



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

**Your path through the collection lead along** Negative sheet 55, negative 4, negative 5, From Asturias, Into Cantabria, Passing Time Near a Particle Accelerator, Block, Learning broom-making again, A Sparta K-10, Rue Verte, Brussels, Slightly Askew (1), Slightly Askew (2), Cobalt, The Imaginary Edge of the Roadway, Potholes, Tipp-Ex, Lemon, Le dos-cul ment, Stopwatch, Neptune in opposition [19/20] – Approximation

## 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 15.05.2023 15:24, printed on \_\_\_\_\_ and contains 16 documents on 35 pages. (<https://the-documents.org/log/15-05-2023-5341/>)

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



HOGENT  
howest

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

15:23:03

A half a day's walk from the Fuente Dé *teleférico*, there are less and less traces of passers-by. The path to Sotres suddenly runs through a lush green. The fence between two pastures keeps the sheep from crossing and coincides with the border between two regions. A hole in the fence would change the landscape's hue.



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	15.05.2021	_MG_9795.jpg	4,6MB	Arnout De Cleene
category	animal, landscape, government			

**15:23:08**



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	date	filename	size	author
photograph	11.07.2021	cern_011.tif	57,57 MB	Michiel De Cleene

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

**15:23:12**

‘The masons in training pour a concrete slab and build four walls upon it in a stretcher bond. Then the block comes to our department and the students in the course *Electrical installer (residential)* can grind channels and drill cavities in it.’

[...]

‘It’s not always a success from the outset, but they learn quickly.’

[...]

‘Never grind horizontally, always vertically. Diagonally if there is no other way.’

[...]

‘Two fingers wide.’

[...]

‘After this it goes to the sanitary department. After the bell drilling, the demolition hammer follows and the masons make us a new block.’

Competentiecentrum VDAB, Wondelgem,  
July 2019.

#### Notes

First published in A+ Architecture in Belgium, A+ 279, Schools (August, September 2019), <https://www.a-plus.be/nl/tijdschrift/schools>



type  
photograph

date  
04.05.2021

filename  
\_44a7269.jpg

size  
27,17MB

author  
Michiel De Cleene

category  
architecture, brick, fissure, house, mistake, parking

**15:23:15**

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

15:23:18

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

15:23:21



Until recently, for as long as I could remember, the packaging of Tabasco® Pepper Sauce had been unchanged. On the front of the packaging, there is a photograph of a bottle of Tabasco®, scale 1:1, against an orange background. As far as packaged goods go, this is a highly idiosyncratic and quirky example.

The background colour approximates the colour of the liquid inside the bottle, resulting in as good as no contrast. Moreover, as the image of the bottle is scale 1:1, the packaging becomes kind of unnecessary and superfluous, also because the life-sized image of the bottle is the only way information is given to the customer: there are no additional slogans, no repetition of the brand name, no props and no decor. The image of the bottle advertises the bottle. It seems to add nothing the bottle could not do by its own (like a bottle of wine does).

What makes the packaging truly stand out, however, is the fact that the image of the bottle is not positioned vertically, but is slightly askew. It seems to be the result of a design error, and has an amateur feel to it. The decision to keep it as such and not correct it up until today, is, however, a stroke of genius. The non-vertical positioning alters the relation of the image of the bottle to the bottle inside: as the box is standing on a shelf, the tilted image of the bottle undermines its representational superfluosity.



type  
scan

date  
29.03.2021

filename  
Document\_2021-03-29\_111649.jpg

size  
180KB

author  
Arnout De Cleene

category  
economy, food, mistake, packaging, replica/copy, scale

15:23:26

It must have been four or five years ago, that I noticed the change in Tabasco's<sup>®</sup> up until then stable, unchanged and thus kind of unfashionable presence in supermarkets (vinegar section). On one of the box's sides, there had always been a photograph of a man, clipboard in hand, looking upwards to a huge wooden barrel full of Tabasco<sup>®</sup>. He was inspecting something, from the outside, writing it down.

A couple of years ago, the man disappeared from the packaging. I think he was replaced by a pizza (as one of the suggestions for using Tabasco<sup>®</sup> on, besides on hashed meat (with an egg yolk, fries and lettuce) and spaghetti bolognese) or a black-and-white image of a part of an oak barrel. It is unclear who is inspecting the barrels now.



type  
scan

date  
29.03.2021

filename  
Document\_2021-03-29\_111649.jpg

size  
180KB

author  
Arnout De Cleene

category  
packaging, food

15:23:28

Cathedral glass, or Flemish glass, lets light through, but distorts visibility. It can show something or someone is present behind it, but not in detail. Often used in front doors, it marks the opaque edge between the private and the public sphere, laying bare their presence, without disclosing their contents.

A blue hand, or a spider (*Cyriopagopus lividus*), traces the cracks that testify to the fact that the jammed door had to be closed with force. The hinges need oiling. Cobalt blue tarantulas are said to be extremely defensive.



type  
photograph

date  
03.11.2021

filename  
\_44A6301.dng; \_44A6305.dng

size  
47,32MB;  
54,99MB

author  
Arnout De Cleene

category  
animal, house, impact, insurance, mistake, repair, trompe l'oeil

**15:23:31**







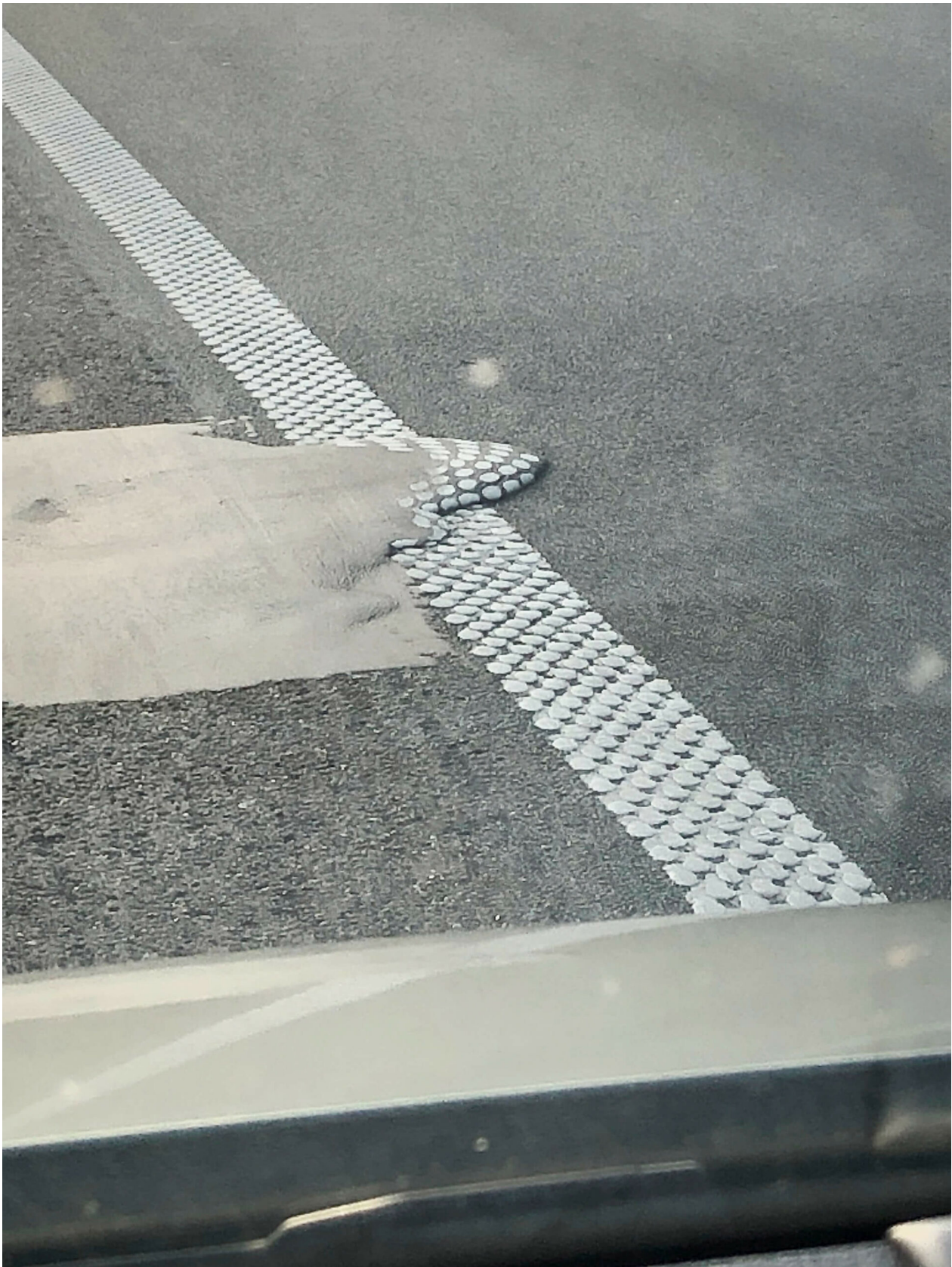
Article 75 of the Royal Decree containing general regulations for road traffic and the use of public roads, published in *Het Belgisch Staatsblad* on 9 December 1975, lists the rules for longitudinal markings indicating the edge of the roadway.

According to 75.1, there are two types of markings that indicate the actual edge of the roadway: a white, continuous stripe and a yellow interrupted line. The former is mainly used to make the edge of the roadway more visible; the latter indicates that parking along it is prohibited.

In 75.2, the decree focuses on markings that indicate the imaginary edge of the roadway. Only a broad, white, continuous stripe is permitted for this purpose. The part of the public road on the other side of this line is reserved for standing still and parking, except on motorways and expressways.

#### Sources

<https://wegcode.be/wetteksten/secties/kb/wegcode/262-art75>



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	08.08.2021	IMG_7943.HEIC	659 KB	Michiel De Cleene

category  
automobile, government, parking, repair, sign

**15:23:35**

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



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	15.07.2021	IMG_7751.HEIC	4,7 MB	Michiel De Cleene
category				
fissure, government, sign, tree				

15:23:41

A white Mercedes van inserts in front of me in a traffic jam near Antwerp. The back of the van has been altered in several ways: a latch was added to the door,<sup>1</sup> a footstep was bolted to the bumper, a couple of tie-wraps are holding up the lights on the left side.<sup>2</sup> Traffic is moving slow. There is no Mercedes logo.<sup>3</sup> Some parts have been retouched with white paint that differs slightly from the rest of the bodywork,<sup>4</sup> not unlike a tipp-ex'ed document.

#### Notes

- 1 Maybe the original locking mechanism no longer functions, or, perhaps, the owner wants to add a padlock to the doors at night.
  - 2 Maybe a corroded screw caused the lights to come loose, or a slight collision.
  - 3 Someone might have stolen it. Mercedes stars are often stolen, although mostly from the hood.
  - 4 Maybe to counter corrosion, to conceal a mark someone made on the van or to cover up a fixed dent.
- Legislation concerning the publication of someone else's licence plate on the internet and the demand to blur it, is somewhat ambiguous.



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	05.07.2021	IMG_7538.HEIC	714 KB	Michiel De Cleene

category  
automobile, crash, impact, insurance, sticker

15:23:47

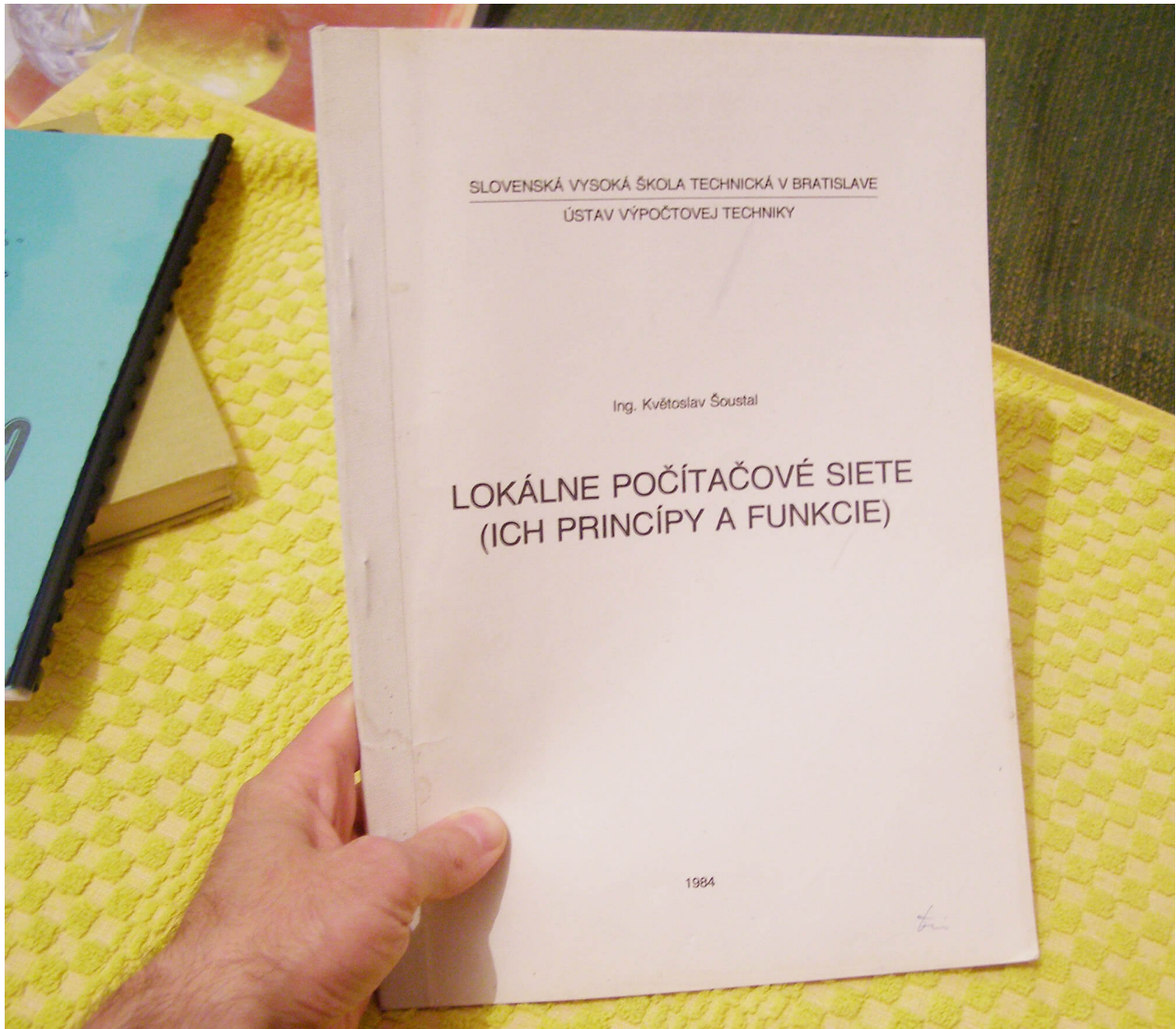
Depending on the language one chooses, the Wikipedia entry for 'document' shows a different picture. The French-language page shows what appears to be a Slovenian thesis written in 1984. The caption states it is a 'book of Czechoslovak computer science author Květoslav Šoustal about computer networks'. The image was uploaded by Kelovy, a Slovakian mushroom-picker.

The anonymous hand rests on a lemon-yellow tablecloth, on which a yellow book and a blue binded file lie. The top left corner is the most intriguing, however: the tablecloth seems to be draped over a lemon, alongside a drinking glass. The cloth, however, does not get shaped by the lemon. Nor does the shadow-side of the lemon coincide with the shadow the other documents throw on the tablecloth. A closer look seems to indicate that the lemon is in fact an image of a lemon, printed on a plastic napkin.

The Russian wikipedia shows the image of a lease agreement. The German wikipedia for 'document' is text only.

#### Sources

[https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Document#/media/Fichier:KVETOSLAV\\_SOUSTAL\\_BOOK.JPG](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Document#/media/Fichier:KVETOSLAV_SOUSTAL_BOOK.JPG), created October 3, 2006 / original in original: paper, 1984



type  
photograph

date  
23.12.2020

filename  
KVETOSLAV\_SOUSTAL\_BOOK.JPG

size  
956KB

author  
Arnout De Cleene

category  
book, encyclopaedia, fruit, food, trompe l'oeil, cloth, manual, technology

15:23:49



*This is a trace, and it is not.*

Ceci est une trace et ne l'est pas.

*What is a trace?*

Qu'est-ce qu'une trace?

Le document n'en est pas, le document documente.

*Documents what?*

Peu importe, le mot 'document' est dérivé du latin *docere*, c'est à dire...

*to show, to teach, to instruct. The document is docile, unlike the trace.*

La trace ne montre pas, n'enseigne pas, n'instruit en rien, à moins d'interpréter.

*The trace as indexical: it does not 'show' though one can see it. It does not teach,*

sauf que tout nous pré-existe, ou plutôt, nous insiste, n'est-ce pas?

*It doesn't: it's never there as such until we name it so.*

Documenti!

Papier!

Poètes, vos papiers!

(Léo Ferre 1956)

Le document.

Le dos-cul ment.

Le d'au-cul ment.

Le dé au cul ment.

Mais co-ment?

*Butt how?*

*The do-cum-meant.*

*The doc-cue-mint.*

*The dock-comment.*

*This is a cardboard mousepad.*

*Are you happy now?*

*Are you happy?*

*Are you?*

*Now?*

**document:** *a paper or set of papers with written or printed information, especially of an official type.*

(<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/engli>

*'He's more of an official type.'*

**A document** *is a written, drawn, presented, or memorialized representation of thought, often the manifestation of non-fictional, as well as fictional, content*

#### Notes

- Sébastien Conard (1982) is a graphic artist, writer and teacher. He draws, writes and publishes comics, post-comics and artist's books. From 2023 until 2026, he will explore the graphic trace in the context of a postdoctoral research project at LUCA School of Arts.

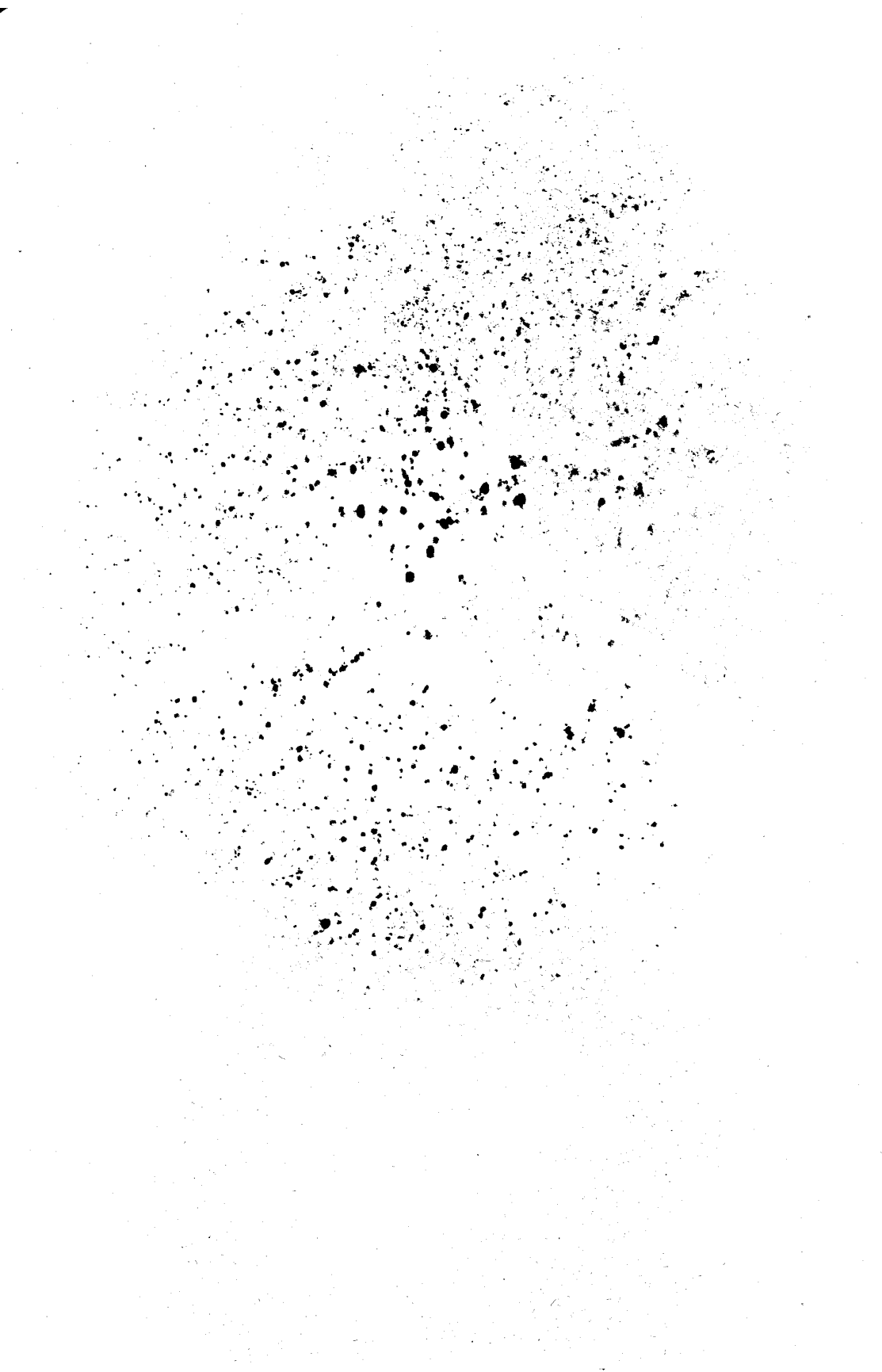
content.

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Document>)

*'She was quite content.'*

*Tha back-ass lies!*

7



type	date	filename	size	author
scan	06.01.2023	Conard-Mousepad2022.png	115KB	Sébastien Conard

category  
book, data storage, manual, sign

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	date	filename	size	author
photograph	10.05.2022	032a-07s.psd	802,34 MB	De Cleene De Cleene

category  
archive, family, house, mirror, technology, hand

**15:23:59**

Sundown at the public observatory in Beisbroek. A choir of birds mixes with the continuous hiss of the freeway nearby. The camera captures the receding colours. The blinds are open; the half dome is closed.

A documentary approach: moving along a tension between proximity and distance. If the pendulum swings to either side, it becomes difficult to speak of *the documentary*. Proximity without distance, and distance without proximity, undermine it, precisely because any approach is then out of the question.

#### Sources

- Excerpt from Towards Civil Dusk (De Cleene De Cleene, 2020)



type	date	filename	size	author
video	04.10.2022	approximation.mp4	176,3 MB	De Cleene De Cleene

category  
animal, architecture, astronomy, automobile, dusk, landscape, Neptune

**15:24:03**

