



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 21, negative 24, negative 24,5, Market, 12M m3 [8/8] Heating, Une étoile est-elle un document?, Saturn Stationary, From Asturias, Into Cantabria, Neptune in opposition [13/20] – A foraging fox, Gatun Locks, New Year's Eve, 2015, Sea glass, F 6, Seacat, Dust, Mushroom Picking Prohibited, Gold Varnish

## 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 17.12.2023 15:50, printed on \_\_\_\_\_ and contains 15 documents on 32 pages. (<https://the-documents.org/log/17-12-2023-5510/>)

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



A malfunctioning of the camera leading to a double-exposed negative. The car is decisive in establishing the relationship between the superimposed photographs. In the middle of the image, we see it parked in front of the house. Slightly less visible is the same car, repeated but further away. This makes it possible to deduce that the dark outline of the house, with the roof and the chimney, is also the same house as in the other photograph. This time, the house is photographed relatively frontally (the slightly angled point of view allows to bring the shed at the back of the house in the line of sight), and from nearby. At the bottom left, the lines that make up the street help to see the continuity of the one photograph, while the electric wires at the top right aid to comprehend the other one.

The camera malfunction speculates on a future addition to the plot. The dark, outlined shed's scale is realistic with regards to the scale of the house and itself (the shed) in the other photograph. Its position with regards to the other buildings seems logical. It imposes itself as a possible second shed for the owner to build in the next few years. In that future shed, the car, now standing in front of the house, could be comfortably parked.



type	date	filename	size	author
scan	25.10.2023	021a_14.jpg	1,29 MB	De Cleene De Cleene

category  
architecture, archive, automobile, house, panorama, parking, scale

08:47:38

K. says that the stall where he usually buys fruit has already been packed up. But he is not worried about the quality of the fruit the other vendor sells. He gestures encouragingly.

Five signs of type-1, eleven of type-2 and two of type-3 are visible. Four of type-2 (two visible, two deduced) and two of type-3 retain two vehicles.

Notes

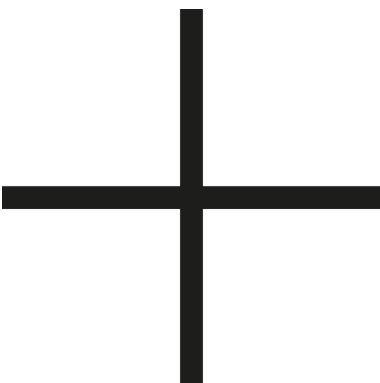
1.



2.



3.



- Márk Redele pursues projects that fundamentally relate to architecture and its practice but rarely look like architecture. [www.markredele.com](http://www.markredele.com)



type  
photograph

date  
26.12.2021

filename  
market\_.jpg

size  
3,82 MB

author  
Márk Redele

category  
automobile, economy, food, fruit, landscape, manual, parking, precipitation, sign

**08:48:30**



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

**08:48:51**

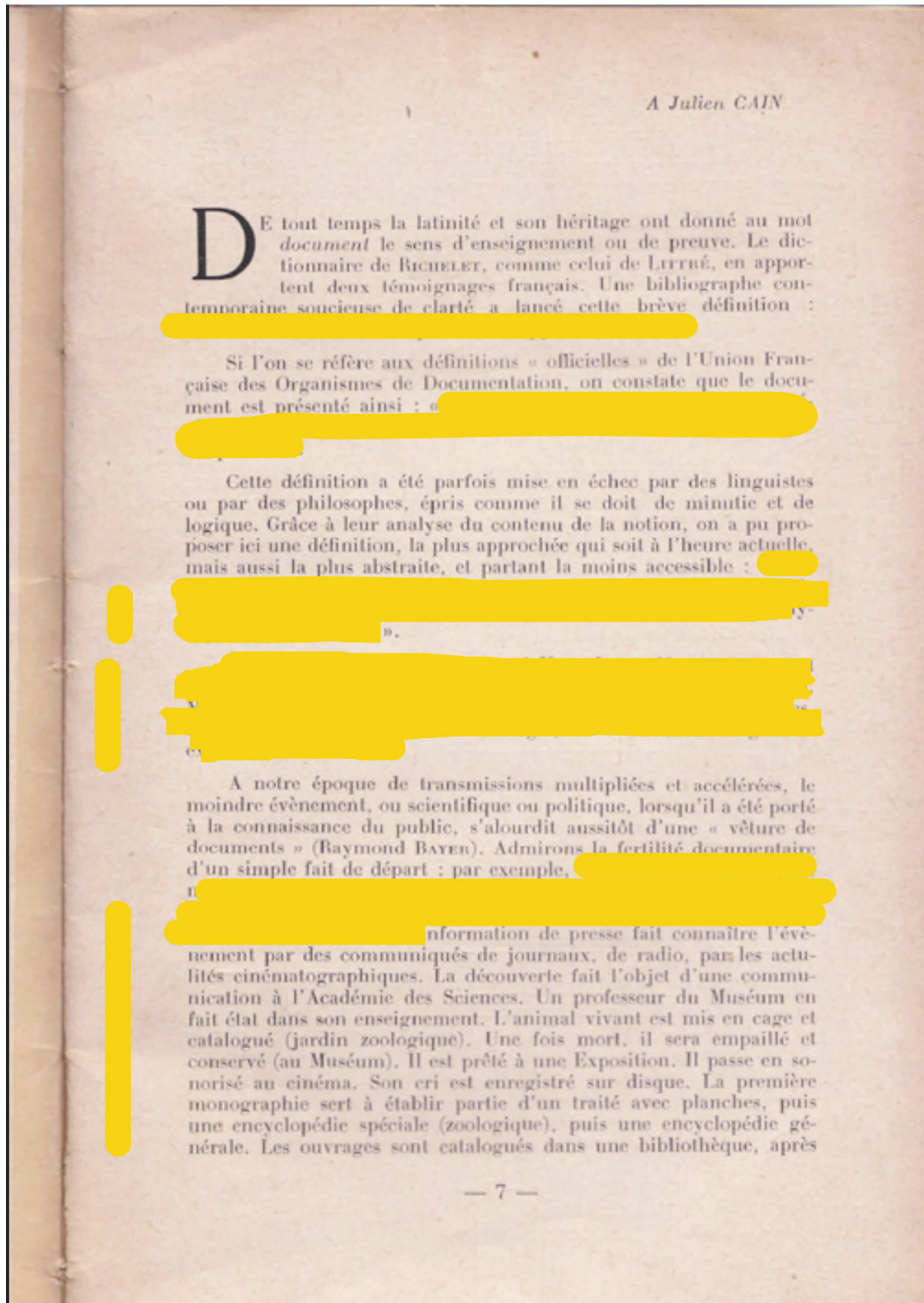
In the introduction to her book *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?*, French 'documentalist' Suzanne Briet asks what a document is. In a scrappy scan of her book I found online I am highlighting almost everything she writes. Is a star a document? Briet says it isn't. But the catalogues and photographs of stars are. When I quickly opened the file with Apple's 'Preview' application to check the above paraphrase, the highlighted sentences were illegible.

**Notes**

Briet is cited in Lisa Gitelman's *Paper Knowledge* (2014).

**Sources**

Briet, S. *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?* Paris: Edit, 1951. Online: <http://martinetl.free.fr/suzannebriet/questcequeladocumentation/briet.pdf>



type	date	filename	size	author
screenshot	17.05.2021	Schermafbeelding 2021-05-13 om 11.41.58.png	201KB	De Cleene De Cleene

category  
astronomy, book, mistake, replica/copy

08:48:57

On May 23rd 2021, the planet Saturn appears to be stationary among the surrounding celestial bodies in the night sky.<sup>1</sup> This is an attempt to capture this planetary standstill.<sup>2</sup>

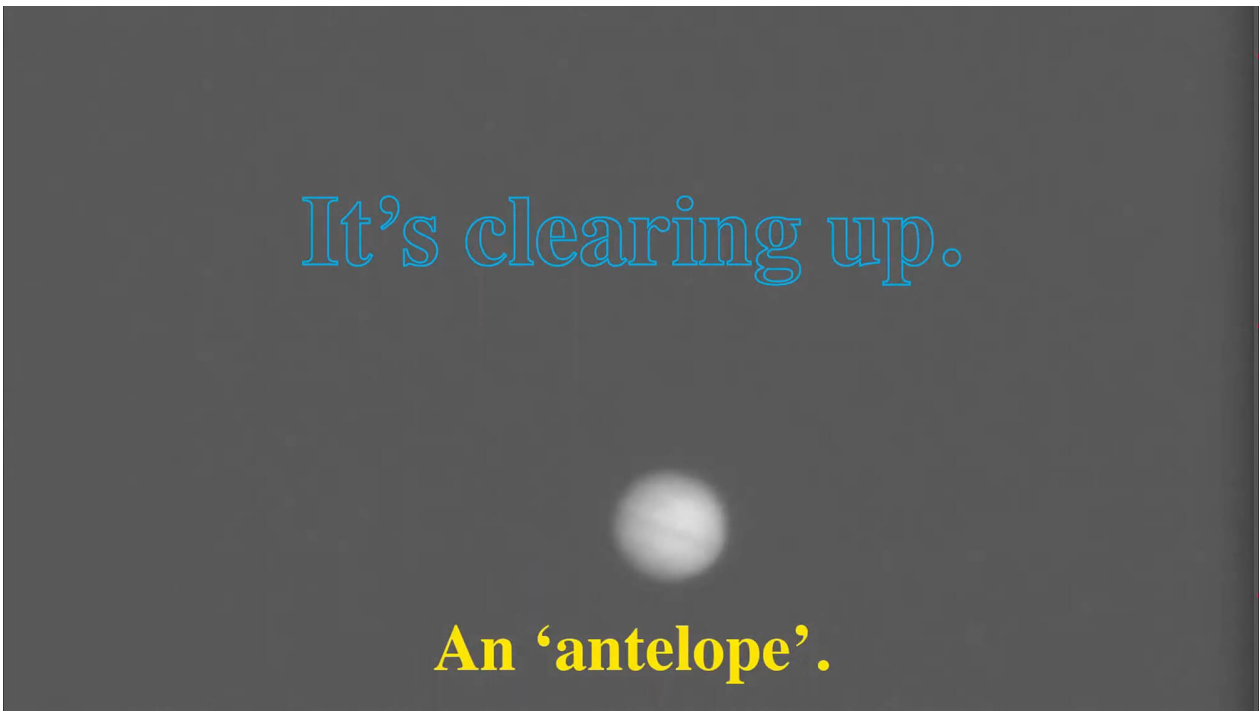
A telescope is set up in a pasture, near a forest edge, pointed to the south-southeast morning sky.<sup>3</sup>

#### Notes

- 1 The standstill is de facto inexistent. It's the moment when Saturn's apparent prograde motion turns to a retrograde motion. Since Earth completes its orbit in a shorter period of time than the planets outside its orbit, it periodically overtakes them, like a faster car on a multi-lane highway. When this occurs, the planet being passed will first appear to stop its eastward drift, and then drift back toward the west.
- 2 In astrology, Saturn's retrograde movement is generally a time of karmic rebalancing. Previous bad behavior could be punished. But hard work and responsibility could also be rewarded.
- 3 This is the third instalment of De Cleene De Cleene's Public Observatory. Thanks to Volkssterrenwacht Mira, Grimbergen.

#### Sources

- Briet, S. *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?* Paris: Edit, 1951.
- Gittelman, L. *Paper Knowledge. Toward a Media History of Documents.* Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2014.
- *Oxford English Dictionary Online.* Accessed on 13.05.2021.
- 'Saturn Retrograde May 23, 2021 – Karmic Love', *Astrology King.* Accessed on 15.05.2021.



type	date	filename	size	author
video	22.05.2021	-	-	De Cleene De Cleene

category  
astronomy, botany, landscape, mirror, music, tree

**08:49:02**

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			

**08:49:06**



A first try at using the instrument for making a recording: excitement as we succeed in pointing the telescope at the brownish dot afar we just noticed on the other side of the valley. As it continues scavenging, we wait for night to set in.



type	date	filename	size	author
video	27.09.2022	2020-05-30-1755_8-CapObj	105,04 MB	De Cleene De Cleene

category  
animal, astronomy, encounter, food, landscape, Neptune, technology

**08:49:16**

On March 23th 2015, a high pressure system above Panama Bay blew strong winds landwards. At the Gatun locks, one of the webcams overlooking the Canal neglected the traffic and briefly captured its own images. The ship's presumed passage through the Gatun locks wasn't recorded by this camera and the AIS-transponder did not save any data of the ship's transit from the Pacific to the Atlantic side of the canal: the Authenticity managed to swap oceans undetected.

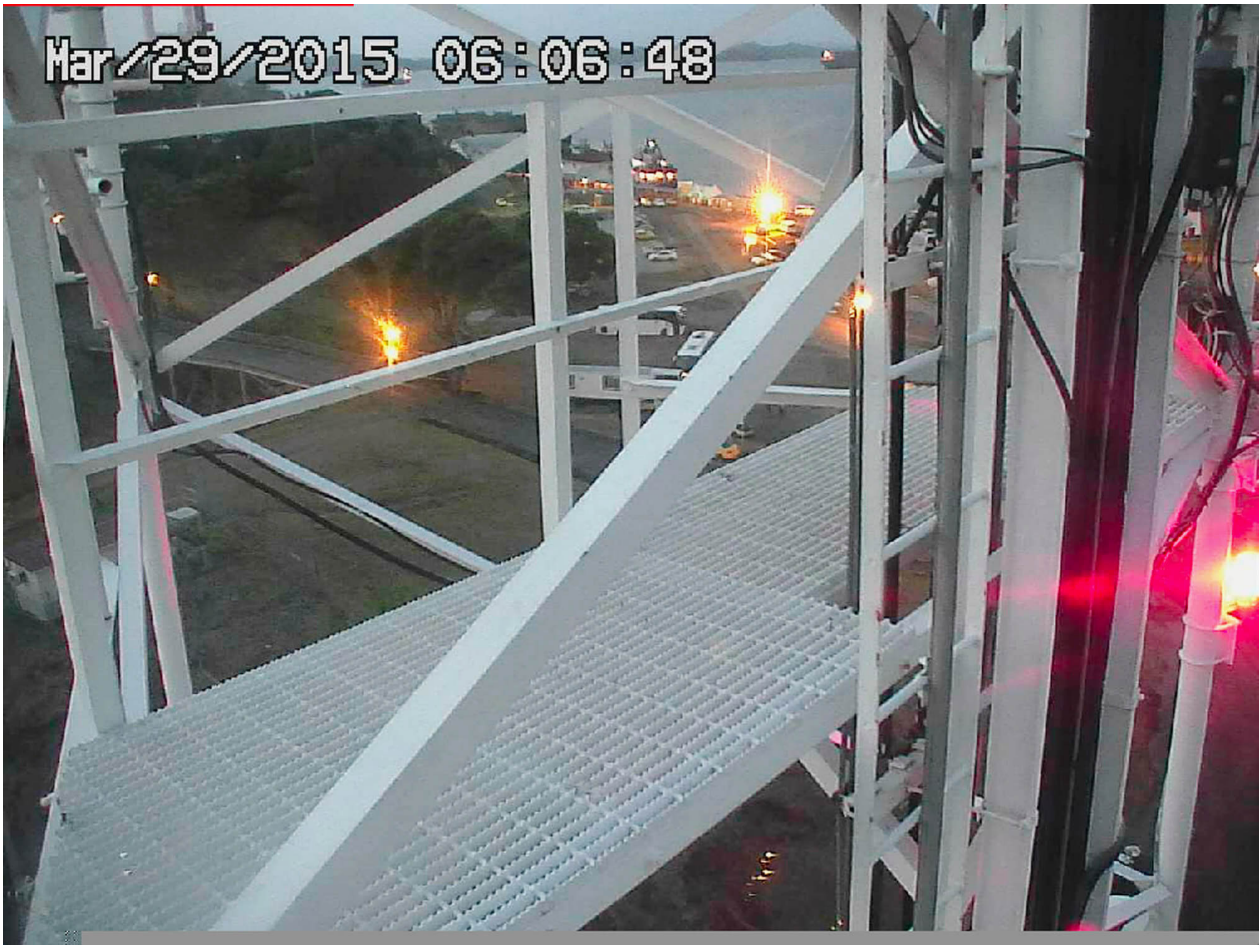
On February 16th 2016, the transponder still signals the ship near the port of Bahia Las Minas. The current is calm, the ship has been practically immobile for a year.

**Notes**

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

**Sources**

Webcam Gatun Locks, Panama Canal, <http://www.pancanal.com>



type	date	filename	size	author
video	10.05.2021	gatun-cam3.mp4	53,16MB	Michiel De Cleene

category  
animal, data storage, economy, encyclopaedia, interference, landscape, precipitation, Reference Guide, sea, technology

**08:49:19**

The end of 2015. For hours, precipitation of all sorts had impeded a view of the Asian side of the city. Ships went out of sight before they reached the horizon. I can't recall where exactly we were standing, or what we were visiting. I imagined it to be a place full of history. The Bosphorus seemed agitated.

The Greek historian Herodotus wrote about Persian King Xerxes' torn after a storm demolished the bridge he was building across the Dardanelles, at the other side of the Sea of Marmara: 'When Xerxes heard of this, he was very angry and commanded that the Hellespont be whipped with three hundred lashes, and a pair of fetters be thrown into the sea. I have even heard that he sent branders with them to brand the Hellespont. He commanded them while they whipped to utter words outlandish and presumptuous, "Bitter water, our master thus punishes you, because you did him wrong though he had done you none. Xerxes the king will pass over you, whether you want it or not; in accordance with justice no one offers you sacrifice, for you are a turbid and briny river.'"'<sup>1</sup>

Two days later, heavy snow delayed our flight back home. For hours, we were stuck inside the cabin, watching the tarmac. Passengers wanting to get out scorned the stewards. Trucks sprayed a fluid on our plane's wings. We arrived at the family gathering just before midnight. Underneath the unlit fireworks hanging from the chandeliers, desert was being served.

#### Sources

1. Herodotus. *The Histories* (A. D. Godley, trans.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920, book 7, chapter 35. Online: <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D7%3Achapter%3D35>



type  
photograph

date  
28.12.2022

filename  
\_MG\_9652.jpg

size  
2,5MB

author  
Arnout De Cleene

category  
angst, family, food, precipitation, sea

**08:49:23**

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	date	filename	size	author
photograph	02.05.2022	_44A9615.psd	115,50 MB	De Cleene De Cleene
category	collecting, sea, waste, hand			

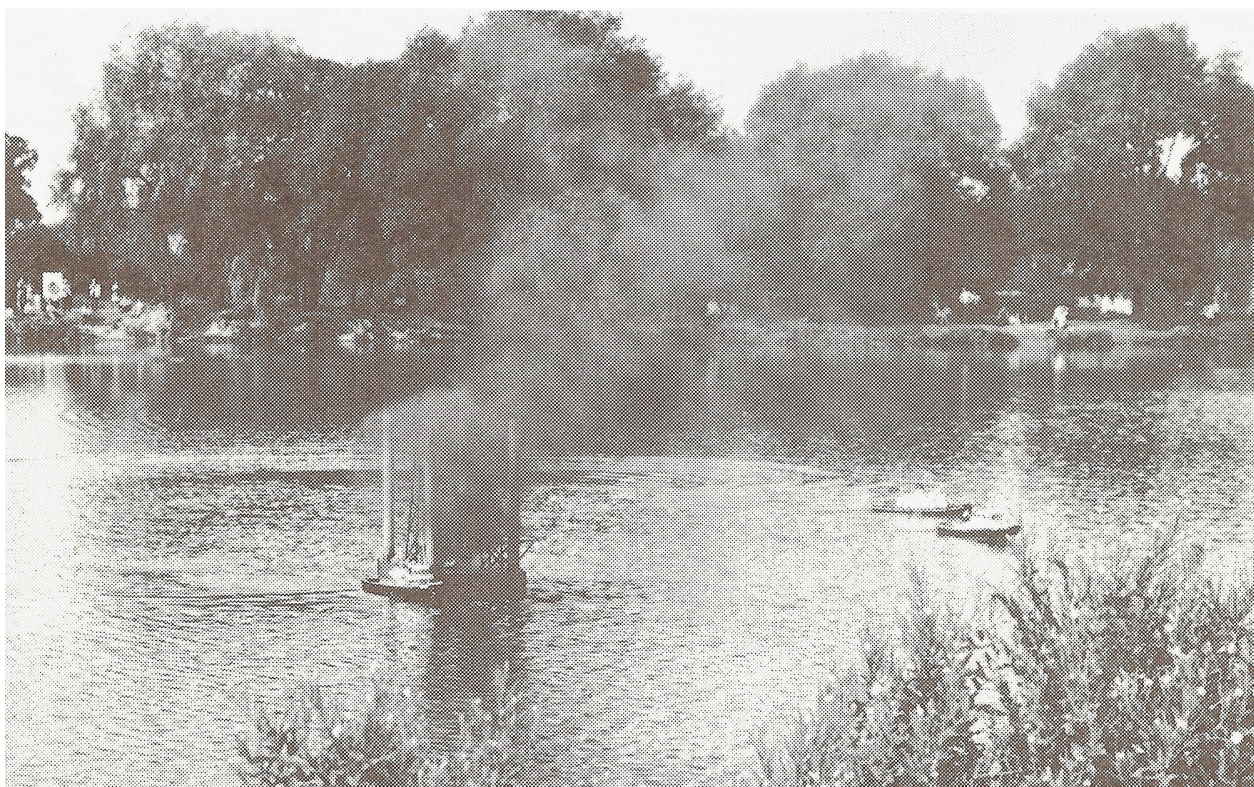
08:49:27



In his *Handboek Varende Scheepsmodellen* (Handbook Sailing Ship Models) André Veenstra explains the different classes in ship model-competitions. There's a wide variety. For static ship models the most important one is 'truth-to-nature'. A jury compares the model to photographs of the actual ship and brings into account categories such as amount of work, degree of difficulty, scale ratio, construction execution and painting.

The most interesting class – according to Veenstra – is F 6. In this particular class, a number of participants with different boats will form a team. Together, they will perform a certain 'act' with a maximum duration of ten minutes. During the act, they mimic a slice of reality. Such as, for example, 'rescuing' and towing a ship in distress; extinguishing a fire on a tanker or oil rig, lichen and/or tow the sunken wreckage to the harbor, stage a naval battle, etc.

Page 262 shows a photograph of such a mimicked slice of reality. The caption explains: 'Image 14.15. The Dutch demonstration in the F 6 class during the European Championship of 1975: the oil rig is set on fire by a motorboat with terrorists. The fire is extinguished and the oil rig is quickly towed to a safe harbor by tugs. The show was performed by six people and took a very creditable fourth place.'



type	date	filename	size	author
scan	22.06.2021	veenstra-b.jpg	20,17 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category  
book, landscape, replica/copy, scale, sea

**08:49:39**

Coming back from holidays, we were waiting for the ferry to take us from Ramsgate to Ostend. We were well on time. As the ship entered the harbour, I asked my parents if I could take a photograph. It's the first photograph I recall taking. I remember my dad telling me to wait long enough for the ship to get closer. I didn't. I only got one try.<sup>1</sup>

It took a while before the film was developed. I couldn't stop imagining what the photograph would look like: some picturesque waves in the foreground, the shining white ship, the red and blue text on the side, and a cloud filled sky.

#### Notes

- 1 Following every holiday, when we got home, the garden and our house would be photographed with the remaining exposures on the roll of film in the camera.



type	date	filename	size	author
scan	10.11.2022	48b_08.jpg	427 KB	Michiel De Cleene

category  
archive, family, landscape, sea

08:49:53

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

**08:49:58**

I must have driven past this rocky landscape about sixteen times, going back and forth between viewpoints and the house the parents of a friend let me stay in. On the last day, I left early for the airport, pulled into a lay-by, took my tripod and camera out of the trunk of the red Volkswagen Polo rental car and made two photographs.<sup>1</sup> It was only when I got home, had the film developed, scanned it and was removing dust particles from the file, that I discovered the hand painted text on the rock: 'PROIBIDO BUSCAR SETAS'.

**Notes**

1.



# Mushroom Picking Prohibited



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	19.05.2021	Untitled99993-dustfree-nosharpen-crop2.psd	365,37MB	Michiel De Cleene

category  
automobile, dusk, food, landscape, parking, sign, tree

**08:50:04**



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<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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			

**08:50:08**

