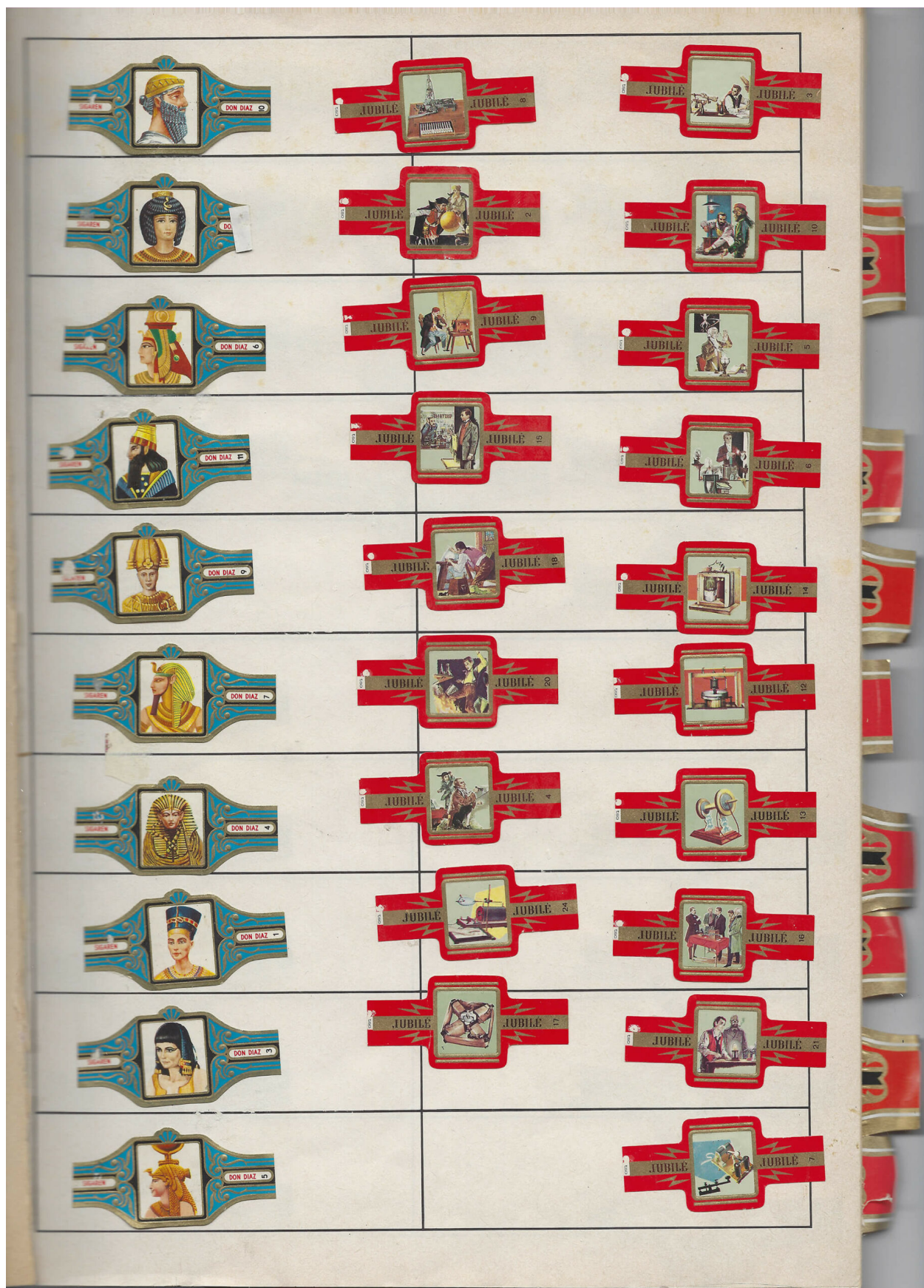
- Telephone, beginning of the 20th century
- Next to his wireless telegraph. Guglielo [sic] Marconi
- Invention of the incandescent light bulb. Thomas Alva Edison
- Morse’s telegraph. Samuel Morse

The series is incomplete.<sup>2</sup>

#### Notes

- 1 The scene shows a man standing at a desk, sticking out his hand to an officer in a window that reads, in mirror writing: Customs.
- 2 On eBay a complete series is advertised (15 EUR), with a lo-res picture of the whole collection, including the five bands missing in my grandfather’s collection. The information on the back, however, is not given. It leads to a highly speculative history of energy.
  - A man in a gown watching a T-shaped object.
  - A child in a cellar, sitting on a stool at a table with gray objects.
  - A soldier kneeling beside a child, in front of a train, and in front of a boat.
  - A low table with a giant cartwheel of sorts and a box.
  - A vertical object with what seems to be a bell on top.





type  
scan

date  
18.08.2021

filename  
Document\_2021-07-23\_160752.jpg

size  
10MB

author  
Arnout De Cleene

category  
collecting, physics, technology

18:11:23



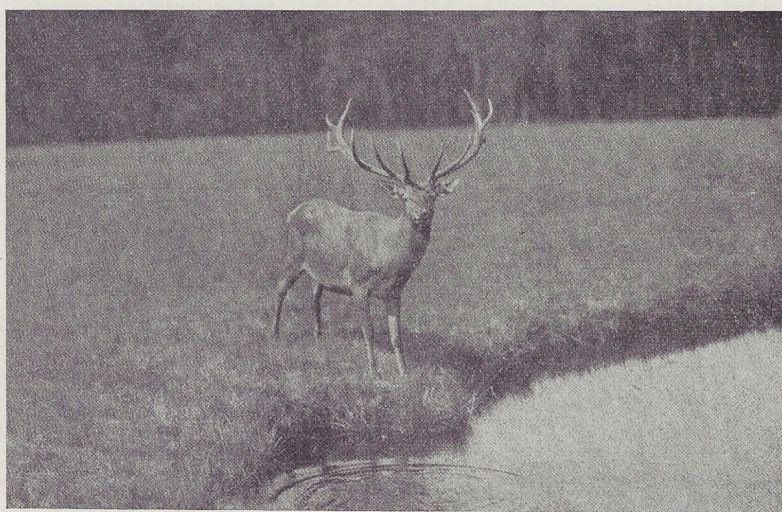
(‘*Imaginary landscape in the actual greater Gent, some thousands of years ago. A grassy riparian zone separates rivers from the edge of the forests*’)

Imagine a deserted city of Gent, overtaken by nature, Thiery asks the reader in his book *Het woud* (*The Forest*). After fifty years, you return to the city. Buildings have collapsed, streets are overgrown. It has become an impenetrable, dense forest, except for the river on which the reader makes his or her way through it. In the first half of the twentieth century, Leo Michel Thiery made one of Belgium’s first botanical gardens for educational purposes. In the middle of an industrialized quarter of the city of Gent, the garden presented different sceneries. There were landscapes from the Alps, dunes, the Ardennes, steppe. Besides sceneries with chalk-, loam-, marl- and sand-based vegetation, there were forests, grasslands and swamps.

After his death, Thiery’s garden decayed. Decades later, it was restored, with the Alps, dunes, the Ardennes and steppe now classified as a protected view.

#### Sources

Thiery, M. *Het woud. Een proeve van plantenaardrijkskunde*. Gent: De Garve, s.d., p. 14



Denkbeeldig landschap in het huidige Groot-Gent, eenige duizenden van jaren terug. Grazige oeverlanden scheidden er de rivieren van den boschzoom.

type  
scan

date  
21.12.2020

filename  
Document\_2020-12-21\_083327.jpg

size  
3,2MB

author  
Arnout De Cleene

category  
animal, botany, book, landscape

18:11:41

A block of concrete. Fissures are showing and rebar is sticking out from all sides. If it were still straight, the block would measure approximately 130 x 15 x 40cm.

It is lying by the side of the road, a few hundred meters from a construction site. It appears to be shaped by impact. Maybe the block plummeted to the ground from a great height. Perhaps, something heavy hit it. For all one knows, it served as a column and was exposed to an unforeseen amount of pressure, causing it to buckle.

According to Eyal Weizman '[a]rchitecture emerges as a documentary form, not because photographs of it circulate in the public domain but rather because it performs variations on the following three things: it *registers* the effect of force fields, it contains or *stores* these forces in material deformations, and, with the help of other mediating technologies and the forum, it *transmits* this information further.'

<sup>1</sup>

#### Sources

- 1 Weizman, E. 'Introduction', in: Forensic Architecture. *Forensis. The Architecture of Public Truth*. London/Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014.





type  
photograph

date  
02.06.2021

filename  
\_44A7339.dng

size  
42,54MB

author  
Michiel De Cleene

category  
archaeology, architecture, crash, impact, mistake, sand

18:11:44

Besides the scale indicating the length in centimeters, and the marks made by using it, a folding ruler displays other marks. These are the marks found on the *weber broutin* [www.weber-broutin.be](http://www.weber-broutin.be) folding ruler, from left to right:

- 2m (in a frame, between 1cm and 2cm); indicating the total length of the folding ruler.
- a hexagon, barely visible, punched into the wood (between 2cm and 3cm); unknown signification.
- LUXMA (in a frame, between 4cm and 5cm); the manufacturer of the folding ruler (different from the company who ordered the folding ruler, their (the company's, i.e. weber-broutin's) name is printed on the sides of the ruler, and is only readable when the ruler is folded together for at least 50% (=1m).
- III (in an oval, between 6cm and 7cm); indication of the preciseness of the scale in centimeters, with 'I' in roman numbers meaning the most precise, and 'IV' in roman numbers meaning the least precise. (It is therefore not entirely certain that the 'III' on *weber-broutin's* folding ruler can actually be found between 6cm and 7cm.)
- D 99 (in an oval, probably between 7cm and 8cm, see argument mentioned above); unknown signification.
- 1.1.60 (in an oval, probably between 7cm and 8cm, beneath D 99), signification unknown.



type	date	filename	size	author
scan	26.12.2020	Handgeschreven_2020-12-26_153034.jpg	659KB	Arnout De Cleene

category  
scale, sign, mistake, mathematics

A visit to the Royal Observatory of Belgium, in Ukkel. Most of the domes are damaged and need repairing. Only a few telescopes are in use. It is difficult to find a good spot from which to film the site. When we asked the people at the Royal Meteorological Institute – the Observatory’s neighbouring institution – if we could access their building’s roof to film the observatory, the answer was ‘no’.

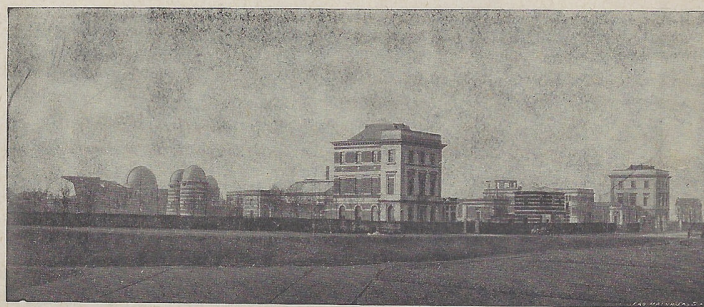
#### Notes

I (M.D.C.) remember there was a fire nearby. We couldn’t see the flames, but a tall dark plume of smoke rose above the trees lining the site. We didn’t insist any longer and ceased our attempt to access the roof, hoping we might find a good spot to film the smoke with a dome in the foreground.

#### Sources

Kesteloot, J. *Leerboek van Cosmografie voor Middelbaar en Lager Normaal Onderwijs* (derde vermeerdeerde uitgave). Brugge: Firma Karel Beyaert, 1948.





*Cliché v. d. Koninklijke Sterrenwacht, Ukkel.*

Fig. 1. — Algemeen zicht op de Koninklijke Sterrenwacht te Ukkel.

De telescopen zijn onder de goed merkbare koepels opgesteld.

III  
15/11/21  
De Cleene

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date  
15.05.2021

filename  
Foto\_2021-05-18\_205934.jpg

size  
2,1MB

author  
De Cleene De Cleene

category  
architecture, astronomy

18:11:48

On a pile of fresh hospital sheets, near the radiator, the tangerine curtains and the black marble window sill (the window looks out over the parking lot), underneath the two-day-old bouquet of flowers and next to a pile of magazines with a handwritten note on top (about a syrup that relieves slime and tastes like oranges), lie two sheets of paper.

Earlier that day the physiotherapist had come by. Twice. Once in the morning and once in the afternoon. He had each time drawn the first line, as an example. A straight line in the morning, a curvy line in the afternoon.

With a ballpoint pen my grandfather, who is recovering from an accident, diligently copied the examples (31 in the morning, 5 in the afternoon).



type  
photograph

date  
09.01.2022

filename  
IMG\_9441.HEIC

size  
862 KB

author  
Michiel De Cleene

category  
family, manual, medicine, parking, replica/copy

18:11:52

In his debut novel 'De Metsiers' Hugo Claus employs a multiple narrative perspective. In the copy I picked up in a thrift store, there's a bookmarker between pages 44 and 45 where the perspective shifts from Ana to Jim Braddok. It's pouring. The pink piece of paper lists 9 sessions at a driving school. There's a total of 20 hours, taught alternately by Johan and Guy.

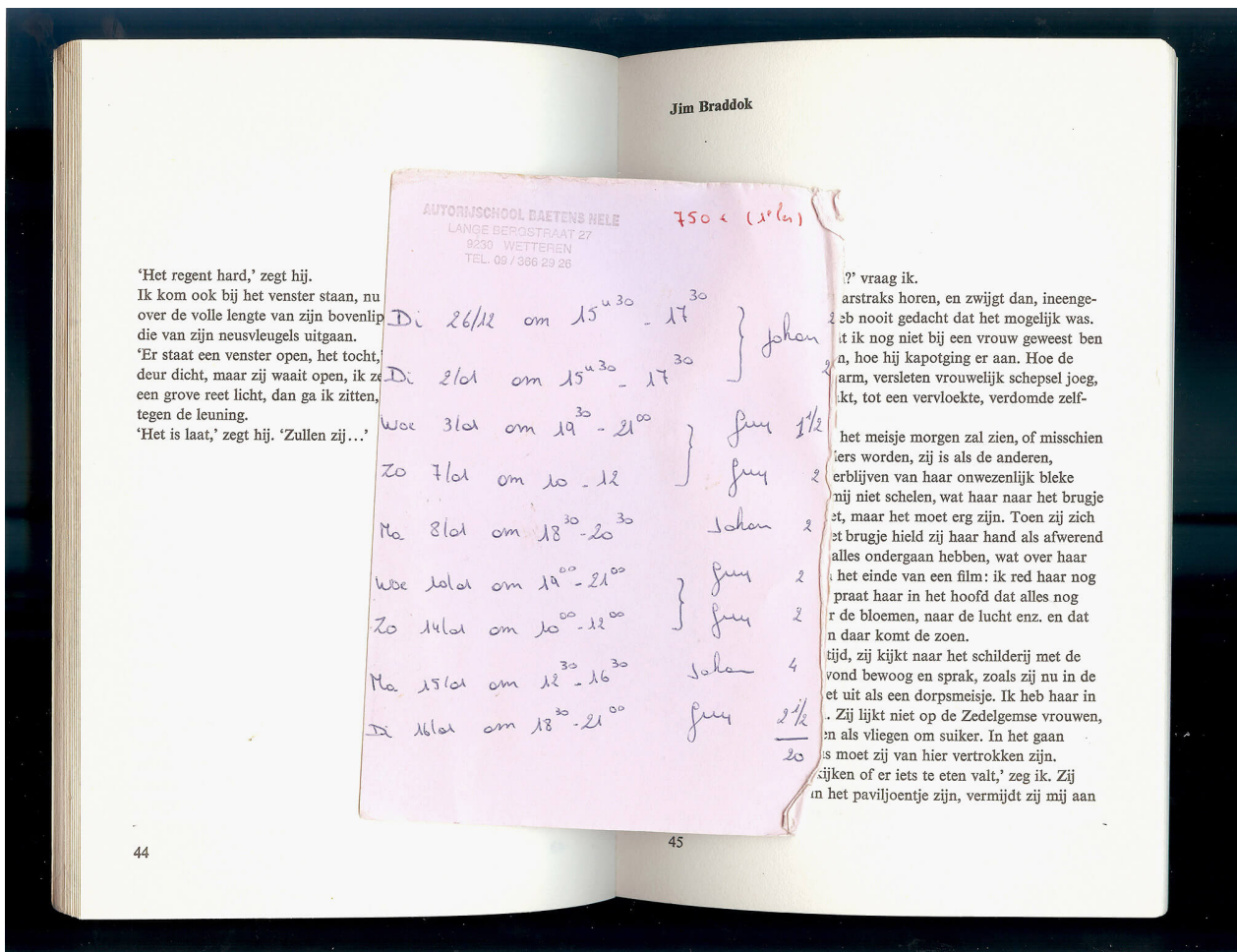
**Notes**

In 2000, 2006 and 2017 the twenty-sixth of December was a Tuesday.  
(Earlier years are improbable, since the Euro was not introduced yet.)

**Sources**

Claus, H. *De Metsiers*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Bezige Bij, 1978.





type  
scan

date  
09.06.2021

filename  
metsiers.jpg

size  
11,61 MB

author  
Michiel De Cleene

category  
automobile, book, card, literature, precipitation

18:11:58

At the State Archive in Kortrijk, I am leafing through a 1955 photo album of the construction of the provisional church in Lokeren by the famous furniture company Kunstwerkstede De Coene. Gigantic wooden, prefabricated beams structure the building. It is cold. An old man in a grey suit shuffles between the racks to look up the date of birth of his great great grandmother. Snow covers the unfinished provisional roof. A bus passes, I reckon, through the pouring rain.



type	date	filename	size	author
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category  
archive, architecture, book, data storage, De Coene, precipitation

**18:12:00**



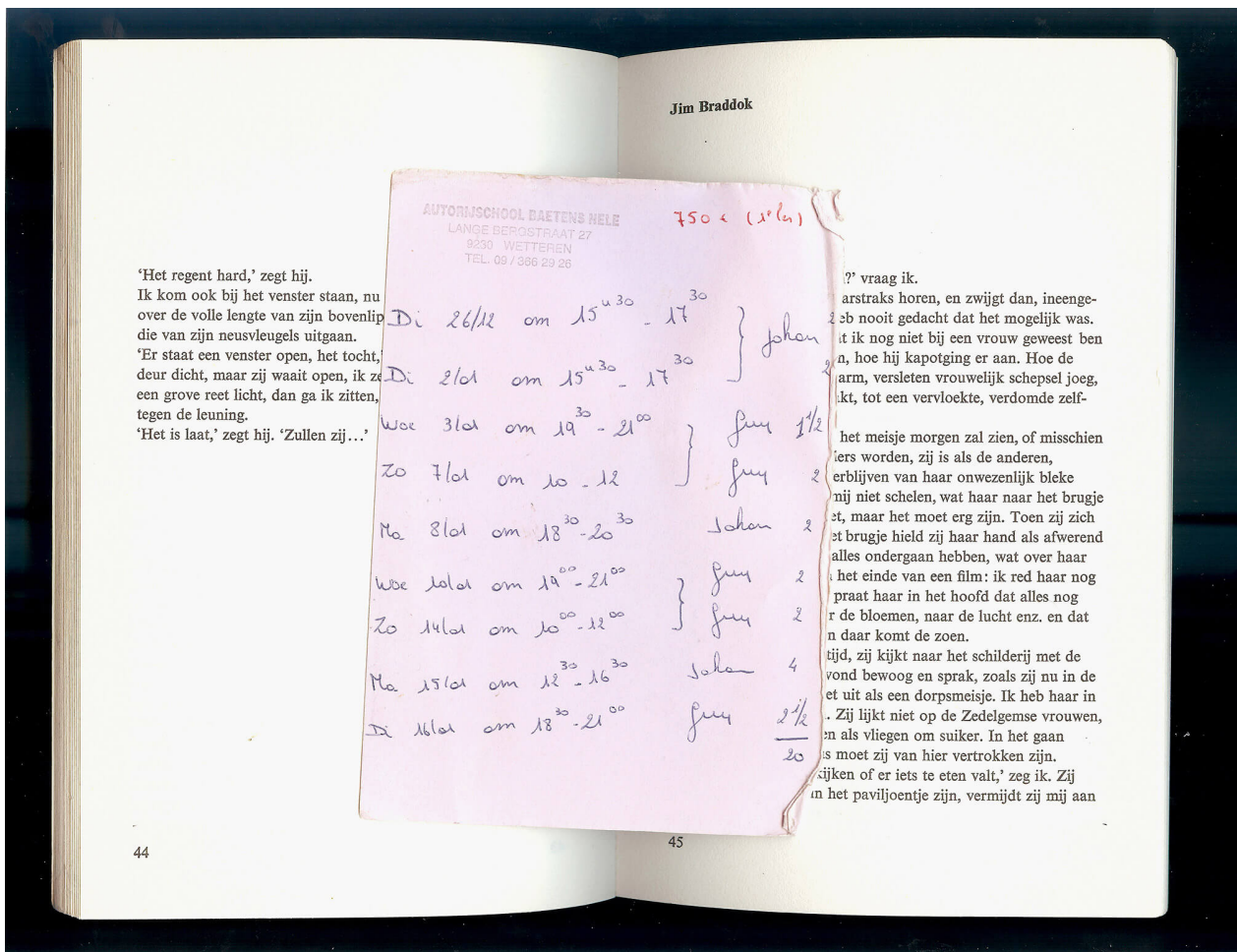
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**Notes**

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Claus, H. *De Metsiers*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Bezige Bij, 1978.



type  
scan

date  
09.06.2021

filename  
metsiers.jpg

size  
11,61 MB

author  
Michiel De Cleene

category  
automobile, book, card, literature, precipitation

18:12:04

‘ORIGINAL. Rire de tout ce qui est original, le  
haïr, le bafouer, et l’exterminer si l’on peut.’  
[‘ORIGINAL. Laugh with everything that’s  
original, hate it, scold it, exterminate it if you can.’]

#### Sources

Flaubert. *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (présenté par Raymond Queneau). Paris:  
Livre de poche, 1959 (with p. 232-233: dried leaf of a ginkgo tree, and p.  
324-325: dried leaf of a birch tree), p. 429 [2,00 EUR, Librairie Vic-sur-  
Cère, August 2021].



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	14.09.2021	_MG_7413.JPG	5,2MB	Arnout De Cleene
category	book, botany, tree, encyclopaedia, replica/copy, literature, collecting			

18:12:07

In 2020, the print versions of the Flemish telephone books 'Gouden Gids' and 'Witte Gids' (The Golden Guide and The White Guide), were published for the last time. From that year onwards, the directory could only be accessed and consulted online. The effect of the production of print telephone directories on the environment is considered to be enormous. As yearly updated, ubiquitous books, they were publications that soon turned superfluous. They led to piles of waste.

From the beginning of the 21st century on, both the print version and the online version had been available. This was a period of medium transition. During the last two decades, the print directory increasingly referred to the websites of the companies listed. To search for e.g. someone to inspect the heating installation, it was possible to find such a company's website via the print directory, and consult the inspector's services and price online, bypassing search engines such as Google and its complex algorithms. The telephone directory had a thematic and alphabetical order, combined with the possibility to buy additional advertising space.



type  
photograph

date  
02.10.2021

filename  
\_MG\_7415.JPG

size  
8,2MB

author  
Arnout De Cleene

category  
book, botany, data storage, technology, waste

18:12:17

Every two weeks, *The New York Review of Books* falls into my letterbox. Those are good days. Most often, I won't get to reading it, but what I instantly do, is check the last page with 'The Classifieds'. The people writing the (genuine, not fictitious) adverts and inquiries reappear every so often. I happily assume the position of the implied reader, as they address the presumed readers of the review. There's a 'charismatic, aging French rock star' providing original songs in Franglais. There are top notch apartments in Paris for aspiring writers. There are those seeking love and astronomical peculiarities: 'Hitch my wagon to a star – Looking for a bright sophisticated senior star gazer! CStein3981@aol.com'.

**Sources**

*The New York Review of Books*, March 11, 2021, Volume LXVIII, Number 4.



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type	date	filename	size	author
scan	13.05.2021	Document_2021-05-18_211421.jpg	3,5MB	Arnout De Cleene
category	astronomy, book, music, automobile			

18:12:25

As a result of intense drainage of drinking water, an area around the Belgian city of Waver was designated as having a potential for land subsidence – the downward movement of the soil over an extended period of time. People in Waver were startled to find their town mentioned in an international study published in *Science*. Flemish newspaper *De Standaard* uncovered that the researchers had used an older study, published in 2005, which claimed that the soil in Waver had moved some five centimeters in a period of eleven years. Pictures of fissures in Waver-facades had been added to the original article.

Last year, cracks in our living room wall were covered up by placing plasterboard in front of the plastered brick wall. As such, we avoided having to paint the wall with the cracks and the marks left by the IKEA Billy bookcases.

#### Sources

- [https://science.sciencemag.org/content/sci/suppl/2020/12/29/371.6524.34.DC1/abb8549\\_Herrera\\_SM.pdf](https://science.sciencemag.org/content/sci/suppl/2020/12/29/371.6524.34.DC1/abb8549_Herrera_SM.pdf)
- [https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20210106\\_97889104](https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20210106_97889104)
- [http://earth.esa.int/fringe2005/proceedings/papers/677\\_devleeschouwer.pdf](http://earth.esa.int/fringe2005/proceedings/papers/677_devleeschouwer.pdf)



type  
photograph

date  
11.12.2020

filename  
IMG\_0280.JPG

size  
2,6MB

author  
Arnout De Cleene

category  
drought, fissure, brick, house, seismology, precipitation, book

**18:12:31**

Interior of Eben-Ezer: photocopies and replicas of among other things an *Edit du Roy* and a photograph of a *Marche pour la liberté de conscience, 1956*. Handwritten labels are added beneath the blue frames. Due to limited lighting, and an interdiction to use the camera's flash, some labels are illegible, even when zooming in on the picture. It is unclear what the bottom left replica of a painting is (it has a Brueghelian air to it) and the upper right replica of a photograph.

The walls are made of flint, harvested from quarries in the neighbourhood.





type  
photograph

date  
03.03.2021

filename  
IMG\_0149.JPG

size  
2,2MB

author  
Arnout De Cleene

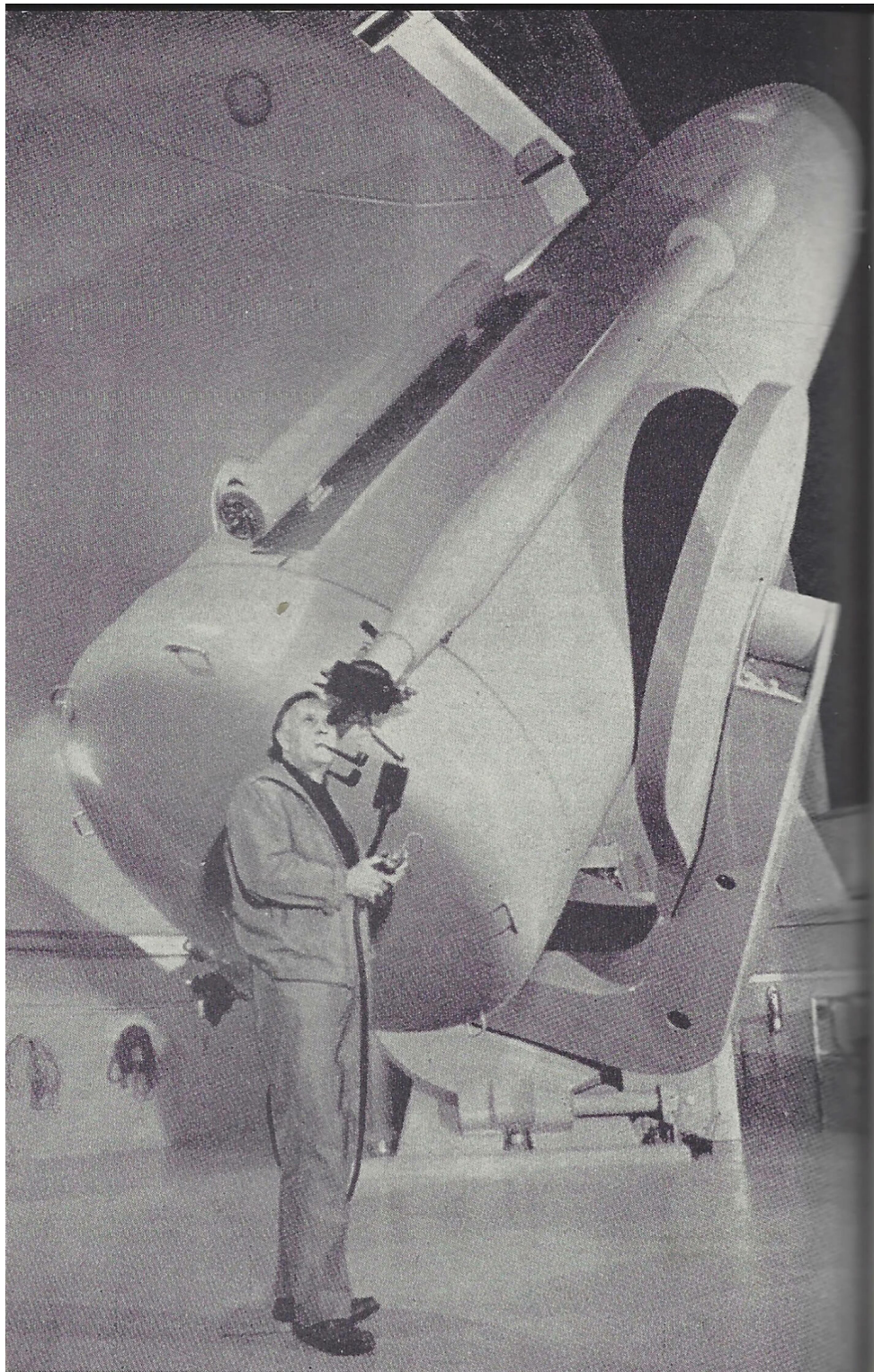
category  
animal, architecture, archive, archaeology, brick, replica/copy, house

18:12:38

The 48-inch Oschin Schmidt, a renowned reflecting telescope at Palomar Observatory, California, was used for the Palomar Observatory Sky Survey (POSS), published in 1958, one of the largest photographic surveys of the night sky.

Based on the man's pipe shadow's direction, thrown onto the telescope, there is reason to believe an off-camera flash was used to make the picture.





iv. De 48-inch-Schmidtkijker van het Mount-Palomar-observatorium.

type  
scan

date  
14.05.2021

filename  
Foto\_2021-05-18\_221027.jpg

size  
2,5MB

author  
Arnout De Cleene

category  
astronomy, mirror

18:12:43



