

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

Your path through the collection lead along Nap, Negative sheet 02, negative 5, negative 6, Negative sheet 17, negative 36, negative 36,5, Negative sheet 55, negative 4, negative 5, Neptune in opposition [12/20] – Culmination, Crash (2), A Transparent Forest, Desiccation, Mammoth Tree and the Golden Spurs, A smoker's history of energy, Passing Time Near a Particle Accelerator, Iguanodon, Tracking, Learning broom-making again, A Sparta K-10, Rue Verte, Brussels

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 10.06.2025 13:57, printed on _____ and contains 15 documents on 35 pages. (<https://the-documents.org/log/10-06-2025-6543/>)

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 / 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

It's time to have a nap. I tilt the window over its middle axis to let the butterfly out. A breeze ruffles the drapes. Now, it sits on the glass and throws an enormous shadow on the yellow cloth.



type
photograph

date
06.01.2025

filename
_MG_9406.JPG; _MG_9429.JPG

size
6,1 MB; 10,2 MB

author
Arnout De Cleene

category
animal, cloth, decoration, encounter, family, scale, wind

13:01:12



The architect's photographic archive contains seven images that can be labelled as panoramic pictures. However, they only appear as such when the photographs are viewed in the archive, as strips of negatives. In order to see the panoramic construct, the viewer needs to be presented with two consecutive negatives.

There are two kinds of panorama in the archive: the kind that can only be attributed to a kind of laziness or a need for efficiency on behalf of the architect, and another that originates from frugality.

The former type of panorama is created when the architect is documenting the situation as it is: it is compulsory to document the context of the building or lot, as part of a building application. He simply pivots from left to right, capturing the first and second photograph consecutively. On the filmstrip a panorama appears.

The other kind of panoramic picture only appears at the end of the film role. The last negative on the film has been exposed (the twenty-fourth or thirty-sixth), after which he exerts force onto the lever to move the film forward anyway. Some films are known to have, by accident, a twenty-fifth or a thirty-seventh negative. The plastic between the sprocket holes tears and the film does not advance enough. The result differs fundamentally from the other kind of panorama: there is no separation, no void between the negatives. Rather, there is a slight overlap. A thin, vertical strip of film that has been exposed twice, suggesting contiguity that might not be there. The two exposures might be from altogether different sites, creating a new situation.

Notes

- Based on De Cleene, M. & De Cleene, A. *The Situation as it Is. A Photonovel in Three Movements*. Gent: APE, 2022



type	date	filename	size	author
scan	27.04.2023	002_17.jpg	1,45 MB	De Cleene De Cleene

category
architecture, archive, house, mistake, precipitation, family, panorama

13:03:22

Photographing the house and the clearing it stood in proved difficult. During summer, the nettles and brambles slowed down the pace. Some plants stung the elbows. The clearing only became visible when the sun fell through the opening in the canopy. On cloudy days the clearing disappeared.

Notes

- ‘As the order of institutions follows its course, or as huts give way to villages and then to cities and finally to cosmopolitan academies, the forests move further and further away from the center of the clearing. At the center one eventually forgets that one is dwelling in a clearing. [...] Yet however wide the circle may get through the inertia of civic expansion, it presumably retains an edge of opacity where history meets the earth, where the human abode reaches its limits.’

Sources

- Pogue Harrison, R. ‘The Ecology of Finitude’, in: id., *Forests*. Chicago, 1992, 245.



type	date	filename	size	author
scan	11.10.2023	017c_05.jpg	1,48 MB	De Cleene De Cleene
category	architecture, archive, house, landscape, panorama, tree			

13:20:57

It has been snowing. A black BMW is parked on the other side of the street and is cut in half by the separation between negatives 4 and 5. Apart from a slight kink in the landscape, the negative on the right is a perfect continuation of the one on the left. The fence around the orchard, the branches of the apple tree and the power lines connect implicitly in the void between the negatives.

Notes

- Based on De Cleene De Cleene, *The Situation as it Is. A Photonovel in Three Movements* (APE, 2022).



type	date	filename	size	author
scan	08.05.2023	55f-56a.jpg	1,34 MB	De Cleene De Cleene

category

architecture, archive, automobile, botany, family, mistake, trompe l'oeil, precipitation, tree, landscape, panorama

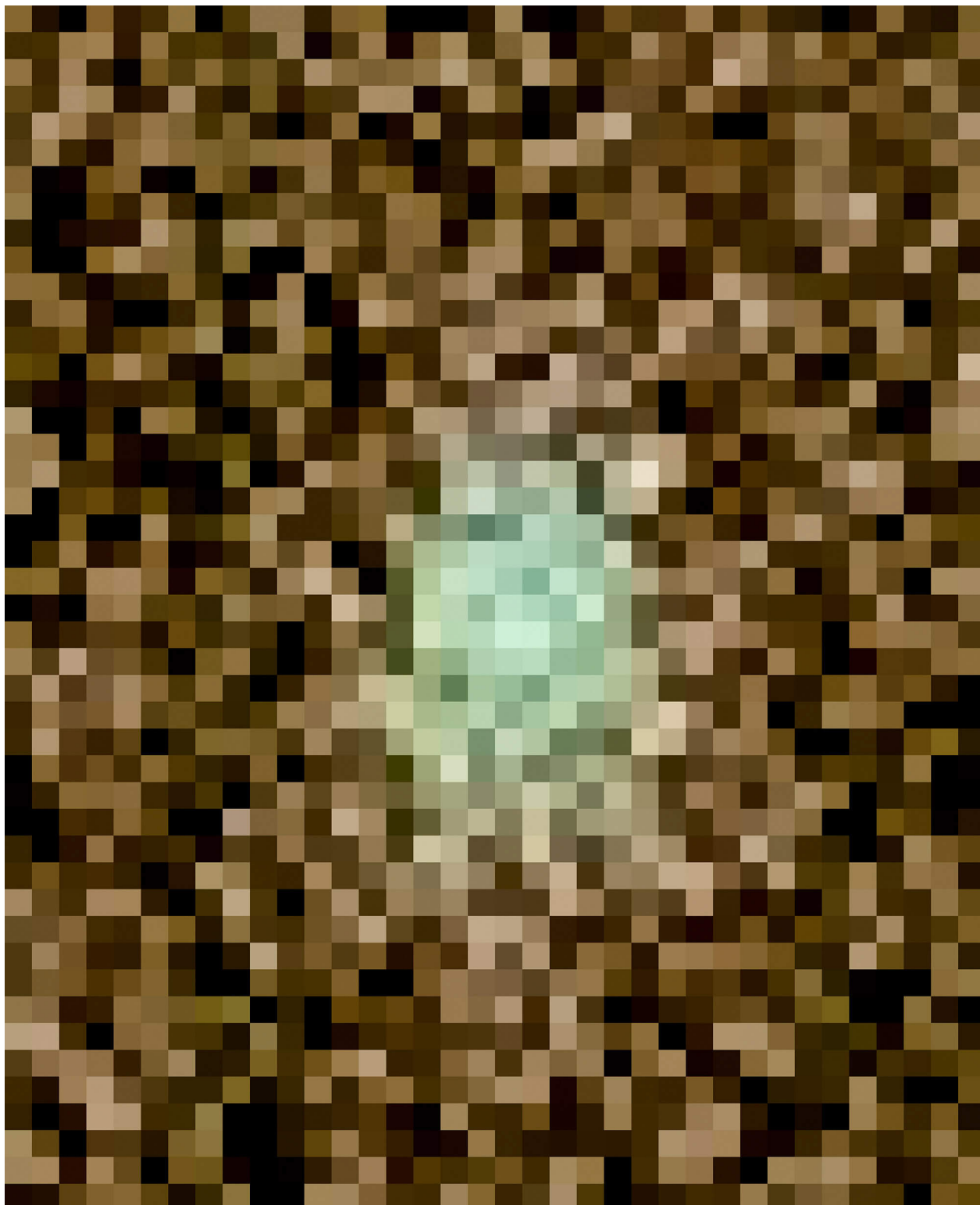
13:55:16

The orthopaedic surgeon left early that morning for his shift at the hospital some twenty kilometres away. It must have been around the time Neptune was at its highest, invisible in the morning sky.

When he got back later that day, we attached a tow cable to the front of my car and the back of his.



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	27.09.2022	_44A2295.dng	54,58 MB	De Cleene De Cleene
category				
astronomy, automobile, encounter, medicine, Neptune				



Near Avenue 61 on an artificial island close to Seef, a truck is being towed after the driver lost control over the vehicle and flipped it onto its side. A warm wind blows in from the Persian Gulf.

A police officer signals us to come closer. ‘Why are you taking pictures?’ he asks. ‘This is just an accident. You have to delete the pictures from your phone. Now.’ After checking the pictures-folder on our phones, he gets in his car, drives a few metres, stops the car and rolls down his window. ‘And don’t do it again!’ he yells. Then he drives off, raising a cloud of sand in his wake.

Notes

Photograph taken and recovered from my trash bin on 18.12.2020.



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	08.05.2021	IMG_5071.jpeg	2,71MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
Bahrain, crash, data storage, drought, government, interference, mistake, parking, sand, technology

13:55:27

During the second half of April 2018, passers-by complained on Twitter about the massive chopping of trees and bushes in the area of the park site in Ranst, Belgium, along the E313 highway, in close proximity to the city of Antwerp.

Initially, the Department of Road and Highway Maintenance answered on Twitter that no pruning activities had taken place. They wouldn't want to disturb breeding birds. But soon after, they admitted to the pruning. Their argumentation took a turn: 'These are pruning activities in the context of the transmigration-problem on parking lots, as requested by the Police Department and the State Governor, so that transmigrants will no longer be able to hide. In the future, we will take up this discussion in our pruning policy for the upcoming breeding season.'

Upon closer investigation (an inquiry by Nature Inspection), the scale of the chopping became clear. The trees closest to the highway and the parking lot were chopped, while other trees were pruned at the bottom. Species such as European black elderberry, maple tree, sorbus, hazel, English holly, wild black cherry and breaking buckthorn disappeared. Rare species, only found in ancient forests, such as Solomon's seal, were severely damaged.

These activities resulted in what the investigators described as a 'transparent forest' – a forest without density at lower levels, which is ecologically speaking not valuable. It has no 'forest feeling'.

Notes

- 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
image	27.05.2024	DCDC_ranst_2_039.psd	1,03 GB	De Cleene De Cleene

category
automobile, botany, conflict, government, landscape, parking, Ranst, tree

A sheet of brushed aluminium serves as the base for a monochromatic print showing a circular floor plan and seven photographs. The nearby *Prosopis cineraria*, known as the 'Tree of Life', is a well-known tourist attraction in the Arabian Desert near Jebel Dukhan. The plaque shows how the recently constructed concrete structure, circling the four hundred year old tree, allows the visitors to see and photograph the landmark in new and – because of the tree's decentralized position – surprising ways. In summer the temperature can rise well over 40°C. The different expansion rates of the aluminium and its imprint cause the latter to crack.



type
photograph

date
12.12.2020

filename
IMG_4888.HEIC

size
2,2MB

author
Michiel De Cleene

category
Bahrain, botany, drought, map/plan, tree, fissure, sand, sign, physics, scale

13:55:57

Between the rhinos and the kangaroos in the Antwerp Zoo a wooden footpath curves through a grove of *Sequoiadendron Giganteum* trees. In the middle of this Californian forest, visitors find the giant slice of a felled tree of the same species. It was brought to the zoo in 1962 and was approximately 650 years old at the time. Eleven labels point out significant moments in history on the tree's growth rings. They range from zoo- and zoology-related moments (for instance: '1901: The Okapi is described as a species', or '1843: Foundation of the RZSA and opening of the Zoo', or '1859: Darwin publishes *The Origin of Species*', etc.), to cultural and historical milestones ('1555: Plantijn starts publishing books in Antwerp', or '1640: Rubens (baroque painter) dies', or '1492: Columbus in America'). Another label points to the last growth ring and reads: '1962: this tree is felled and this tree disc is installed at the Zoo.'

The label pointing to the centre of the tree implies a simultaneity between the tree's first growth year and the Battle of the Golden Spurs in 1302.

Notes

On closer inspection the slice seems to consist of two halves that were put together like a jigsaw puzzle. The resulting gap is skilfully patched with what appears to be wood from the same species – possibly even the same mammoth tree.



type
photograph

date
15.05.2021

filename
IMG_6958.HEIC

size
1,9MB

author
Michiel De Cleene

category
animal, book, botany, card, tree

13:56:06

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.¹ 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:

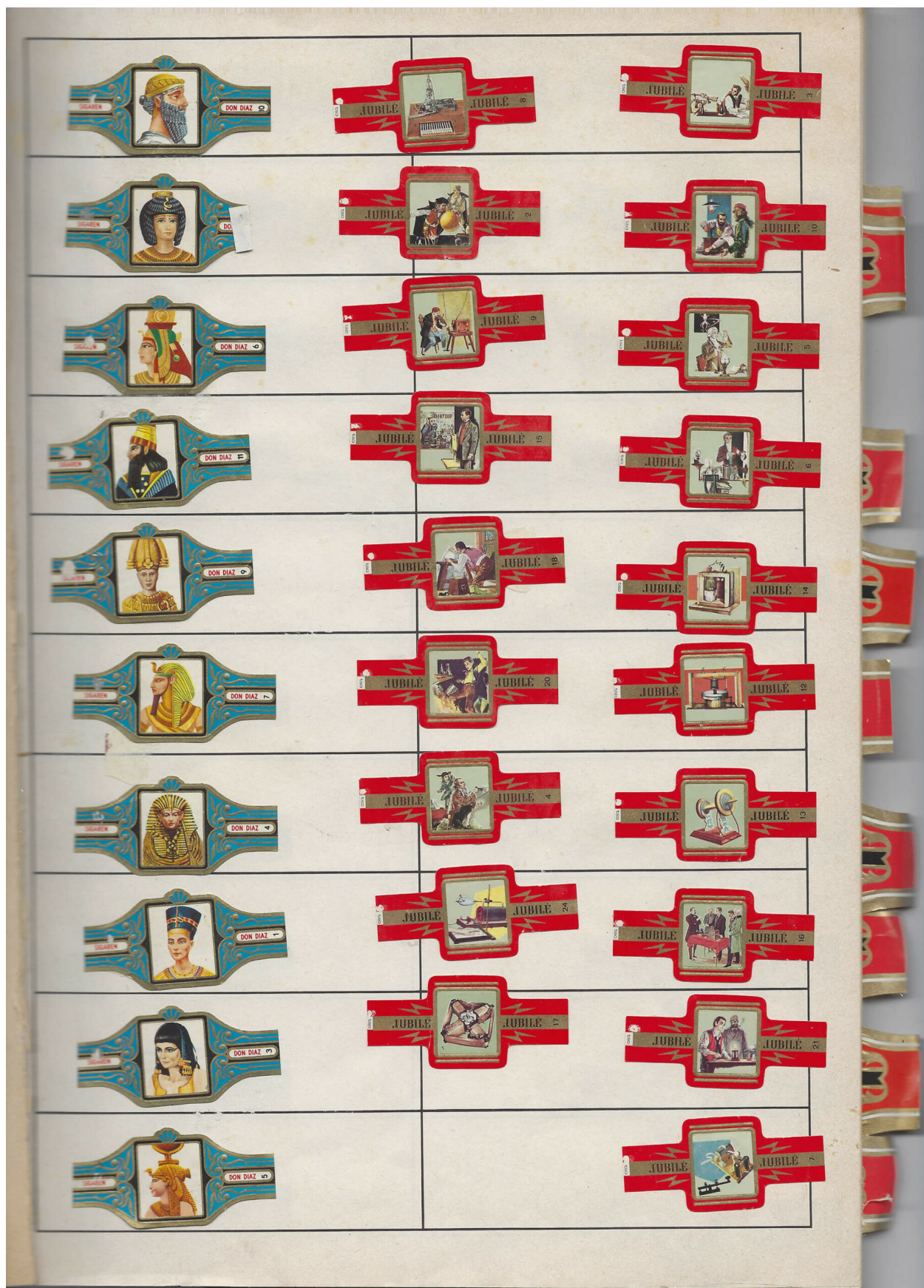
- Electric discharge. William Watt
- Magnetic telephone. Antonio Meucci
- Muscles reacting to electricity. Luigi Galvani
- Voltaic pile. Alessandro Volta
- Oscillating circuit. Guglielo [sic] Marconi
- Development of the telephone. Graham Bell

- 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.²

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

13:56:21

On the second to last day of a research visit at CERN, there was some spare time in the schedule. I took a long walk towards building 282 in search of some excavation samples: cylindrical pieces of rock that were preserved when the tunnel was dug, glued to a block of wood and frequently exhibited in museums over the last three decades as material evidence of the earthwork and as a witness to the depth. The route led me along the back of building 363 where the wind caused young trees – now gone – to scuff the facade over time.

Notes

First published in: De Cleene, M. *Reference Guide*. Amsterdam: Roma Publications, 2019, as W.569.EXC CERN, Towards Building 282, in search of excavation samples



type
photograph

date
11.07.2021

filename
cern_011.tif

size
57,57 MB

author
Michiel De Cleene

category
archaeology, architecture, archive, landscape, physics, Reference Guide, technology, tree, wind

13:56:30

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*.¹

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

13:56:43

I drove through the neighborhood seeking evidence of the disruption using a power outage map as a compass. Winding through quiet streets, I stumbled upon a lone blue PG&E truck idling opposite a charred utility pole with fragments of wood and wire strewn across the pavement. I parked my car and walked toward the truck to ask the driver what had happened. He pointed to the top of the pole where a porcelain insulator dangled precariously from a high-voltage line. “Tracking,” he said curtly. “Is that like a short circuit?” I asked. “Kind of,” he replied before pausing. He finally elaborated, explaining that the problem arises when moisture from morning fog settles on power lines, creating a pathway for electricity to arc across components.

He then input something into a handheld device before driving away, leaving the repair for another service team to complete. I gathered the debris intending to collect the remaining components that comprise a utility pole, each having failed in one form or another. I shipped the fragments to Maziar the following week.

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
photograph	24.02.2023	02_tracking.jpg, 03_tracking.jpg	3,51 MB, 324 KB	Mathew Kneebone

category
automobile, collecting, encounter, hand, impact, map/plan, precipitation, repair, technology

13:56:54



This video-still is taken from a documentary about ‘Le Coin du Balai – De Bezemhoek’, a Brussels neighborhood on the edge of the Sonian Wood. Historically, the inhabitants had the exclusive right to harvest young shoots of trees to make and sell brooms. In 1976, filmmaker Willy Biesemans captured the last broom-maker, still in possession of this vernacular knowledge.

Nowadays, the Sonian Wood is commonly understood as a place of natural beauty surrounding the city. The wood the forest produces is managed as a chain of production and sold in public auction to the best buyer. The bulk of the forest’s produce is exported abroad and eventually imported back as manufactured goods.

Notes

- Clementine Vaultier’s interests, although trained as a ceramist, are in the warm surroundings of the fire rather than the production it engenders.

Sources

- Biesemans, W. *De Bezemhoek*. 1976 ([YouTube – De Bezemhoek](#))



type	date	filename	size	author
screenshot	16.08.2022	clementine_learning_broommaking_ag ain.png	3 MB	Clémentine Vaultier
category				
botany, economy, landscape, tree				

13:57:08

This bike regularly pops up on the streets of the Brussels neighbourhood where I live. On 4 June 2021, it stands in Rue Verte, in front of the entrance to the Reine Verte Park. The park is built on one of the steepest slopes in Brussels. That condition required a clever park design, in which you can hang out or walk from Rue Verte to Rue des Palais, up, or vice versa, down. The park is well cared for by city services.

The bike is an orange Sparta K-10. It has a remarkably low entry and high handlebars. As a result, it seems to be a comfortable bike, albeit one whose body posture while cycling is not geared to the gradient of our neighbourhood, in which it usually stands. Moreover, it has no gears and the saddle is very slanted.

Notes

- Lars Kwakkenbos lives and works in Brussels and Ghent (B). He teaches at KASK & Conservatorium in Ghent, where he is currently working on the research project 'On Instructing Photography' (2023-2024), together with Michiel and Arnout De Cleene.



type
photograph

date
13.01.2023

filename
20210604_081159.jpg

size
5,09 MB

author
Lars Kwakkenbos

category
bicycle, landscape

13:57:16

