



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

**Your path through the collection lead along** Stopwatch, Sea glass, Zebras, View, Backpack, Mirror, Straight in the morning, curvy in the afternoon, Inflation, 12M m3 [8/8] Heating, 12M m3 [5/8] It's Freezing, 12M m3 [3/8] Swell, Elevator, Iguanodon, The First Light of Day, Directory, Dust

## 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 10.05.2022 01:55, printed on \_\_\_\_\_ and contains 16 documents on 34 pages. (<https://the-documents.org/log/10-05-2022-4005/>)

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.  
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- 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



HOGENT  
howest

He's wearing a digital watch. It looks like a Casio. It's impossible to read the time, no matter whether you are studying the high-resolution scan of the negative or the negative itself, with the aid of a loupe and lightbox.

The device had a stopwatch function. When we were around eight and ten, we used to compete in trying to start and stop the stopwatch in the shortest possible interval. The smaller the gap, the closer to zero. Sometimes he would also have a try. We once managed to get it down to 00:00:00:03. Neither of us dared to press 'reset' and try again.

#### Notes





type  
photograph

date  
10.05.2022

filename  
032a-07s.psd

size  
802,34 MB

author  
De Cleene De Cleene

category  
archive, family, house, mirror, technology

**09:52:14**

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

09:55:27



On Mondays, before noon, I go to the supermarket with my two-year-old son. After passing the lasagnes, the loaves of bread and the fruit and vegetables, we make a short stop at the aquarium with the lobsters. Around New Year, there are two of them.

After we've paid for the groceries and have put them in the car, we walk into the pet shop. We look at the parrots (Jacques, Louis and Marie-José), the rabbits, the guinea pigs, the assorted caged birds and the fish and turtles. He's very fond of the *Cyphotilapia Frontosa Burundi*. He calls them zebras. They hail from Lake Tanganyika, the label says. It's the second-oldest freshwater lake, the second-largest by volume and the second-deepest. The pet shop has adorned their aquarium with a scene of ocean waste.

In an effort to avert guilt, I look for something cheap and more or less useful to buy: birdseed, a snack for the neighbour's cat, a comb for his grandparent's Labrador, etc.



type  
photograph

date  
05.04.2022

filename  
IMG\_0214.HEIC

size  
1,5 MB

author  
Michiel De Cleene

category  
animal, RDC, trompe l'oeil, waste, family, replica/copy

09:55:29

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’.<sup>1</sup> 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

\_44A6588.dng

At 13:26:43 I took a photograph of a concrete building without windows in an industrial zone just south of Brussels.

\_44A6590.dng

At 16:46:15 I photographed a succession of office buildings in the same industrial zone.

\_44A6589.dng

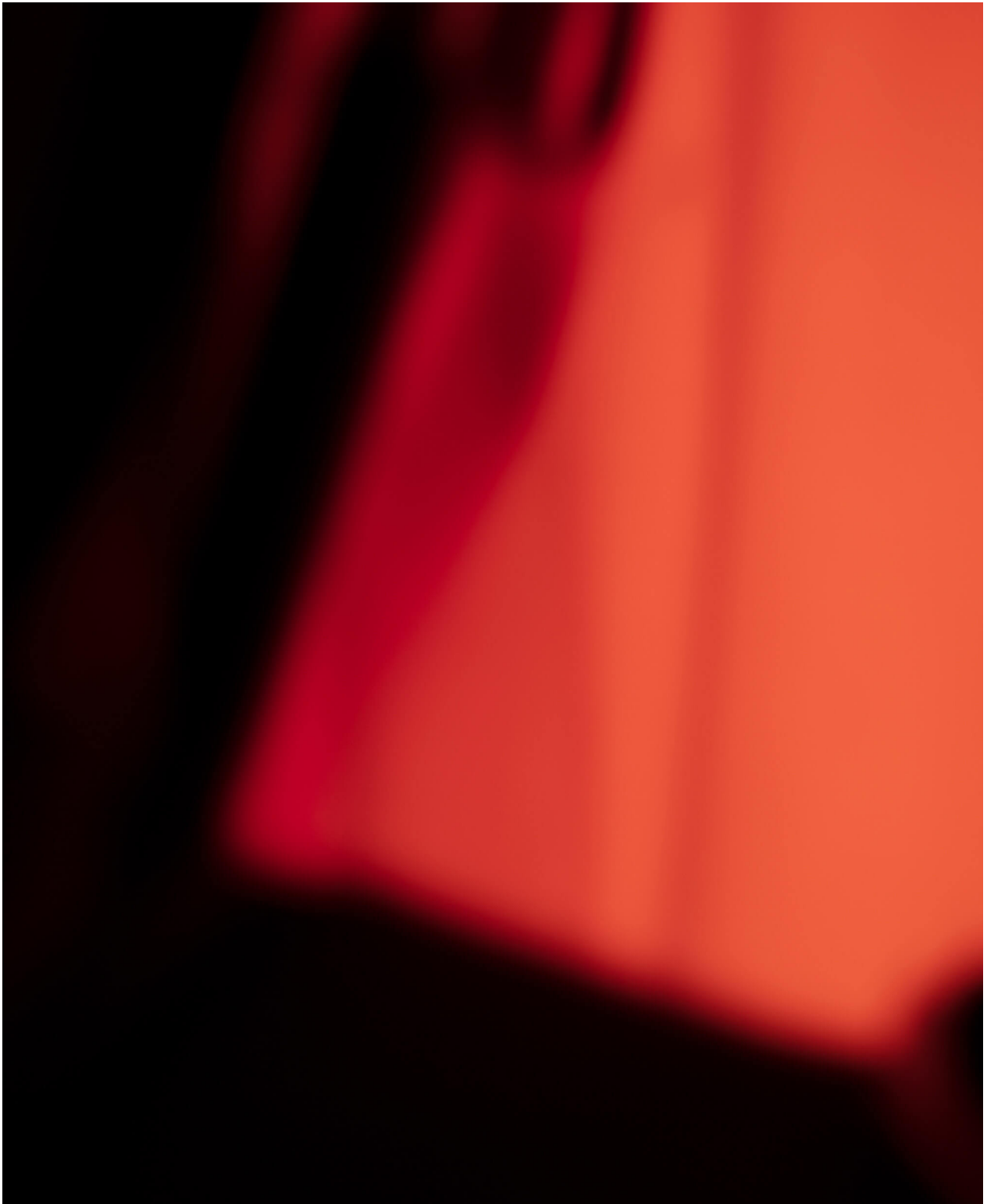
I must have walked about 1 kilometer between the concrete building without windows and the section of the industrial zone with the offices. At 13:43:49, the camera, safely stored in my backpack, recorded 0.4 seconds of the 20 minutes it took me to get there.

In *The Snows of Venice*, Alexander Kluge wonders whether he can take the liberty to conjure up what the sky looked like on 31 December 1799, as Schiller made his way to Goethe's house. He goes on by saying that, historically, there's a 'LACK OF SENSORY ATTENTION AT CRUCIAL MOMENTS'.<sup>1</sup> There are exceptions, though, like the cameraman that was sent out to document the fireworks on New Year's Day 2000. The camera was turned on prematurely. The batteries were used up by midnight, but 'certain gray tones, however, filtered through the cracks of its protective case, conveyed the motion of the walking cameraman, the transportation. The incompletely shut, low-information container was documented exactly [...] To this day it provides inexact testimony as to the qualities of the leather of a twenty-first century carrying case and the precise sensitivity to light and dark demonstrated by a twenty-first century recording medium.'<sup>2</sup>

#### Sources

- 1 Lerner, B., Kluge, A. *The Snows of Venice*. Leipzig: Spector Books, 2018, p. 53
- 2 Ibid.





type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	15.02.2022	_44A6589.dng	37,87 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category  
architecture, data storage, mistake, packaging, technology

**09:55:37**

On the online thrift shop 2dehands.be the homepage generates a 'for you' section. On November 9th this section listed, among other things, a picture of the sky on a patch of concrete. On closer inspection, it became clear that it was the sky's reflection in a mirror with a red frame and four lightbulbs in it, the kind you might see at the hairdresser's or backstage in a television studio or theatre. The seller estimates the mirror's current value to be 45,00 EUR. The listing includes five photographs. In the fifth one, the object for sale reflects a bucolic landscape: a blue sky, white clouds, some trees and a fragment of a barn.



type  
screenshot

date  
16.01.2022

filename  
Schermafbeelding 2021-11-09 om  
20.54.40.png

size  
2,92 MB

author  
Michiel De Cleene

category  
economy, landscape, mirror

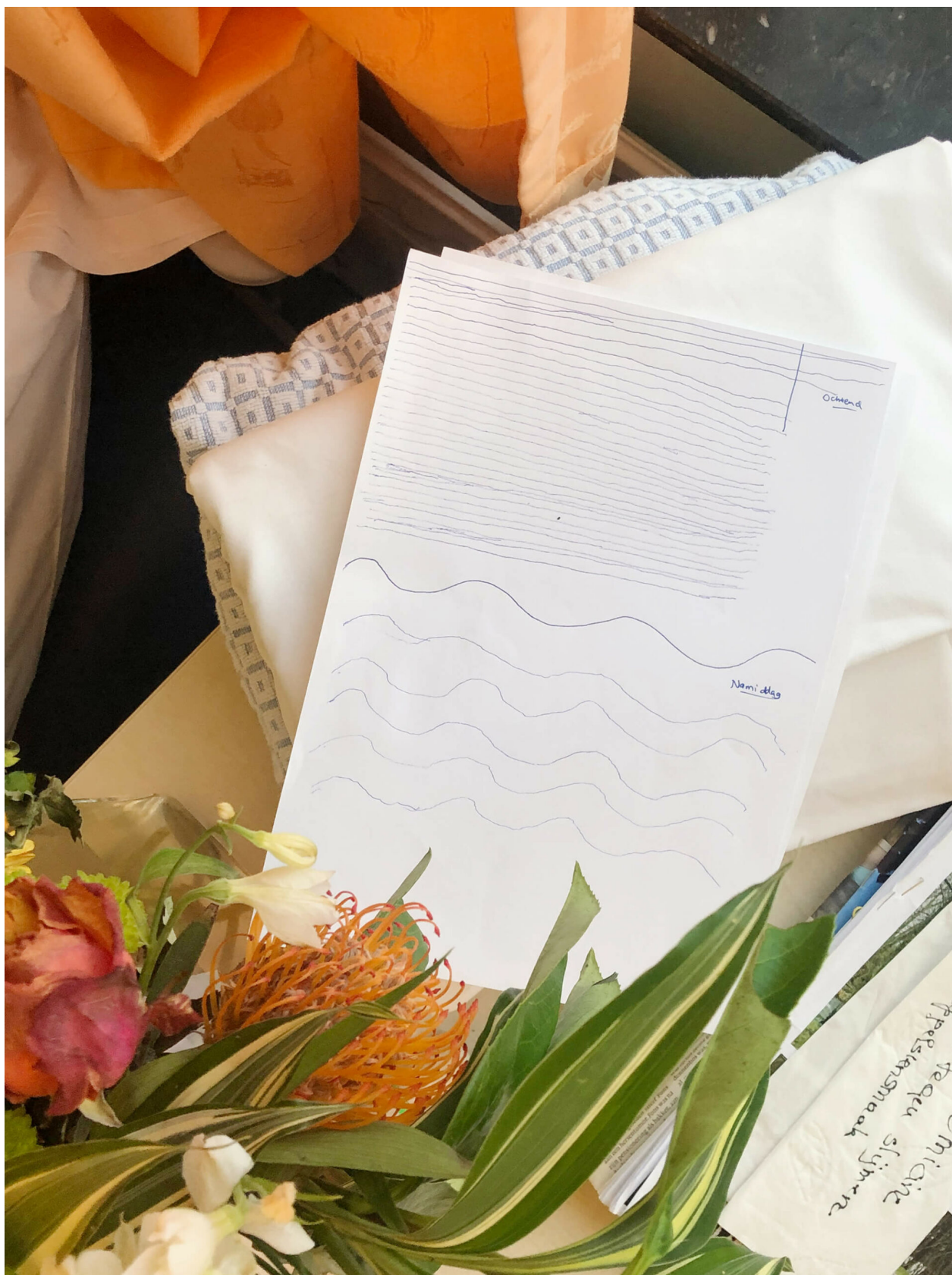
**09:55:38**



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

09:55:39

A 250 meter walk away from the seaside. A sign states in Dutch and French:

‘!!! NO PARKING !!!

Wrongly parked cars will be chained and only released upon payment of a € 40 parking fee’

The 40 EUR parking fee the sign threatens to charge is communicated by a relatively new sticker stuck on an older sign. Underneath the three black characters (€, 4 and 0) on a white background, there’s a relief: 7 characters declaring a parking fee of 1500 BEF.

1500 BEF equals 37,18 EUR<sup>1</sup>. In changing currency, the fee increased by 7,58%.

#### Notes

1. The Belgian franc was the currency of the Kingdom of Belgium from 1832 until 2002 when the Euro was introduced. 1 EUR is worth 40,3399 BEF.





type  
photograph

date  
02.01.2022

filename  
\_44A4714.dng

size  
63,15 MB

author  
Michiel De Cleene

category  
automobile, brick, economy, parking, sea, sign, sticker

09:55:40

Shortly after crossing the Thur the couple reaches their car. They're freezing. As the sun sets they drive through the mountainous landscape. The heating hurts their fingers.

The next day, they return, but the scene looks different. It's warmer. The Thur appears to flow faster.





type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	07.12.2021	IMG_0518b.jpg	4,38 MB	Michiel De Cleene
category				
automobile, family, landscape, parking				

09:55:40

On January 23, 2020 a young couple walks around  
the drained reservoir of Kruth-Wildenstein.

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It's freezing. They're expecting their first child  
within a month.



type  
photograph

date  
04.12.2021

filename  
IMG\_0509b.jpg

size  
3,31 MB

author  
Michiel De Cleene

category  
family, landscape

09:55:41



The river swells and eventually overflows, causing the death of six people and extensive damage: washed away bridges, damaged homes, submerged factories, destroyed food stocks, heavily eroded roads and paths.



type  
photograph

date  
01.12.2021

filename  
IMG\_0507b.jpg

size  
6,12 MB

author  
Michiel De Cleene

category  
impact, landscape, precipitation

09:55:42

The building is almost finished. One apartment is still up for sale, on the top floor. The contractor is finishing up. There's a long list of comments and deficiencies that need to be addressed before the building can be handed over definitively to the owner. The elevator's walls are protected by styrofoam to prevent squares, levels, measures, drills, air compressors, chairs, bird cages, etc. from making scratches on the brand new wooden panelling.

In 1932 Brassai began taking photographs of graffiti scratched into walls of Parisian buildings. On his long walks he was often accompanied by the author Raymond Queneau, who lived in the same building but on a different floor. Brassai published a small collection of the photographs in *Minotaure*, illustrating an article titled 'Du mur des cavernes au mur d'usine' ['From cave wall to factory wall'].





type  
photograph

date  
13.11.2021

filename  
IMG\_0039.jpeg

size  
2,57 MB

author  
Michiel De Cleene

category  
architecture, decoration, sign

09:55:45

I recognized it in a flash, the late Jurassic-early Cretaceous herbivore looming dangerously over the road I was cycling on. I thought of *Some Windy Trees*.<sup>1</sup>

A utility pole (425638, 07/99, 07/2002, COBRA), electrical wires, a hawthorn (*Crataegus*) and an old man's beard (*Clematis vitalba*). A symbiosis.

#### Notes

1 Delbrouck, V. *Some Windy Trees*. Loupaigne: Wilderness, 2013.





type  
photograph

date  
17.10.2021

filename  
IMG\_2711.jpg

size  
4,66 MB

author  
Michiel De Cleene

category  
angst, animal, book, botany, dusk, mistake, tree, trompe l'oeil, wind

**09:55:46**

A year ago, mid-August, just before sunrise, the mostly unlit office buildings line the road that leads to the underground parking. I turn off the ignition. I'm in F36. The walls are painted pink. Looking for the exit, I take the escalator and get stuck in an empty shopping mall. The music is playing but all the shops are closed off with steel shutters. So are the exits. I'm out of place. In keeping early customers out, the mall is keeping haphazard visitors in. I'm back in the parking lot. The elevator is broken. I take the stairs and walk by a homeless man, sleeping. There's shit on the floor. I open the door that leads out of the stairwell. It slams shut behind me. There's no doorknob. I find myself on a dark floor between mall and parking lot. People are sleeping; some are awake. Heads turn toward me. I start walking slightly uphill towards where I think I might find an exit, or an entrance. The scale of the architecture has shifted from car (F36) and customer (the closed mall) to truck. I find myself amidst the supply-chain. It takes five minutes, maybe fifteen, maybe more to get out and see the office buildings towering over me in the first light of day.





type  
photograph

date  
15.10.2021

filename  
\_44A4965.dng

size  
52 MB

author  
Michiel De Cleene

category  
angst, architecture, automobile, economy, map/plan, mistake, music, parking

**09:55:47**



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

09:55:47

Ten years ago, in November, I drove up to Frisia – the northernmost province of The Netherlands. I was there to document the remains of air watchtowers: a network of 276 towers that were built in the fifties and sixties to warn the troops and population of possible aerial danger coming from the Soviet Union. It was very windy. The camera shook heavily. The poplars surrounding the concrete tower leaned heavily to one side.

I drove up to the seaside, a few kilometers farther. The wind was still strong when I reached the grassy dike that overlooked the kite-filled beach. I exposed the last piece of film left on the roll. Strong gusts of wind blew landwards.

Months later I didn't bother to blow off the dust that had settled on the film before scanning it. A photograph without use, with low resolution, made for the sake of the archive's completeness.

The dust on the film appears to be carried landwards, by the same gust of wind lifting the kites.



type  
photograph

date  
06.09.2021

filename  
LWT-Oudemirdum0002.tif

size  
28,17 MB

author  
Michiel De Cleene

category  
architecture, archive, data storage, landscape, sea, wind

**09:55:48**

