

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, A Dead Insect on the Trunk of a Cedrus Atlantica Glauca, Aggressive mimicry, Iguanodon, Passing Time Near a Particle Accelerator, Iguanodon, pgealerts.alerts.pge.com/, Owls and cats, The Birds, License Plate, A Glass Bubble, The Authenticity in the woods of the Bosque Protector de Arraiján, Gatun Locks, Dust, Backpack, 12M m3 [1/8] Rapid Snowmelt, Neptune in opposition [20/20] – A constellation, It's Pouring

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 25.03.2025 19:37, printed on _____ and contains 18 documents on 39 pages. (<https://the-documents.org/log/25-03-2025-6527/>)

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



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

19:30:35



It's early spring. The pool is covered with a sheet of plastic. The deciduous trees are just leafing out. A tree stump serves as a placeholder for the diving board's foot – it was customary to take it indoors for winter – and keeps people from kicking its threaded rods sticking up from the silex tiles that line the pool.

The upper right corner of the plastic frame is missing. It's probably where the insect – now dead, dry and yellowish – got in. The frame was left behind in the laundry room overlooking the garden, the pool and the pool house. At the time it hadn't been used for quite a while. Half empty, the water green.

In summer, when the wind dropped, horse-flies came. You could shake them off temporarily by swimming a few meters underwater.



type
scan

date
22.07.2021

filename
pool.jpg

size
38,87 MB

author
Michiel De Cleene

category
animal, botany, cloth, decoration, family, tree

19:30:47

The *Cryptolaemus montrouzieri* is commonly known as the mealybug destroyer. This species of ladybird gets its nickname from its capacity to battle mealybugs in plantations and greenhouses.

The website *waarnemingen.be* that gathers observations of plants and animals in Belgium lists multiple observations in the wild of the *Cryptolaemus montrouzieri*. The website explains that ‘in (northern) Europe, the species is widely traded and used in greenhouses and will regularly escape from them. But this ladybird cannot survive our winters (yet?). Sightings within the Benelux must therefore be entered into the register as “escape”. However, the species is already established in the Mediterranean area.’ (our translation)

The larvae have a waxy covering that makes them look like the mealybugs they prey upon, allowing them to avoid being correctly identified by the ones they are about to devour.

In an attempt to get rid of the mealybugs on my plants, I ordered 25 adult ladybirds. They were dead on arrival.

Sources

- <https://waarnemingen.be/species/600135/>
- <https://waarnemingen.be/observation/244840499/>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aggressive_mimicry



type
photograph

date
21.08.2022

filename
_44A3849.dng

size
50,83 MB

author
Michiel De Cleene

category
animal, botany, replica/copy, trompe l'oeil

19:31:14

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

19:31:47

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

19:31:59

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

19:32:19

On a windy morning in April, I was on a video call with a friend, curator Maziar Afrassiabi. He listened patiently from Rotterdam as I labored over a direction for my research. It concerned a device I installed in his art space, Rib, six months prior, that monitored blackouts across California by scraping real-time data from utility companies. When a county experienced a significant blackout, it would cut Rib's electricity in kind—causing Rib to inherit and adapt to conditions that shape Californian infrastructure. During its operation, I'd been researching the grid—learning what it is, why it fails, and how communities respond when it does.

We took a short break. Maziar, with tired eyes, stepped away for a smoke. While waiting, I watched the power lines outside my window sway limply in the breeze. In spite of its apparent lifelessness, I've always thought of electricity as a psychological force. My mind wandered through a cursory model of the grid, idiosyncratically cloudy and detailed.

Energy simultaneously generated and used, cascading infrastructural operations in a blink. Outlying stations burning, vaporizing, absorbing fuel, spinning vast electromagnetic turbines. Oscillating current. Neighboring transformers boosting volts to kilovolts, compensating for lost energy coursing through long-distance transmission supported by pylons peppered across Menlo Park.

Current flows into enclosed substations. Transformers, insulators, resembling a kind of industrial Watts Towers—though uninhabitable and anonymous by comparison—step voltages back down to levels safe enough for wires traversing the city. They branch out through streets via buried cables or, like the lines outside my window, are strung atop Douglas fir utility poles at roughly 30-meter intervals...curious vestigial markers. I'd read somewhere they were provisionally pitched when Samuel Morse found that telegraph signals wouldn't transmit through the earth.

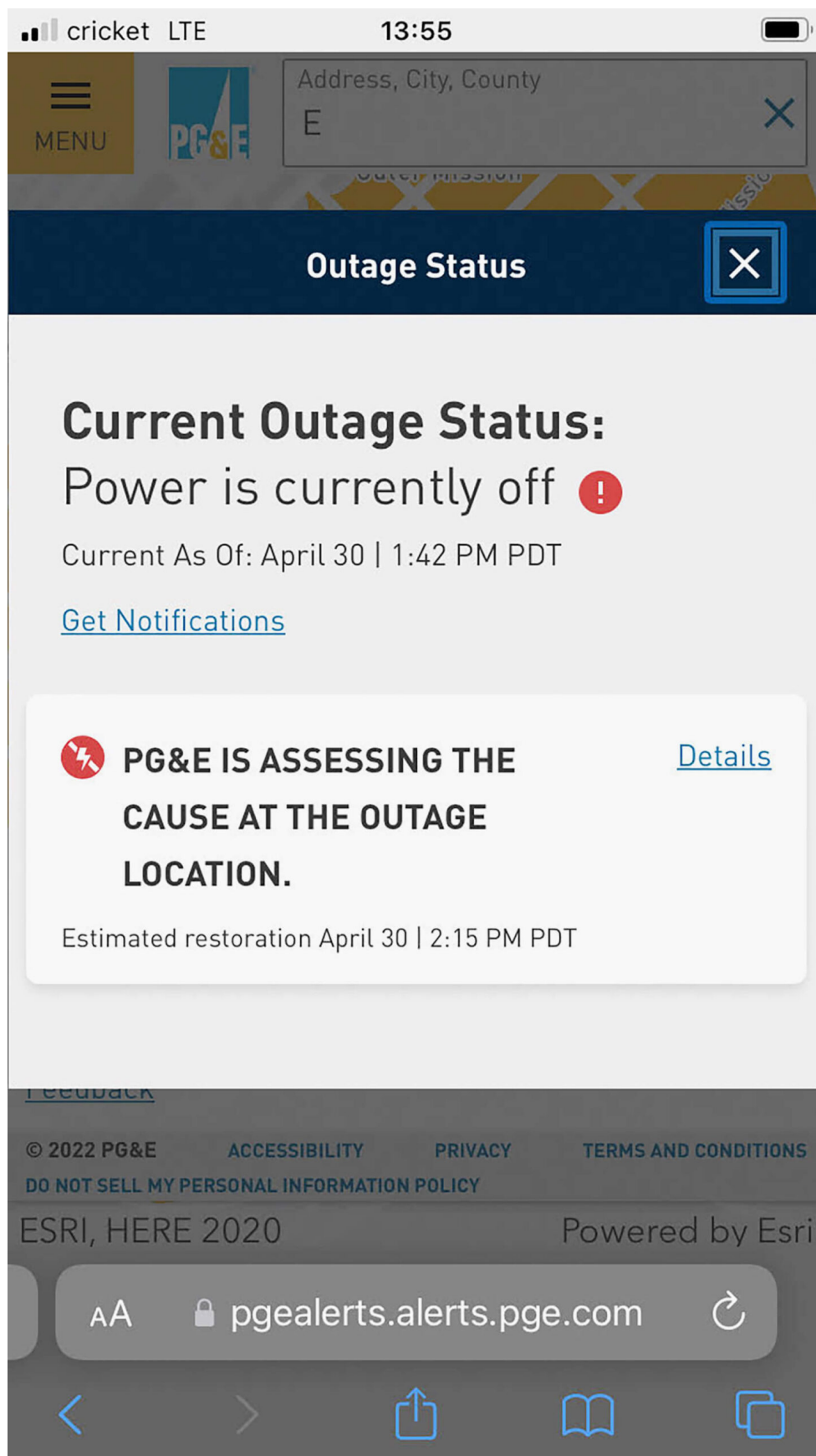
Each pole divides vertically into distinct zones, spaced apart for safety. Treacherous high-voltage wires from substations pass along the top, while safer signals—cable internet and landlines—hang nearest to the ground. The high-voltage wires enter through a barrel-shaped pole-mounted transformer. Within, submerged in oil, two tightly wound copper

coils magnetically harmonize, delivering 240 and 120 volts to three exiting wires, each connected to the electrical meter attached to the building...

A blackout in my neighborhood cut my thoughts and the meeting short. The sudden silence in my apartment indicated Maziar was also in the dark. I received a text message from him and the utility company.

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
screenshot

date
18.02.2023

filename
unnamed.jpg

size
84 KB

author
Mathew Kneebone

category
house, interference, technology, tree, wind

19:32:25

For about an hour, he has been saying ‘owl’ at regular intervals. A cartoon character he picked up somewhere and is now fantasizing about, I guess. Or a Disney reference in one of the songs that have been playing on repeat all day, in the car, driving home from holidays.

50 kilometers further, I recognize the birds in the high-voltage pylons along the highway.

According to the amateur experts at hoogspanningsforum.com, these French pylons – used for conducting electricity from 63kV to 400kV – are nicknamed ‘chats’: the wiring can be interpreted as feline whiskers.

Some genera of owls, such as the *Megascops* or Screech owls, have whiskers.



type
photograph

date
12.08.2022

filename
IMG_1944.HEIC

size
1,59 MB

author
Arnout De Cleene

category
animal, automobile, family

19:33:19

This is the spread one sees upon opening the bird field guide that once stood, as the stamp indicates, in the library of a psychiatric institution.¹ It shows birds' silhouettes, as they can be seen beside the road.

The drawing has a kind of Hitchcock feel to it.² The birds seem to be spying on each other, as they also seem to be spying on the unsuspecting passer-by.

The composition of the scene is marvelous. The electric wires, the tree, the wire fence, the double framed list with the birds' names, handsomely positioned in a birdless patch, at once superimposed on the telephone wires, and pushed to the background by the skylark.

Imagine seeing this scene. What are the odds: to see the silhouettes of Europe's twenty most common species of birds in one glance, from your car's window, as you are driving home at dusk.

Before closing the book, the last spread seems to show the birds fleeing, maybe attacking.³

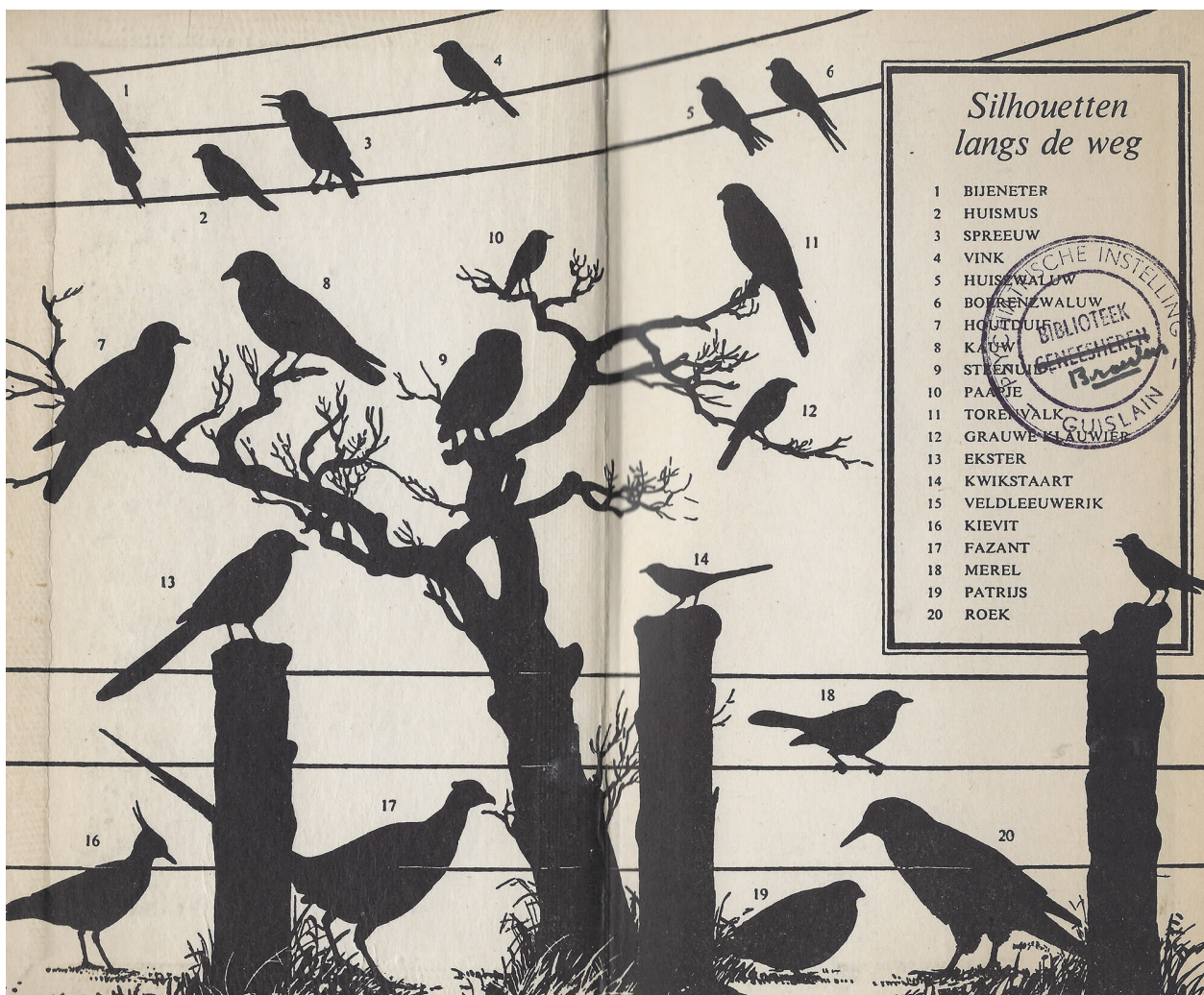
Notes

- 1 The stamp indicates that, at the psychiatric institution, the book was part of the sublibrary for the Catholic Brothers of Charity. The crossed-out part indicates that there was also a separate physicians' library, to which the book might have originally belonged.
- 2 On the web, discussions on whether Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963) was shot in colour or in black and white, abound.
- 3



Sources

Peterson, R.T., Mountfort, G. & P.A.D. Hollom. *Vogelgids voor alle in ons land en overig Europa voorkomende vogelsoorten* (J. Kist, transl.). 3d ed. Amsterdam/Brussels: Elsevier, 1955.



type
scan

date
19.07.2021

filename
Document_2021-07-19_094741.jpg

size
7,5MB

author
Arnout De Cleene

category
animal, automobile, book, dusk, encyclopaedia, landscape, tree

19:33:34

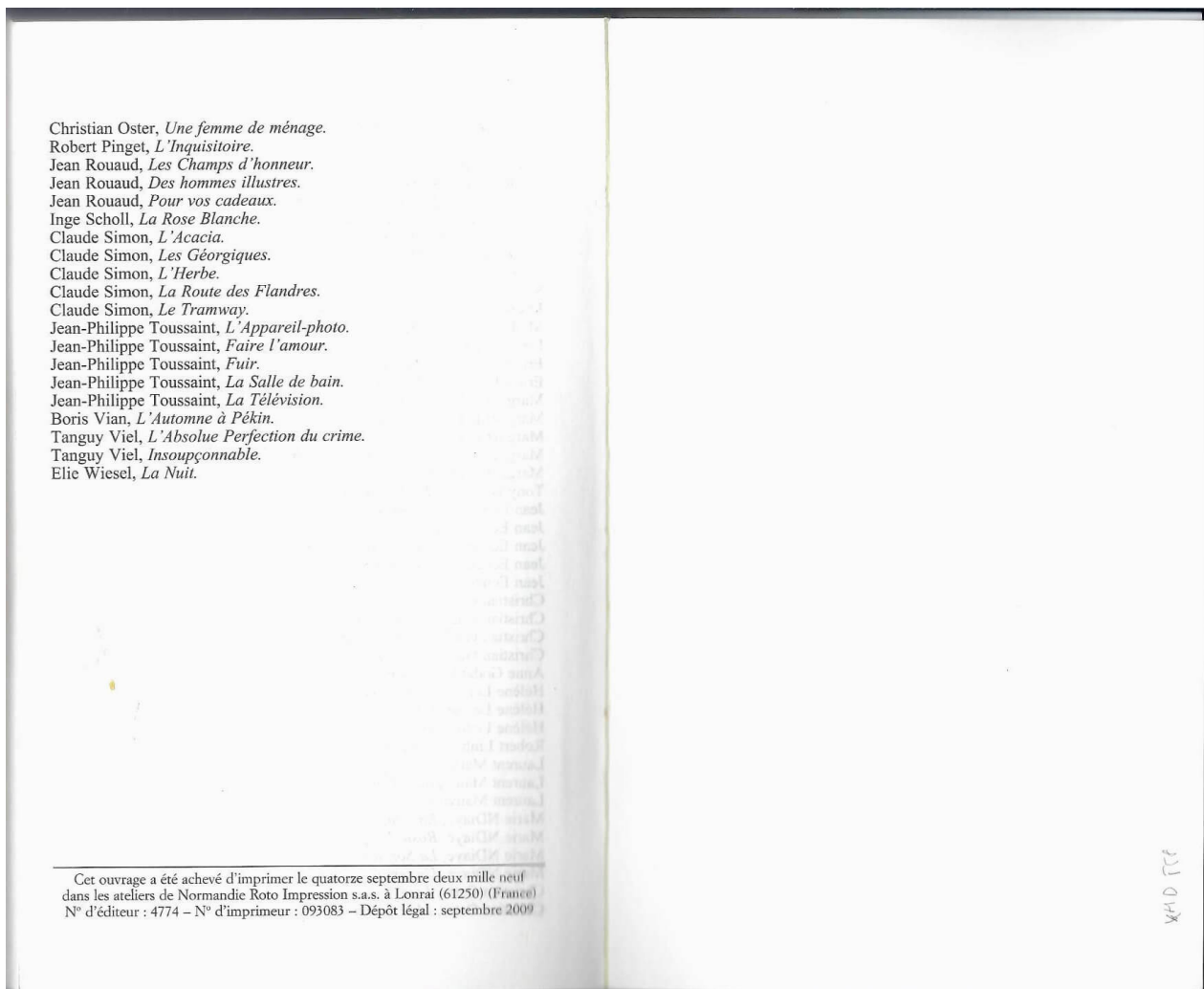
During the preparation of a seminar, I reread Pierre Bayard's *Qui a tué Roger Ackroyd?* (2008). On the inside of the back cover, there's an inscription: it appears I wrote down a license plate number – something I have the habit of doing when a situation seems suspicious.

In *Qui à tué Roger Ackroyd?*, Bayard analyzes Agatha Christie's famous detective novel *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926). The literary critic disagrees with detective Hercule Poirot's conclusion: Ackroyd's murderer is not the narrator, James Sheppard, as Poirot would have it. It's a delirious interpretation, 'consistant à rechercher minutieusement des indices, à interpréter des faits et à organiser nos déductions en une construction d'ensemble harmonieuse'.

The car with license plate number XHD 558 is unknown to me. I can't recall what I saw that urged me to write it down, nor the time or location when I saw it.

Sources

- Bayard, P. *Qui a tué Roger Ackroyd?* Paris: Minuit, 2008.



type	date	filename	size	author
scan	15.08.2023	ackroyd.pdf	431 KB	Arnout De Cleene
category				
angst, automobile, book, literature				

19:33:53

The door leading to the kitchen has a section in stained glass. The other day, I took a closer look at one of the spots on it, which I had half-consciously registered every time I passed it. On two square meters, there are three of them. All are oval in shape. Two of them seem to be flat bubbles of air, haphazardly produced during the manufacturing of the glass, I imagine. The third one, however, is peculiar. It drew my attention because it appeared to represent something. Upon closer investigation, it seemed to allude to different things. A model ship, like the ones in glass bottles. A dragon, like the one used on the Welsh national flag. A tailed, devilish figure riding a cloud-like motorcycle. What skills the glass worker must have had, to produce an image in a glass covered air capsule like this. I closed the door softly, as the microwave's signal sounded.



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	02.03.2021	_MG_6545.JPG	5,5MB	Arnout De Cleene

category
alchemy, decoration, house, mistake, scale, sign, trompe l'oeil

19:34:24

The Authenticity bunkered crude fuel in the Panama Bay. She navigated back and forth between the artificial island Isla Melones and ships leaving or waiting to enter the Panama Canal. On February 14th 2015 she had been moored for a couple of days near the Centennial bridge when the AIS-transponder momentarily signalled the ship's position in the woods of the Bosque Protector de Arraiján. Afterwards no signal of the ship was received for 41 days, until she reappeared near the port of Bahia Las Minas, at the other side of the Panama Canal.

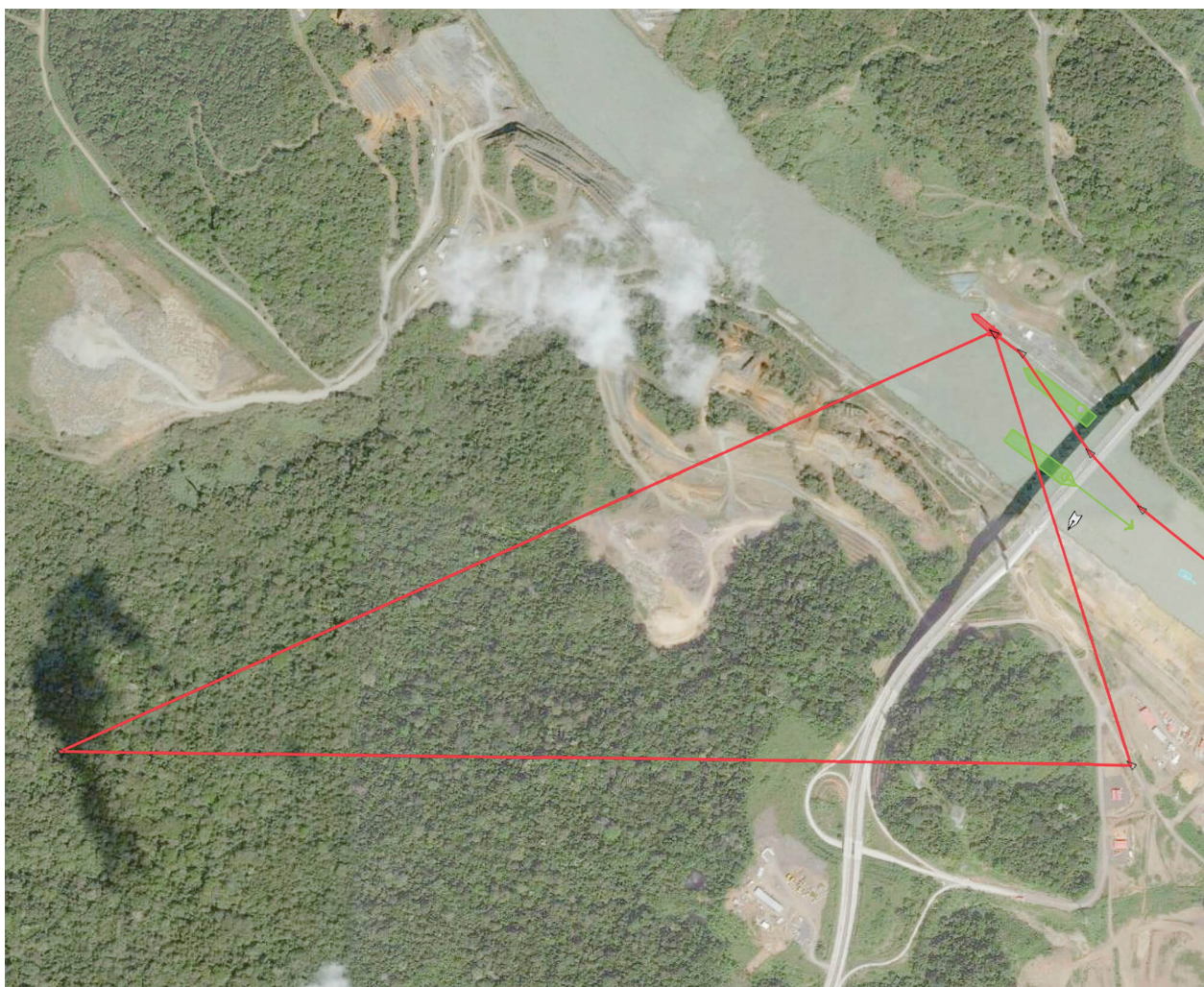
Notes

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

Sources

Marine Traffic, Authenticity (Caribe Trader, PA), latest position, 09°01'40,71" N 79°38'18,59"W, viewed 14.02.2015, <http://www.marinetraffic.com>

The Authenticity in the woods of the Bosque Protector de Arraiján



type
screenshot

date
10.05.2021

filename
caribe.jpg

size
17,33MB

author
Michiel De Cleene

category
economy, encyclopaedia, interference, landscape, map/plan, Reference Guide, sea, technology, tree, data storage

19:35:02

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.

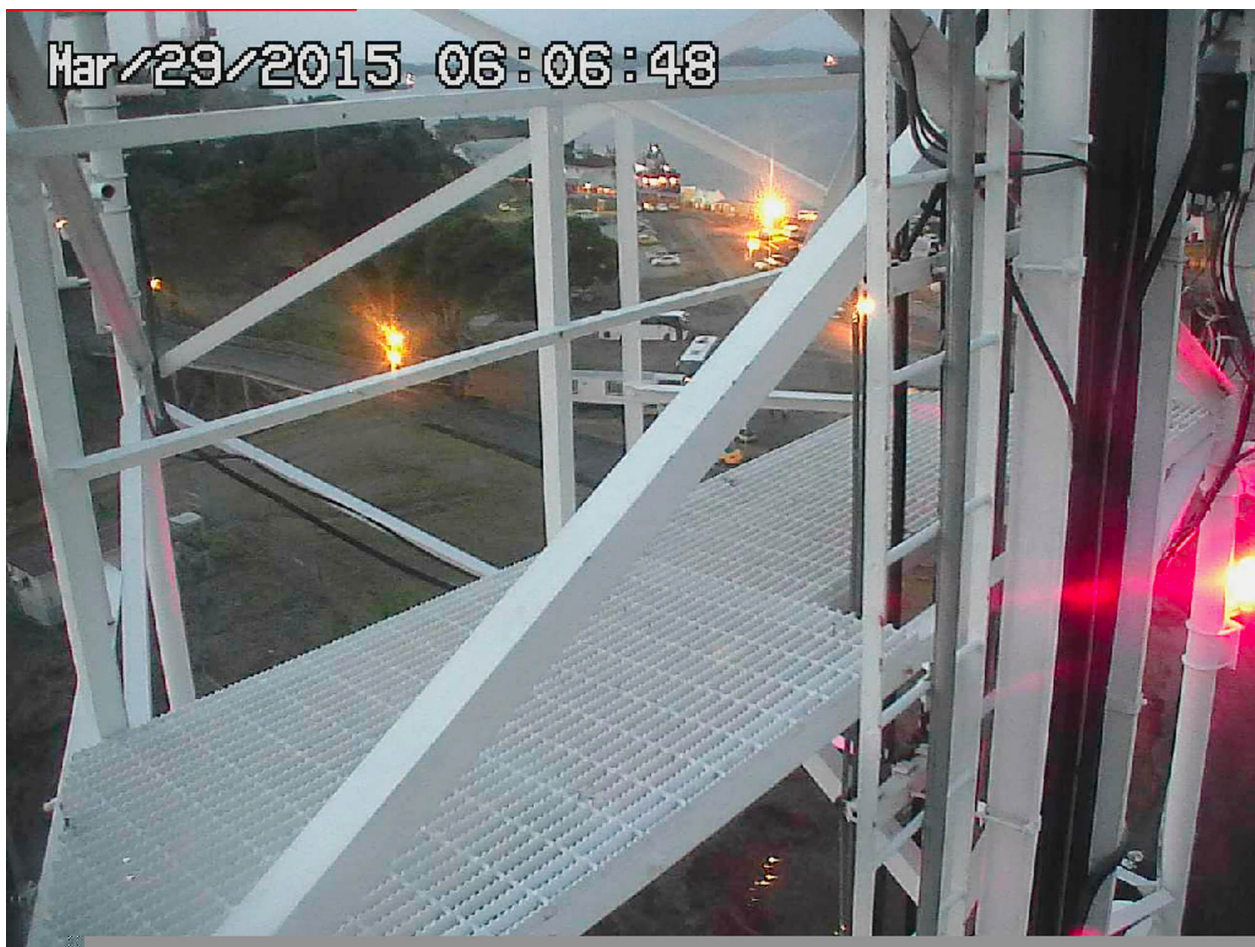
On February 16th 2016, the transponder still signals the ship near the port of Bahia Las Minas. The current is calm, the ship has been practically immobile for a year.

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

19:35:23

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

19:35:41

_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.

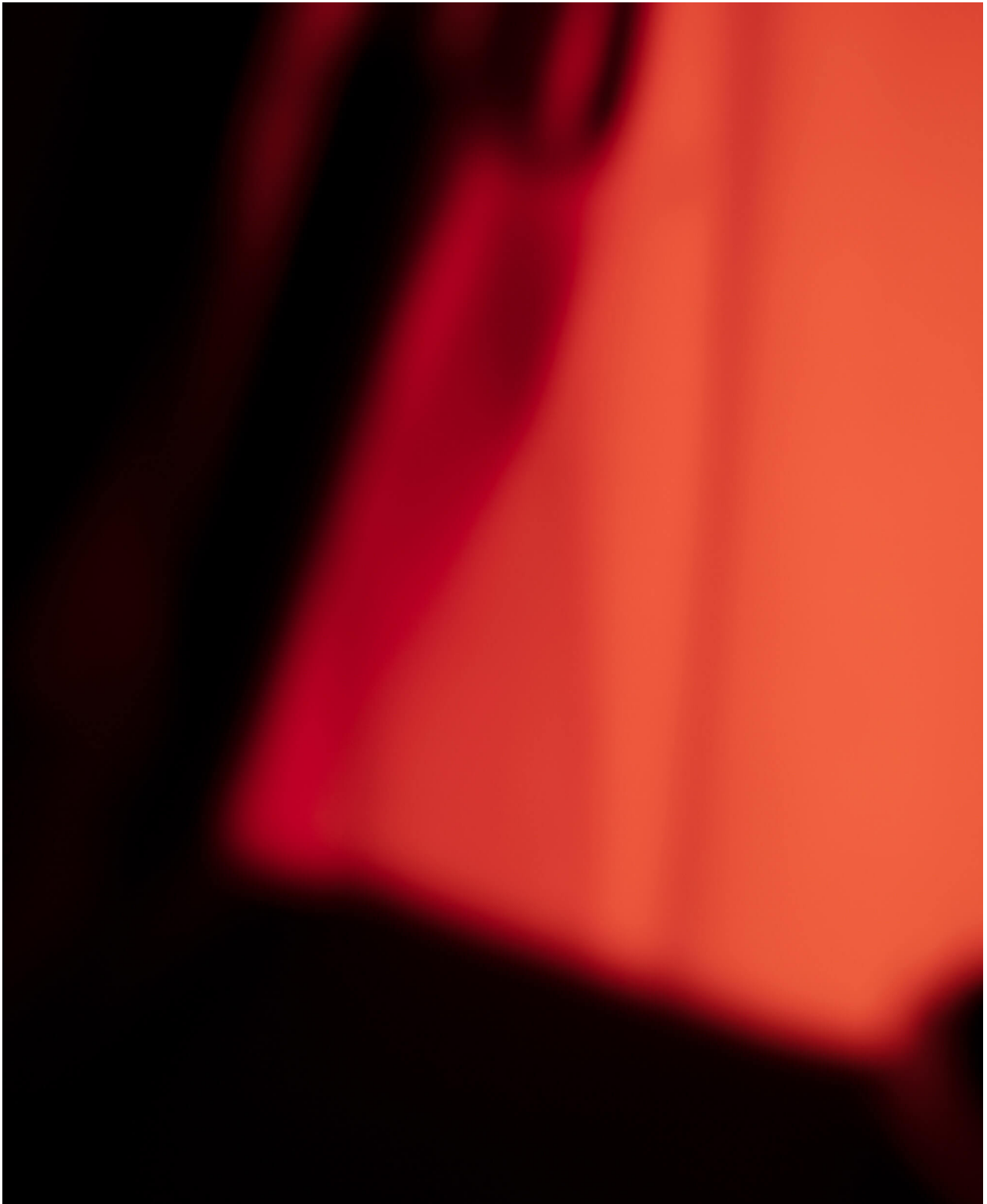
_44A6589.dng

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'.¹ 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.'²

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

19:36:04

December, 1947. Rapid snowmelt coincides with torrential precipitation. At the bottom of the Thur valley, in Wildenstein, the water gathers.



type
photograph

date
29.11.2021

filename
IMG_0504b.jpg

size
8,68 MB

author
Michiel De Cleene

category
landscape, precipitation

19:36:45

As we point the telescope to the sky – cloudy, and filled with chaotic bursts of rain – the dispersion of the city lights accentuates the swirling, frantic raindrops. The roof we are standing on is uneven. A puddle forms underneath the apparatus, around the right leg of the tripod and our feet. The sound of a car on a wet street, below. A kitchen light is flicked on. Temperature is low for a mid-September night, and getting lower by the minute. It seems impossible to tell the depth of field we are documenting, and at what distance from our position these fleeting constellations occur.

Sources

- Excerpt from *Towards Civil Dusk* (De Cleene De Cleene, 2020)
- Neptune in opposition [1-20] is part of 'Documenting Objects', a research project by Arnout De Cleene and Michiel De Cleene at KASK & Conservatorium, the school of arts of HOGENT and Howest. Their research is financed by the HOGENT Arts Research Fund. Previous research into this subject has amongst other things led to the documentary film *Towards Civil Dusk* and temporary public observatories at 019, Gent and Kunsthall Extra City, Antwerp.
- Thanks to:
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 Philippe Molet
 019
 Astropolis (Oostende)
 Cercle Astronomique Mosan (Herbuchenne)
 Koninklijk Observatorium Ukkel
 Observatoire Astronomique Antoine Thomas S.J. (Namur)
 Observatoire Astronomique Centre Ardenne (Grapfontaine)
 Publieke Sterrenwacht van de Westkust (Koksijde)
 Volkssterrenwacht Armand Pien (Gent)
 Volkssterrenwacht AstroLAB IRIS (Zillebeke)
 Volkssterrenwacht Beisbroek (Brugge)
 Volkssterrenwacht Mira (Grimbergen)
 Volkssterrenwacht Urania (Hove)



type	date	filename	size	author
video	05.10.2022	2020-09-24-1156_0-CapObj.mp4	51,05 MB	De Cleene De Cleene
category				
astronomy, Neptune, precipitation				

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 bookmark 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.

