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

Your path through the collection lead along Tracking, Traces of logging on Mount Egaleo, The Loop of the Sparta K-10, The Saddle of a Sparta K-10, Rue Verte, Brussels, Two Sparta K-10s, Owned by Fred and Partner, A New Sparta K-10, A Sparta K-10, Rue Verte, Brussels, Le dos-cul ment, Debatably graded, Neptune in opposition [20/20] – A constellation, Neptune in opposition [17/20] – Remote, Neptune in opposition [16/20] – Unrest, Neptune in opposition [13/20] – A foraging fox, Neptune in opposition [12/20] – Culmination, Neptune in opposition [9/20] – Rooftops, a windmill and power lines, Neptune in opposition [8/20] – Diamonds, Neptune in opposition [6/20] – Pier

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 26.02.2023 22:55, printed on ____ and contains 17 documents on 43 pages. (https://the-documents.org/log/26-02-2023-5258/)

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.decleenedecleene.be / info@decleenedecleene.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.



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

21:54:20

the-documents.c



‘The saw cuts are sloppy and appear to be made in a haste.[1] The cuts are situated at a height of approximately seventy centimetres from the ground. The hill’s protected woods have seen an increase in these scattered traces of illegal logging since a rise in tax on heating fuel in October 2012. Many Greeks set about logging illegally in protected woods, mostly in the colder North of the country, but also here in Egaleo, a western suburb of Athens.’

Notes

1 

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

Traces of logging on Mount Egaleo



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	03.02.2023	mt_eg_003.tif, mt_eg_004.tif	88 MB, 86,40 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
economy, encounter, government, landscape, Reference Guide, tree

21:55:42

the-documents.c

Traces of logging on Mount Egaleo



On 12 October 2022, I see a third orange Sparta K-10 listed on marktplaats.nl, after Tineke and Fred‘s. It is sold by one Fr from Zevenaar. Fr put the bike up for sale four days earlier. According to Fr, it is a ‘luxury station bike’ and ‘camping bike’. He is asking 199 euros for it. Fr explains the bike as follows:

‘Luxury sparta unisex bike with 3-speed shimano-nexus.
Striking specimen.
Looks like new.
Please note……fixed price!
Ideal for station, camping or for some nice touring.
Equipped with:
Front and rear battery lighting
Handy front and rear luggage rack
All-terrain tyres
3-speed gearbox
Comfortable drifter saddle
Integrated cable lock
Large dingdong bell
A real eye-catcher’[1]

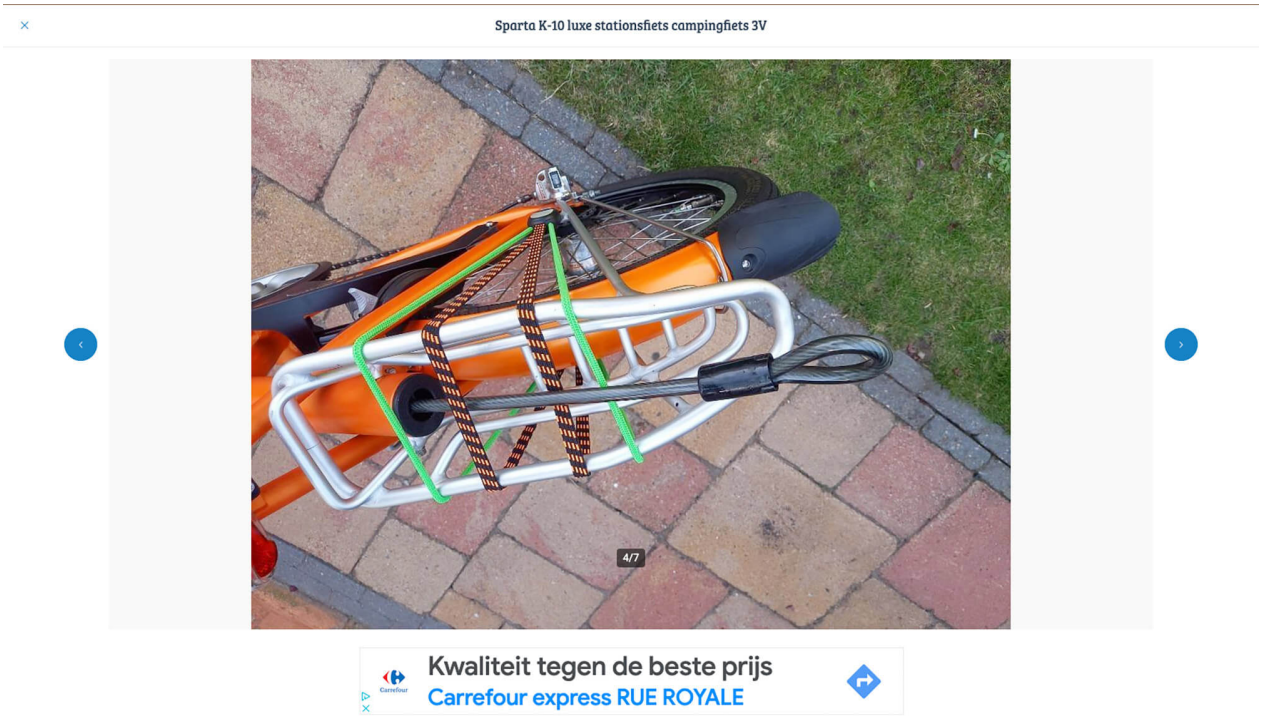
According to Fr, the price is fixed, but on the website you can make an offer, albeit only from 199 euros. Fr’s Sparta K-10 has three gears. The Sparta K-10s of Tineke, John and Fred that are still for sale do not have gears, the Sparta K-10s in Rue Verte in Brussels and on cyclonewebshop.be do not have them, and in the 2011 Sparta leaflet we did not see that option either. In short, we come across a Sparta K-10 with gears for the first time. There is a small typing error in Fr’s explanation in Dutch – the t in *geïntegreerd* is missing – but those who like to browse on marktplaats.nl read smoothly over that. One of the photos of Fr’s ad shows the loop attached to the back of the bike. You can clearly see how that loop forms the end of an integrated cable lock.

Notes

1 ‘Luxe sparta unisex fiets met 3 versnellingen shimano-nexus.
Opvallend design exemplaar.
Ziet er uit als nieuw.
Let op……vaste prijs!
Ideaal voor station, camping of zo om lekker mee te toeren.
Voorzien van:
Batterijverlichting voor én achter
Handig bagagerek voor én achter
All terreinbanden
3 versnellingen
Verende zadelpen
Comfortabel drifter zadel
Geïnegreerd kabelslot
Grote dingdong bel
Een echte eye-catcher’

• 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.

The Loop of the Sparta K-10



type	date	filename	size	author
screenshot	23.01.2023	Screenshot 2022-10-12 at 22-19-22 ≥ Sparta K-10 luxe stationsfiets campingfiets 3V — Fietsen Dames Damesfietsen — Marktplaats.png	1,68 MB	Lars Kwakkenbos

category
bicycle, economy, technology

21:55:42

How slanted is this saddle? Anyone looking at the full photo of this Sparta K-10 might think that the street fence is pushing its saddle down at an angle. However, the bike and its saddle are leaning against the fence, they are not pushed under it. Whether the saddle is as slanted as the photo suggests, we are not sure. This detail of the photo suggests otherwise. The rail to which the saddle is attached is already mounted slightly less slanted than the line of the fence behind which the saddle is partly hidden, and above that part of the fence something vaguely protrudes from the back of the saddle. Presumably that is the edge of the saddle, which would reassure us about the cyclist’s comfort.

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.

The Saddle of a Sparta K-10, Rue Verte, Brussels



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	22.01.2023	Naamloos.jpg	189 KB	Lars Kwakkenbos

category
bicycle

21:55:42

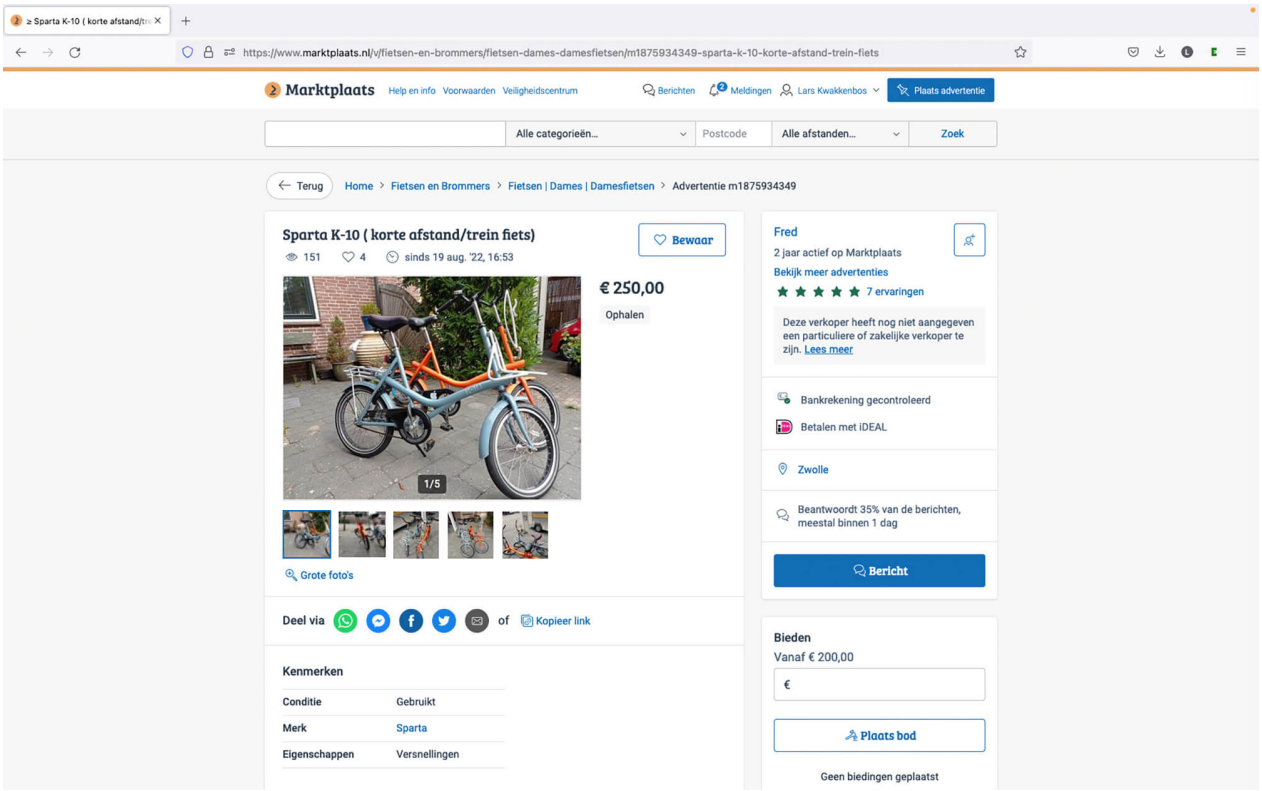
Fred from Zwolle offers two Sparta K-10s on Marktplaats.nl on 29 September 2022. The asking price for the two bikes is 250 euros, bids may start from 200 euros. The green bike has a front light that is powered by a rim dynamo, while in another photo we see a front light on the orange bike that is presumably battery-powered, as may be the case for the rear lights. The carrier mounted at the front of the green bike is clearly a luggage carrier, as is the one at the back. What the carrier mounted at the front of the orange bike is for, is unclear. The description of the bikes does mention the function of the loop protruding from the frame at the back of the Sparta K-10:
‘20-inch bikes that we have always used while camping. No gears but smooth and light pedalling. Ideal for running small errands close by or a quick errand in the toilet building. They are light and quite short making them easy to take on the train. Ideal as a short-distance bike between station and work. Both are, furthermore, in good condition. Each bike comes with a key for the integrated cable lock. Are listed as a ladies’ bike but I (male) get on just fine.’[1]

Notes

1 ’20 inch fietsen die wij altijd tijdens het kamperen hebben gebruikt. Geen versnellingen maar soepel en licht trappend. Ideaal om kleine boodschappen dichtbij te doen of een snelle boodschap in het toilet gebouw. Ze zijn licht en vrij kort waardoor ze makkelijk mee te nemen zijn in de trein. Ideaal als korte afstandfiets tussen station en werk. Beiden zijn verder in goede staat. Van elke fiets beide sleutels aanwezig voorzien van een geïntegreerd kabelslot.Worden als damesfiets genoemd maar ik (man) kom er prima mee vooruit.’

• 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.

Two Sparta K-10s, Owned by Fred and Partner



type	date	filename	size	author
screenshot	18.01.2023	Screenshot 2022-09-29 at 12-19-38 ≥ Sparta K-10 (korte afstand_trein fiets) – Fietsen Dames Damesfietsen – Marktplaats.png	522 KB	Lars Kwakkenbos

category
bicycle, economy

21:55:43

On 29 September 2022, I find a picture of a new Sparta K-10 on the website of cyclonewebshop.be. The bike is matt black and has a chaincase and a nice luggage rack at the front. The typical loop at the back is less noticeable in this photo. This is partly due to the colour of the bike.

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.

A New Sparta K-10



type	date	filename	size	author
image	17.01.2023	20200420_141733.webp	141 KB	Lars Kwakkenbos

category
bicycle, economy

21:55:43

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

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A Sparta K-10, Rue Verte, Brussels



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	13.01.2023	20210604_081159.jpg	5,09 MB	Lars Kwakkenbos

category
bicycle, landscape

21:55:44

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!
Papiere!
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.*
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Document)

'She was quite content.'

Tha back-ass lies!

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.

Le dos-cul ment



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

category
book, data storage, manual, sign

21:55:44

The two photographs arrived in Belgium inside a used hardback[1] in spring 2016, though it is unclear how long before that time they were actually taken.[2]

Photograph #1 measures 151 x 100 mm and shows two young people who appear to be mountain climbing and captured while clearing a ridge. Behind the two subjects a bluish mountainous landscape is vaguely visible, suggesting a vantage point of some considerable elevation. The person on the left is wearing a white T-shirt and a bracelet, and has several earrings. The person on the right is carrying a backpack. What appears to be a black tank-top may in fact also be the straps of the pack. On their head they wear what appears to be a grey T-shirt or other garment, presumably to protect the subject from the sun; this person also has earrings and is wearing a necklace and sunglasses. The weather appears nice, both subjects are smiling and appear relaxed. The effort may well have been staged.

Photograph #2 measures (approximately) 43 x 62 mm with the left, bottom and right sides appearing to be cut, rather unevenly, with scissors. It has the typical appearance of an American high school yearbook photo and shows a young person wearing a shiny black blouse and a necklace. They have blue eyes and below-shoulder length auburn hair. The red lips appear painted. On the back of this photograph is written in a clearly legible hand:

Clay, I can't
wait until next
year when we're
in grade 12![3]
Have a great
Summer and
call me [XXX XXXX][4]
by the way, I haven't
forgot about how big UR

The only assumptions to be made somewhat safely from these two items are that (a) the book has once belonged to 'Clay', and, (b) a relationship of a close, friendly, perhaps even intimate, nature has at one time existed between 'Clay' and the person in the second photograph (assuming also that (c) the note on the back of the second photograph was indeed written by the person in that photograph). The circumstances surrounding, and/or motivations ('Clay''s or any third parties') behind the book's ending up in a used-book shop, must necessarily remain a matter of speculation. There are no reasons to assume that the book was gifted to 'Clay' by the

Notes

1 The book is a first edition, first printing hardback copy of *Word Virus: the William S. Burroughs reader*, edited by James Grauerholz and Ira Silverberg, with an introduction by Ann Douglas, published by Grove Press (New York) in 1998 (160mm x 235mm, 532pp.). On the used book aggregator webstore, the book was graded 'Very Good' (or, VG),* which proved a realistic assessment as it appeared (in fact, still does) largely unread with a dust jacket in equally good condition and no markings inside whatsoever. In fact, the book's condition might well have warranted a 'Fine' (F) grading were it not for the only notable (yet not noted) defect, which was that the 'Spoken Word CD' that was originally included — as indicated by a 32mm diameter round sticker in the top right corner of the front of the dust jacket, and the glued-in envelope in the back of the book — was no longer present. This defect may well have accounted for the apparent disparity between the state and grading of the book and the low price of $4.53 (shipping not included) it was sold at, although the fact remains that this incomplete state ought to have been mentioned in the listing. Since the time of purchase, however, markings were added to the book, presumably with an additional adverse effect on its market value: appearing on the half-title page, they are in dark green crayon and of an abstract nature and were made by the current owner's infant son.
* According to the terminology of the grading scale proposed in 1949 by *AB Bookman's Weekly* and still widely, if not universally, in use in the online used book market today, albeit with some additions or modifications by individual platforms. See Wikipedia for a brief overview.

2 Elements of style and physical nature of the artifacts may be taken to indicate an origin roughly contemporaneous with the book.

3 '[In the United States of America, the] twelfth grade is the twelfth school year after kindergarten. It is also the last year of compulsory secondary education, or high school. Students are often 17–19 years old. Twelfth graders are referred to as Seniors.' (Wikipedia)

4 A 7-digit phone number, without country or area code, redacted here.

5 Located in the state of Nevada, no further identification of the particular shop was provided on the aggregator webstore, and it must be noted that the book was subsequently shipped from 'Auburn', presumably Auburn, CA.

6 Indeed in accordance with its 'Very Good' grading, which is generally understood to explicitly list any defects such as markings (including dedications) but also any missing materials.

7 Quality hardbacks being notably easier to read without damaging the book.

8 Speculations on this, and any potential subsequent extrapolations are, fortunately perhaps, further inhibited by the fact that the book presents a rather generous cross-section of writings spanning the entirety of William S. Burroughs' famously prolific career. The inclusions span the period between 1929 and 1994. Although undertakings of this kind will inevitably meet with criticism, the consensus indeed seems to be that the editors have done an excellent job in selecting and presenting the material. Was 'Clay' mainly drawn by the hard-boiled straightforward prose style of the early novels; the highly experimental and provocative writings of the 'middle period' (traditionally labeled as rather 'hermetic' and 'cold', though they are quite often not without a haunting, perhaps even 'poetic' quality); or the later, one might say 'integrated' style which saw the earlier experiments wedded to a certain 'return to narrative' and, in old age, traces of a much more 'humane' author than ever before (if a point of critique may yet be formulated, one might indeed say that the writings from this later period (roughly 1978–1997) are somewhat favoured (quantitatively) in the *Word Virus* volume; as these have a (still: relatively) greater 'readability' than much of the older material that may indicate a decision of a commercial nature, yet there is also the fact that these texts were written in collaboration with one of the editors of *Word Virus*)?

9 Being in fact a promo sampler for the 4CD Giorno Poetry Systems compilation of William S. Burroughs material also released (by Mouth Almighty Records and Mercury Records) in 1998. See Discogs.

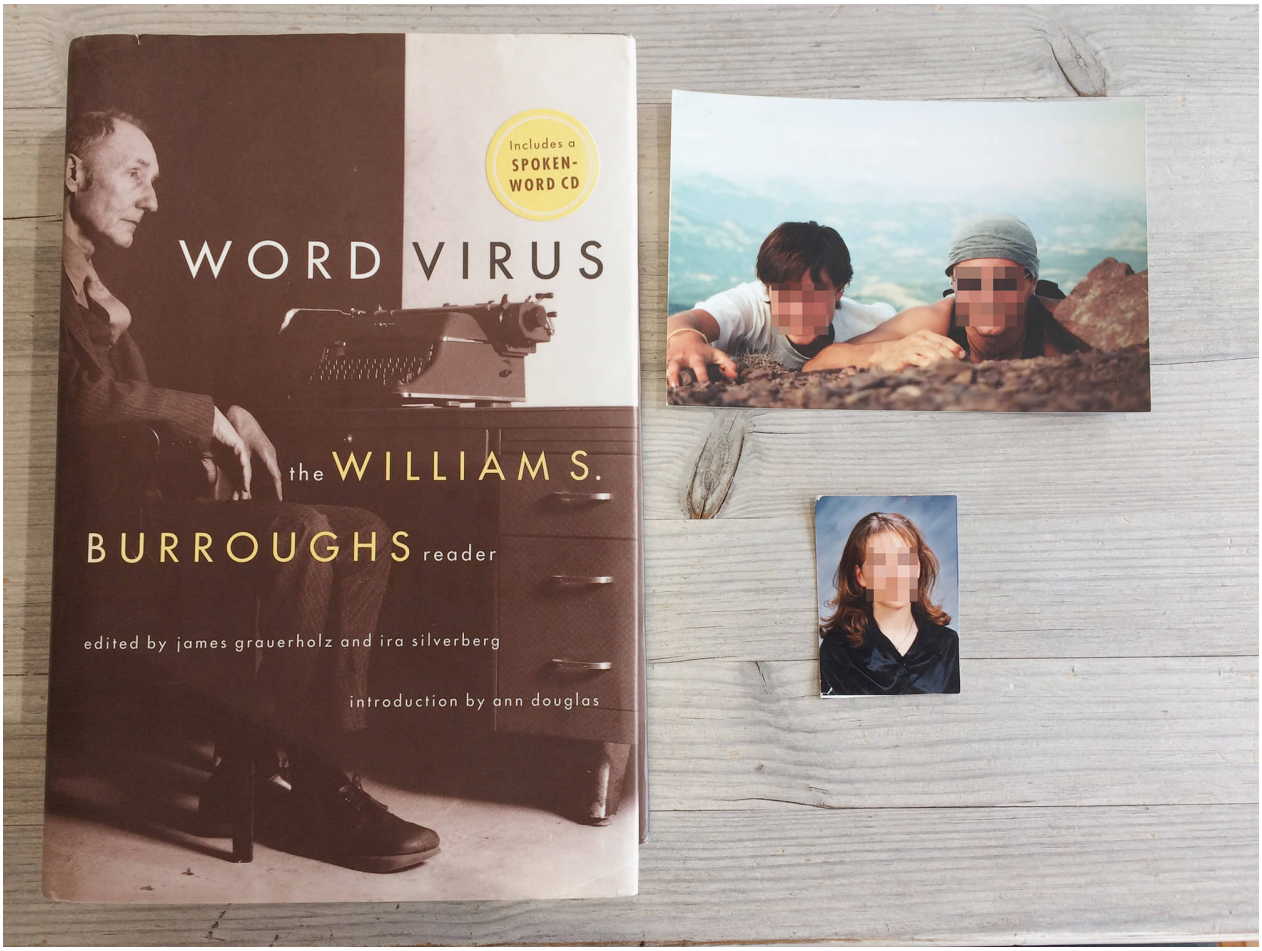
10 Nevada has three area codes (702, 725, and 775), yet quick Google searches of the 7-digit number combined with any one of those yield no easy identification. Considering the overall scarcity of information, however, it seems clear that anyone seeking to reconstruct the biographies of 'Clay' and/or the note-writer should take up this line of investigation.

- David Depestel hesitates in trying to make something of himself; a character, a profession, a fixed mode of being, are for him concepts that already shadow forth the outlines of the skeleton, which is all that will be left of him in the end.

Sources

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_used_book_conditions
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelfth_grade#United_States
- https://www.discogs.com/release/2144-William-Burroughs-Selections-From-The-Best-Of-William-Burroughs-From-Giorno-Poetry-Systems

Debatably graded



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	18.10.2022	IMG_0059.JPG, IMG_058.JPG	2,11 MB, 1,55 MB	David Depestel

category
book, collecting, encounter, landscape, literature

21:55:45

the-documents.c

note-writer (or by anyone else) as no dedication appears in it.[6] It must also remain inconclusive whether there are either two or three different persons appearing across the two photographs, and whether any of these is in fact ‘Clay’.

Indeed, the number of questions raised by these items far exceeds the number of answers they provide. Even leaving aside the nature of the writings in the book, one cannot help but speculate as to:

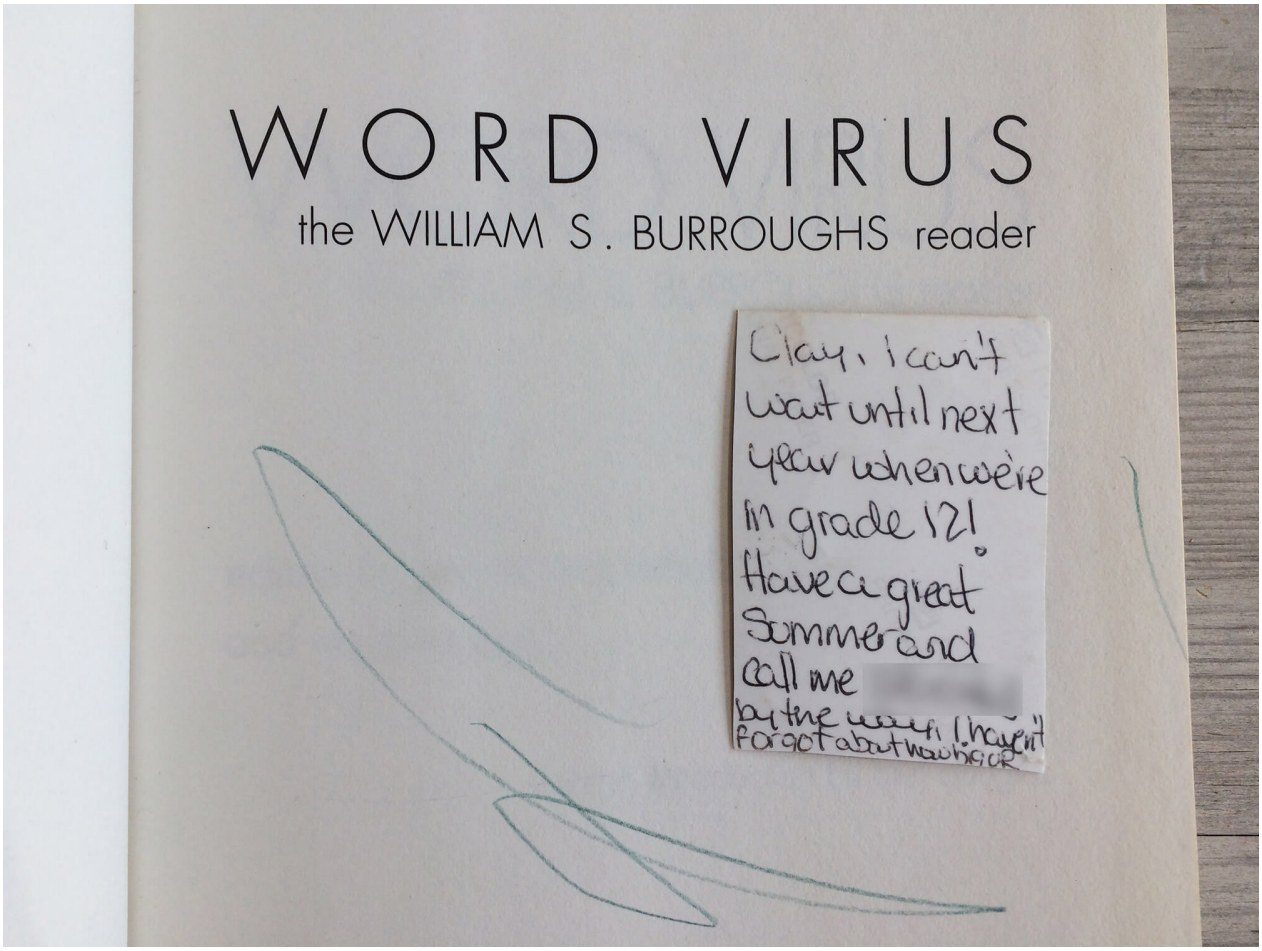
— how much, if any, of the book ‘Clay’ ever read;[7,8]

— what happened to the CD originally included with the book;[9]

— why the unrelated inserted materials were not removed from the book before sale (as opposed to the CD);

— whether ‘Clay’ did in fact ring up the writer of the note over that summer;[10] indeed whether the two ever did meet again, remain close during their ‘senior’ year, perhaps even stay in contact after graduating;

— the meaning of the rather cryptic final line of the note.


WORD VIRUS
the WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS reader
Clay, I can't
wait until next
year when we're
in grade 12!
Have a great
Summer and
call me
by the way, I haven't
forgot about how big OR

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 Kunsthal Extra City, Antwerp.
- Thanks to:
  Angelo Van Daele
  Arthur Haegeman
  Chris De Pauw
  Emi Kodama
  Frédéric Thill
  Gentil Van de Vijver
  Guy Wauters
  Hannah De Cleene
  Jan Scheers
  Jonas Temmerman
  John Sussenbach
  Kunsthal Extra City
  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)

Neptune in opposition [20/20] – A constellation



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

21:55:45

‘My backyard is oriented perfectly, I can see the entire southern sky without obstructions.
In two years, they will start building an apartment block, though, two floors high with a roof on top. The height is not a problem, but of course it does mean heat and potential turbulence. I just hope they will be well insulated.

This is what I like doing. I have never been interested in remote observations.[1] In my backyard. I hear the geese flying overhead at night. An owl. The silence. I want to be near.’

Notes

- In the photograph John Sussenbach is manipulating the telescope’s focus slightly during the recording.

1 To make better images, astrophotographers can rent time on a ‘remote observatory’: a fully equipped observatory located in a less light-polluted region and with a more stable atmosphere than the one the average amateur astronomer lives in. A command given from a computer directs a massive telescope in Chile towards a desired spot.

org Neptune in opposition [17/20] – Remote



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	02.10.2022	_44A6751.dng	48,84 MB	De Cleene De Cleene

category
animal, astronomy, house, Neptune, technology

21:55:46

In *Six Stories from the End of Representation*, James Elkins writes: ‘Astrophysicists are well practised in “cleaning up” photographic plates by adjusting colour and contrast, removing images of dust, correcting aberrations, restoring lost pixels, and balancing uneven background illumination. When it comes to blur, the usual strategy is to specify what counts as “smooth” and what counts as “pointlike,” and then refine the image until it exhibits the required pointlike properties’[1]. Still, some astronomic images keep a certain amount of blur (although it would be technically possible to delineate them). Elkins continues: ‘blur does not need to be a matter of distance from some hypothetical optimal clarity: it can be a functional scale, independent of the viewer’s notions of clarity and even of the image itself’[2].

On the night of 22 November 2021, I join John Sussenbach in his backyard while he captures Neptune.

He invites me to join him and his wife for dinner. A prayer. Soup and bread. The images he makes, he explains, are complex from a temporal point of view. The light coming from Neptune has travelled for four hours before it reaches us. Moreover, these images are not photographs of a singular moment, but stacked frames of a video-recording. In doing so, he can, to some extent, eliminate the effects of a bad ‘seeing’: the negative effect atmospheric turbulence has on the light that reaches the telescope.

A bright dot is jumping around on his laptop’s screen. ‘That’s Neptune’, he says. With his index finger he follows the dot. ‘That’s the bad seeing. That’s the unrest.’

The next day I send him the photograph I took of him standing on his ladder, dangerously placed on the edge of the tarp covering his pool. ‘Nice to see the open star cluster Pleiades in your photograph’, he replies. He attaches the image he made that night: ‘If there would have been a clear storm on Neptune, it would have shown’.

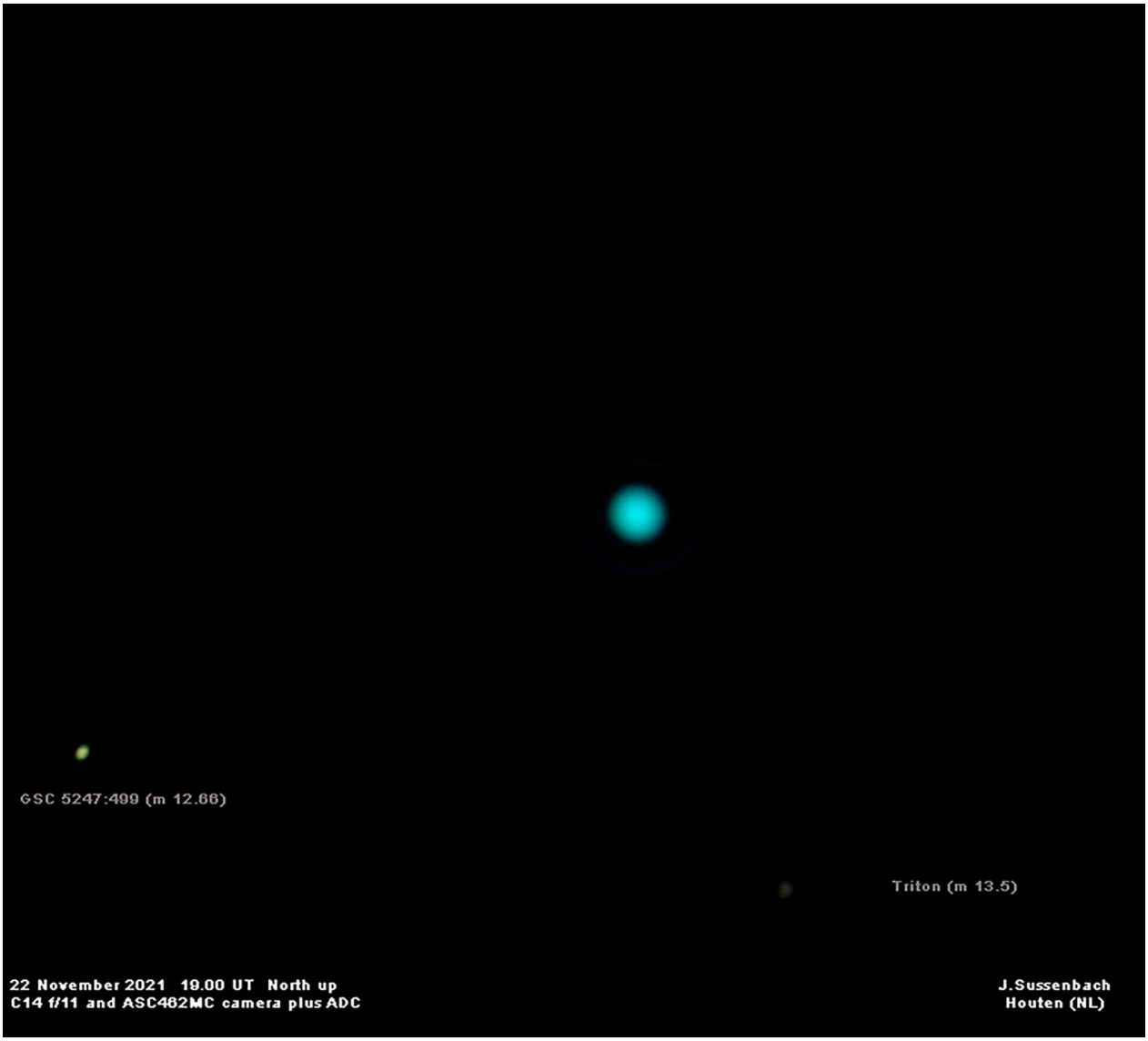
Sources

- Image by John Sussenbach. 22 November 2021 19.00 UT North up C14 f/11 and ASC462MC camera plus ADC, Houten (NL)

1 Elkins, J. *Six Stories from the End of Representation. Images in Painting, Photography, Astronomy, Microscopy, Particle Physics, and Quantum Mechanics, 1980-2000*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008, 59.

2 Ibid., 62-63.

org Neptune in opposition [16/20] – Unrest



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	30.09.2022	nep221121-1900UT-RGB-ASI462MC-JSussenbach.jpg	74 KB	De Cleene De Cleene

category
astronomy, encounter, house, mistake, Neptune, physics, technology

21:55:46

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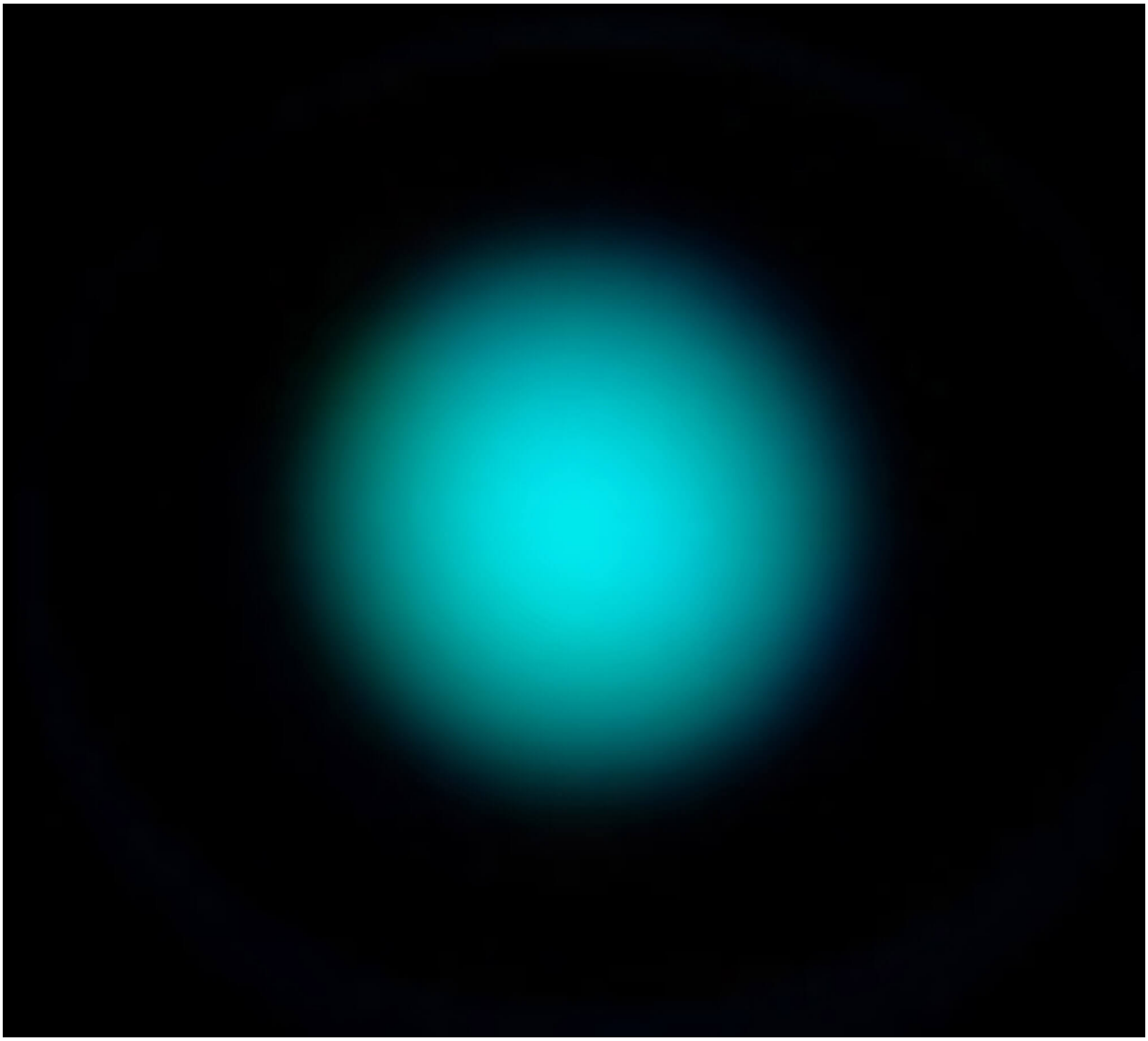

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A first try at using the instrument for making a recording: excitement as we succeed in pointing the telescope at the brownish dot afar we just noticed on the other side of the valley. As it continues scavenging, we wait for night to set in.

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Neptune in opposition [13/20] – A foraging fox



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

21:55:47

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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.

Neptune in opposition [12/20] – Culmination



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	27.09.2022	_44A2295.dng	54,58 MB	De Cleene De Cleene

category
astronomy, automobile, encounter, medicine, Neptune

21:55:47

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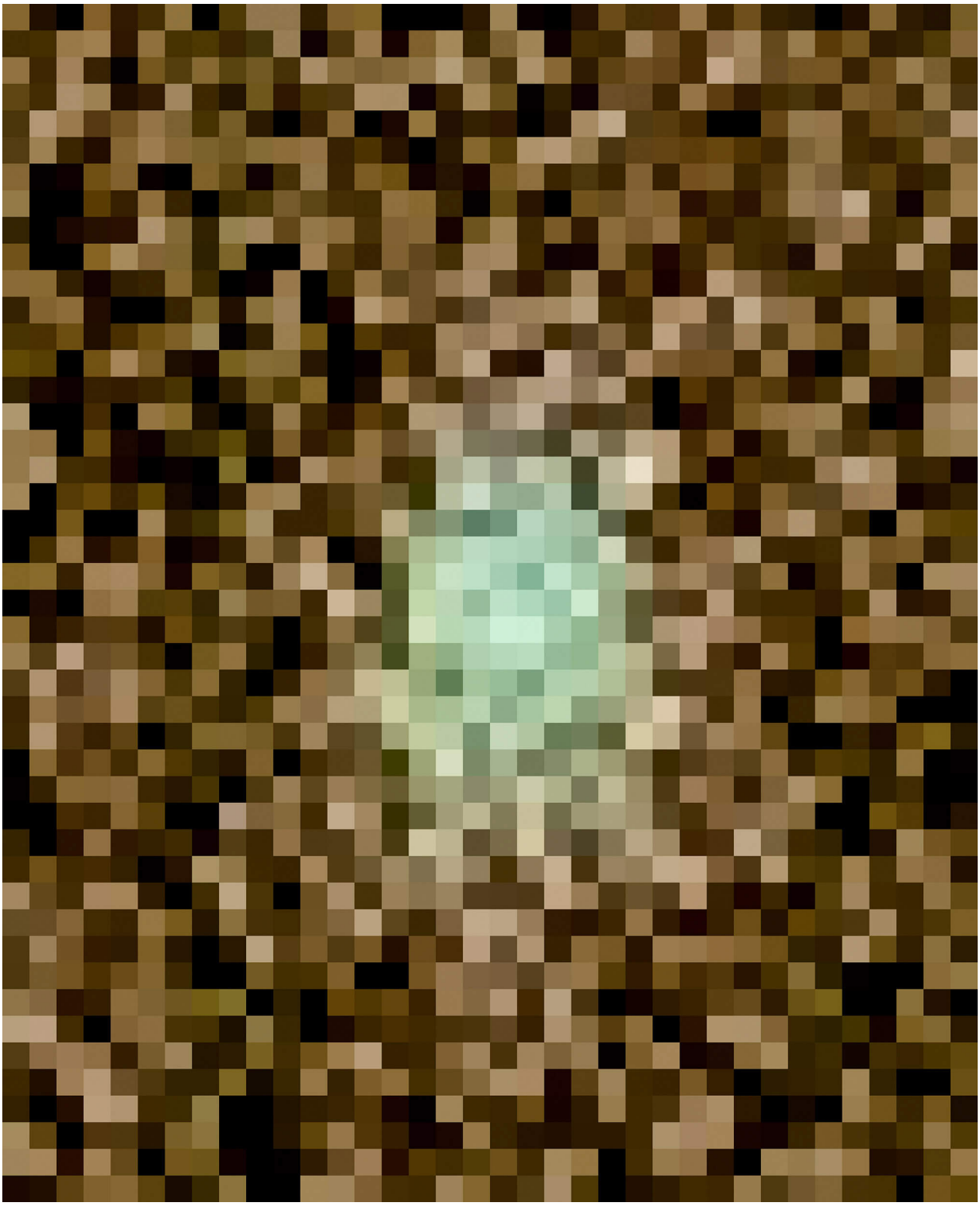

21:55:47

A scene in German author and director Alexander Kluge's *Die Patriotin*: a half-dome opens; the protagonist, Gabi Teichert, stares into the telescope. A montage follows: the waxing crescent moon coming into focus; a night vision of a cityscape with industrial elements; archival footage of a cityscape with skyscrapers during daytime; a giant fire; a woman giving birth aided by a midwife; raindrops falling into a puddle of water; a time-lapse video of a city at sundown; a ship floating by with, in the background, on the shore, windmills; images of tanks rolling by; close-ups of a purple-lit face of someone looking into the camera; archival footage of an air raid.[1, 2]

In a conversation with Ben Lerner, Kluge sees himself as someone 'creating constellations': 'We deal with moving bodies. "Moving reality." […] And this is something that you cannot present in a linear way, but in the form of constellations. "Constellation" refers to cosmic matter and gravitation. There are suns, moons, planets. There are also the dust particles, tiny particles that orbit around the sun for centuries according to physical laws. And there's no hinge, no screw that connects them. Invisible connections.'[3]

Sources

1 Kluge, A. (dir.) *Die Patriotin*. München: Kairos Film, 1979. https://youtu.be/ZRuQ3SUgSSk?t=449

2 Kluge, A. *Die Patriotin. Texte/Bilder 1-6*. Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1979, 60-64. https://monoskop.org/images/4/49/Kluge_Alexander_Die_Patriotin.pdf

3 Lerner, B. & Kluge, A. *The Snows of Venice. The Lerner-Kluge-container*. Leipzig: Spector Books, 2018, 66.

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

Neptune in opposition [9/20] – Rooftops, a windmill and power lines



type	date	filename	size	author
video	23.09.2022	2020-09-23-0837_1-CapObj.mp4	10,76 MB	De Cleene De Cleene

category
architecture, astronomy, house, landscape, Neptune, wind

21:55:48

It is said that ‘if a space traveller were unfortunate enough to enter the atmosphere of one of the giant planets [such as Neptune], he or she would not find a single solid surface. Instead, as he or she descended into the planet, our traveller would find that the temperature, pressure, and density would all continue to increase smoothly, with no sharp transitions. Assuming that he or she was adequately protected from the temperature, pressure, and radiation, our traveller would eventually “float” at that level in the atmosphere where the surrounding density and his or her own density were equal.’[1]

It is said that it storms on Neptune.
Violently.
1200 mph.

They observed a great dark spot and called it: The Great Dark Spot.

It rains diamonds on Neptune.

Sources

1 Miner, E.D. & R.R. Wessen. *Neptune. The Planet, Rings and Satellites.* Chichester: Springer-Praxis, 2002, p. 18.

org Neptune in opposition [8/20] – Diamonds



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	22.09.2022	_44A5917.dng	52,41 MB	De Cleene De Cleene

category
astronomy, crash, Neptune, wind, precipitation

21:55:48

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As an architectural structure, the pier is fundamental in observational astronomy: it can be found in the backyards of amateur observatories, as well as in professional ones. This column is a quintessential part of the physical interventions that are necessary to distinguish noise from valuable data. The pier disjoints the telescope from the observer, from the observatory and from the surroundings. Tremors of passing cars, the astronomer’s footsteps and coughs, the neighbour’s soundsystem: they could result in an agitated telescope. A falling mug would cause the instrument to shift lightyears away from its target.

Notes

- In August 2019, I visited Chris De Pauw, an astrophotographer, at home. He showed me his private observatory. As we were both waiting for clouds to obscure the sun and get softer light for the photograph, he told me about the rolling shed, its advantages and the modifications he was planning on.
  On closing the observatory – by rolling the shed over the instrument – he manoeuvred the instrument into its ‘park’-position: an azimuth of 160 degrees and an elevation of 8 degrees above the horizon. The shed’s doors and hinges barely cleared the telescope.

Neptune in opposition [6/20] – Pier



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	21.09.2022	_44A7375.dng, _44A7394.dng	55,61 MB, 56,96 MB	De Cleene De Cleene

category
architecture, astronomy, encounter, Neptune, technology

21:55:49

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