

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, CLOSED NO POWER. For prescriptions go to Walgreens 2690 Mission OPEN UNTIL 5 PM., pgealerts.alerts.pge.com/, Traces of logging on Mount Egaleo, 12:13, Flashlight in a dark corner of the Oval Room, The Loop of the Sparta K-10, The Saddle of a Sparta K-10, Rue Verte, Brussels, K10 in Folder Sparta Bikes 2011, Green or blue, Two Sparta K-10s, Owned by Fred and Partner, A New Sparta K-10, John's Sparta K-10, Tineke's Sparta K-10, A Sparta K-10, Rue Verte, Brussels, Le dos-cul ment, New Year's Eve, 2015, Seacat, Debatably graded, Consolations, Neptune in opposition [20/20] – A constellation, Neptune in opposition [19/20] – Approximation, Neptune in opposition [17/20] – Remote, Neptune in opposition [15/20] – Plethora

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 Sébastien Conardon 26.02.2023 23:06, printed on ____ and contains 23 documents on 51 pages.
(<https://the-documents.org/log/26-02-2023-5262/>)

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.



Flanders
State of the Art



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

22:06:01



[13:42] Maziar: Power out at Rib now.

[13:45] Mathew: It's windy here today, sorry!

[13:45] Maziar: Saying from the comfort of his electrified home, or...you also have no power?

[13:45] Mathew: No, I don't. But, typically, outages in the city are shorter than in regional areas. PG&E website estimates service within two hours...Maybe you could post a business sign on Rib's window?¹

[13:52] Maziar: Yes. Though my phone is almost dead. No light. Can you send me a text for the sign? I can't access the drive.

[13:52] Mathew: Yeah.

[13:52] Maziar: I feel reality hitting. Not so much the reality of blackouts in the U.S., but the reality of life and work...and that it is time to go home.

[13:55] Mathew: "CLOSED NO POWER For prescriptions go to Walgreens 2690 Mission OPEN UNTIL 5 PM."

[13:55] Maziar: Thanks.

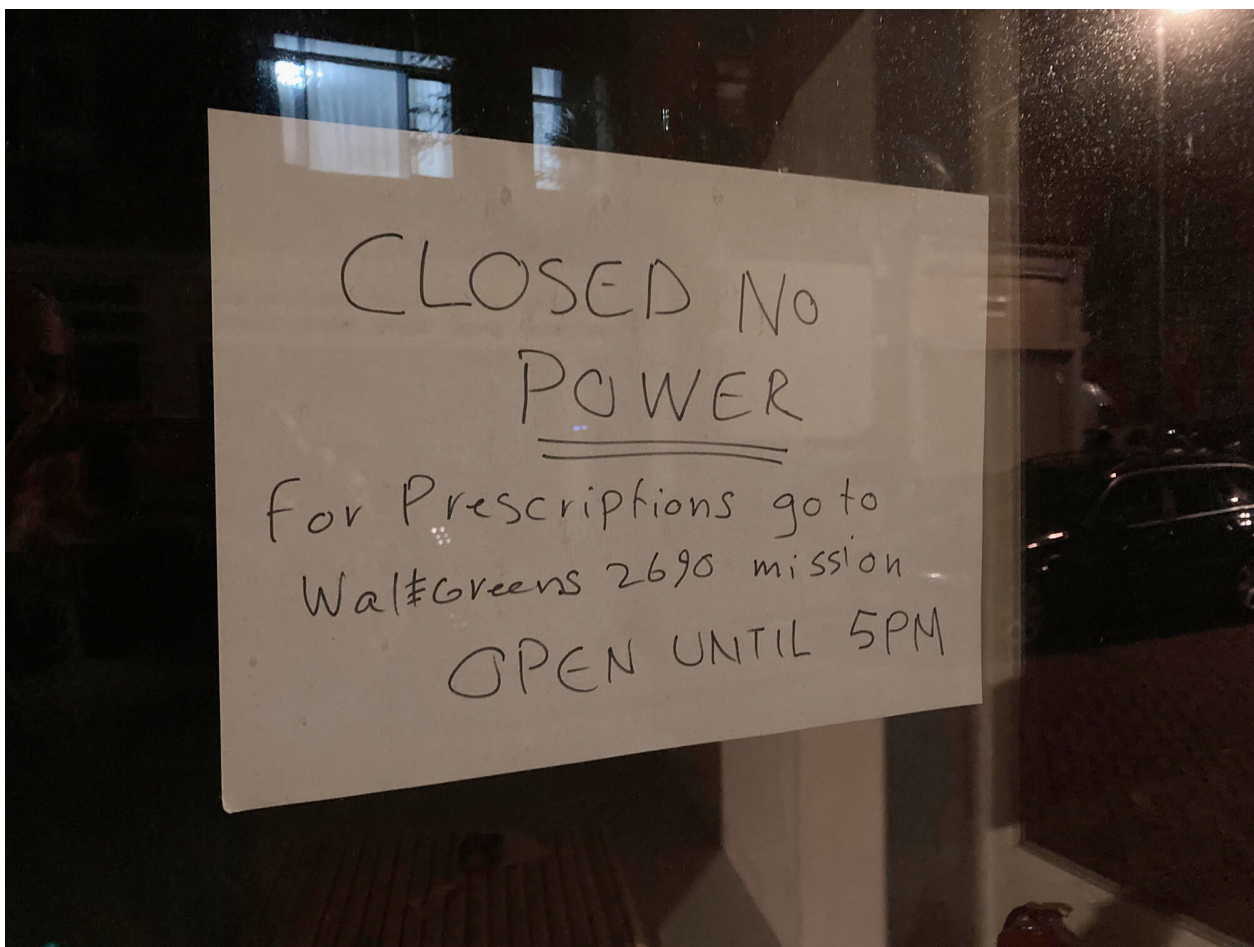
[13:56] Mathew: Yeah, maybe it's time for you to leave for the night. I'm going to drive around to see what's happening.

[13:59] Maziar: Okay, enjoy.

Notes

- 1 Local businesses experiencing a blackout typically post handwritten notices on their street-facing windows. These condensed notes detail acute symptoms felt at a community level, hinting at the improvisation required to maintain social harmony.
- 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.

CLOSED NO POWER. For prescriptions go to Walgreens
2690 Mission OPEN UNTIL 5 PM.



type
photograph

date
21.02.2023

filename
closed-no-power.jpg

size
641 KB

author
Mathew Kneebone

category
automobile, impact, repair, sign, wind

22:06:04

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.

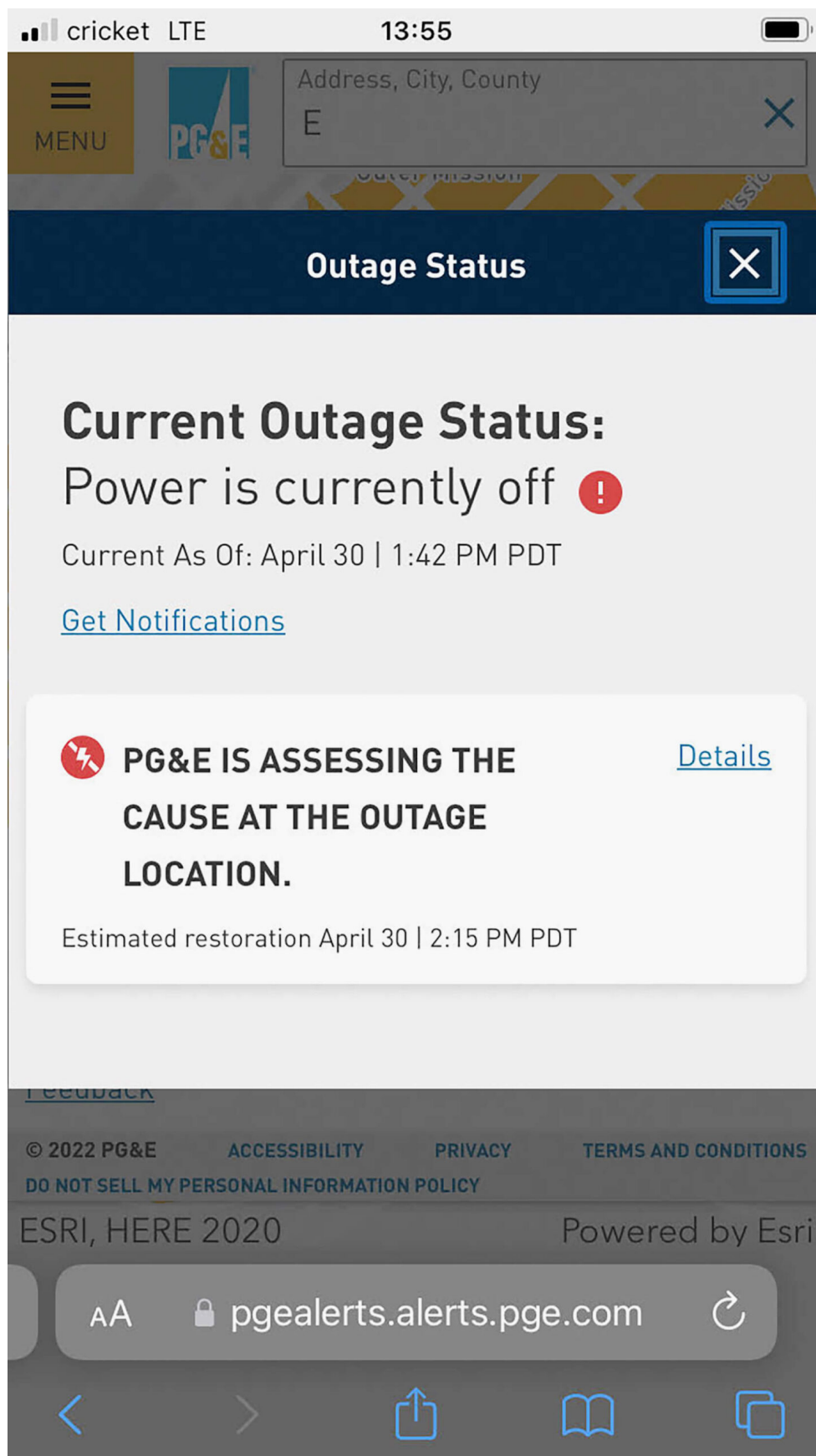
Each pole divides vertically into distinct zones, spaced apart for safety. Treacherous high-voltage wires from substations pass along the top, while safer signals—cable internet and landlines—hang nearest to the ground. The high-voltage wires enter through a barrel-shaped pole-mounted transformer. Within,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

22:06:05

‘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



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

22:06:05



During a two hour tour, H.V. (head of the science collection) guided us from the library to the observatory and back. Along the way, he touched upon various rarities: one hundred ninety-five volumes of the *Encyclopédie Méthodique* (according to H.V. the most complete copy left in the world), the severed summit of Mont Blanc (‘Actually de Saussure brought back a triangular piece of rock from just below the snow line near the summit’), an original copy of the publication on the infamous Lügensteine (‘These date back to the time before the hoax was unveiled’)...

In guiding us from room to room, H.V. piled oddity upon curiosity. He showed a particular interest in all things fish-related.

Notes

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



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	30.01.2023	teylers.tif	36,68 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
animal, archaeology, architecture, archive, astronomy, book, encounter, hand, Reference Guide, replica/copy

22:06:05

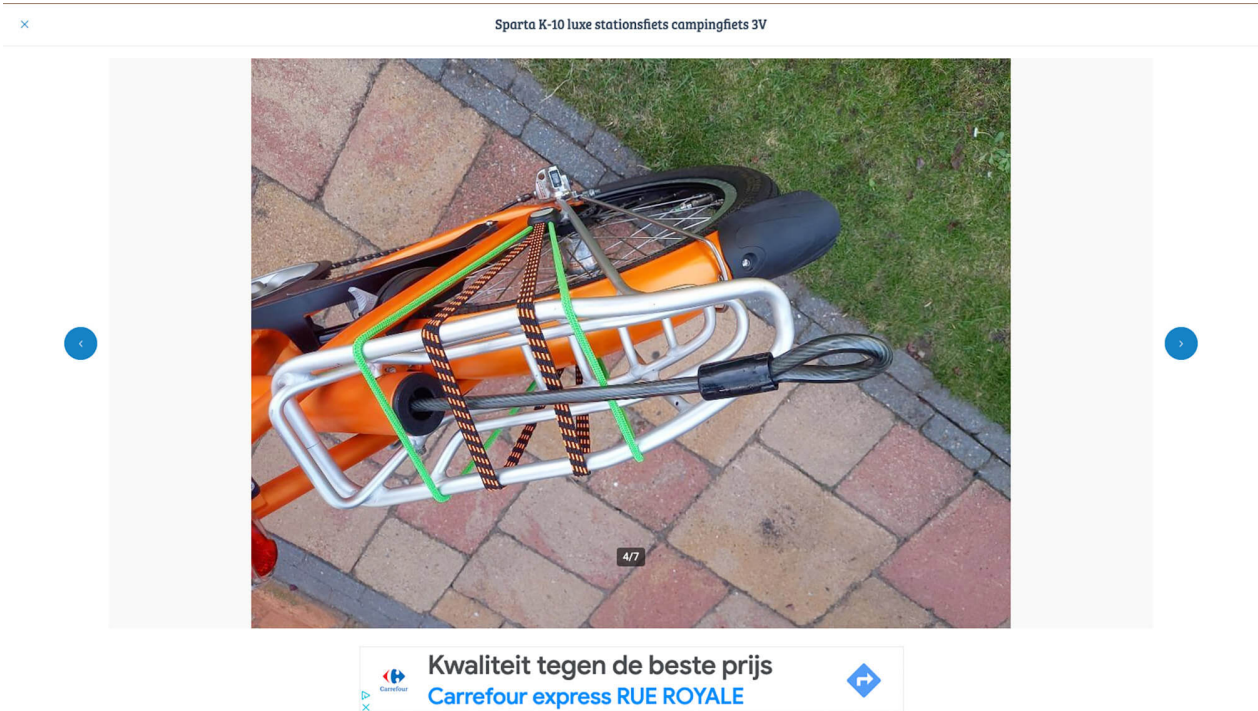
On 12 October 2022, I see a third orange Sparta K-10 listed on marktplaats.nl, after Tineke and Fred's. It is sold by one Fr from Zevenaar. Fr put the bike up for sale four days earlier. According to Fr, it is a 'luxury station bike' and 'camping bike'. He is asking 199 euros for it. Fr explains the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



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

22:06:05

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

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type
photograph

date
22.01.2023

filename
Naamloos.jpg

size
189 KB

author
Lars Kwakkenbos

category
bicycle

22:06:05

The company Demuynck from Heist (B) has put the 2011 brochure of Dutch bicycle manufacturer Sparta on yumpu.com as an ePaper. According to yumpu.com, this was reportedly done on 28 September 2013. The leaflet is titled 'Collection Overview 2011'. On pages 68 and 69, the bike is called K10, the frame says K-TEN, while a version presumably a bit older is usually for sale second-hand as K-10. The K10 is a 'practical, compact city bike', it is available in one unisex frame size 50 and it has an integrated cable lock. There is a loop at the back of the large tube to which the rest of the frame is mounted. This might be the end of that lock. There are optional carriers, front and rear, and there is an optional lighting kit. The recommended retail price is 299 euros.

Notes

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type
screenshot

date
20.01.2023

filename
Screenshot 2022-09-30 at 10-59-06
Klik hier voor de folder Sparta
fietsen 2011. - Demuyne Heist.png

size
761 KB

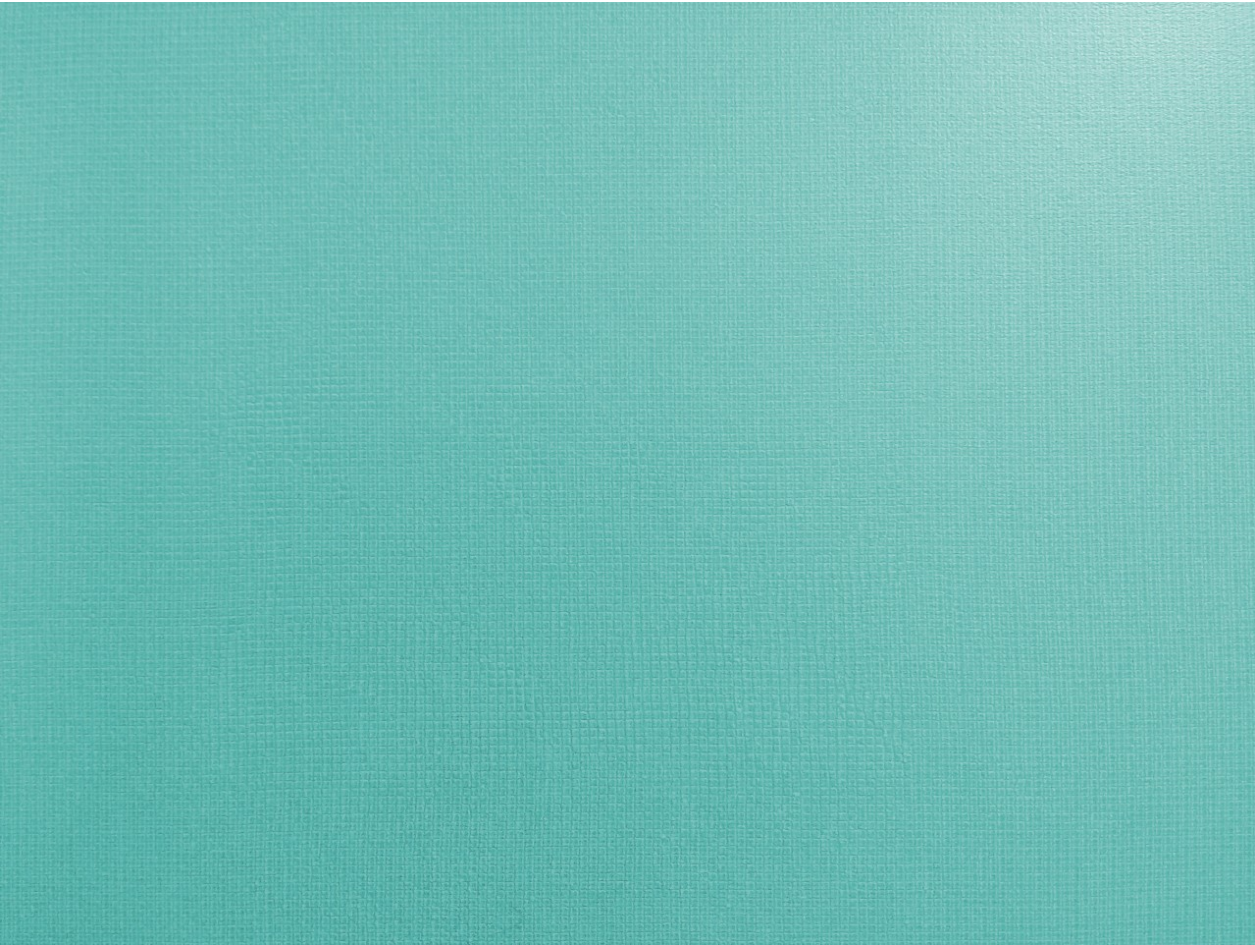
author
Lars Kwakkenbos

category
bicycle, economy

According to @missbluesette, the green K-10 put up for sale by Fred from Zwolle that I came across on marktplaats.nl on 29 September 2022 is not green, but blue. The colour resembles turquoise, I explain, a colour I have always called green. No, turquoise is not green, but blue, she replies. And the texts of my Instagram posts are too long, she says, so she doesn't read them.

Notes

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type	date	filename	size	author
image	19.01.2023	teal-turquoise-plastic-with-square-pattern-texture.jpg	308 KB	Lars Kwakkenbos

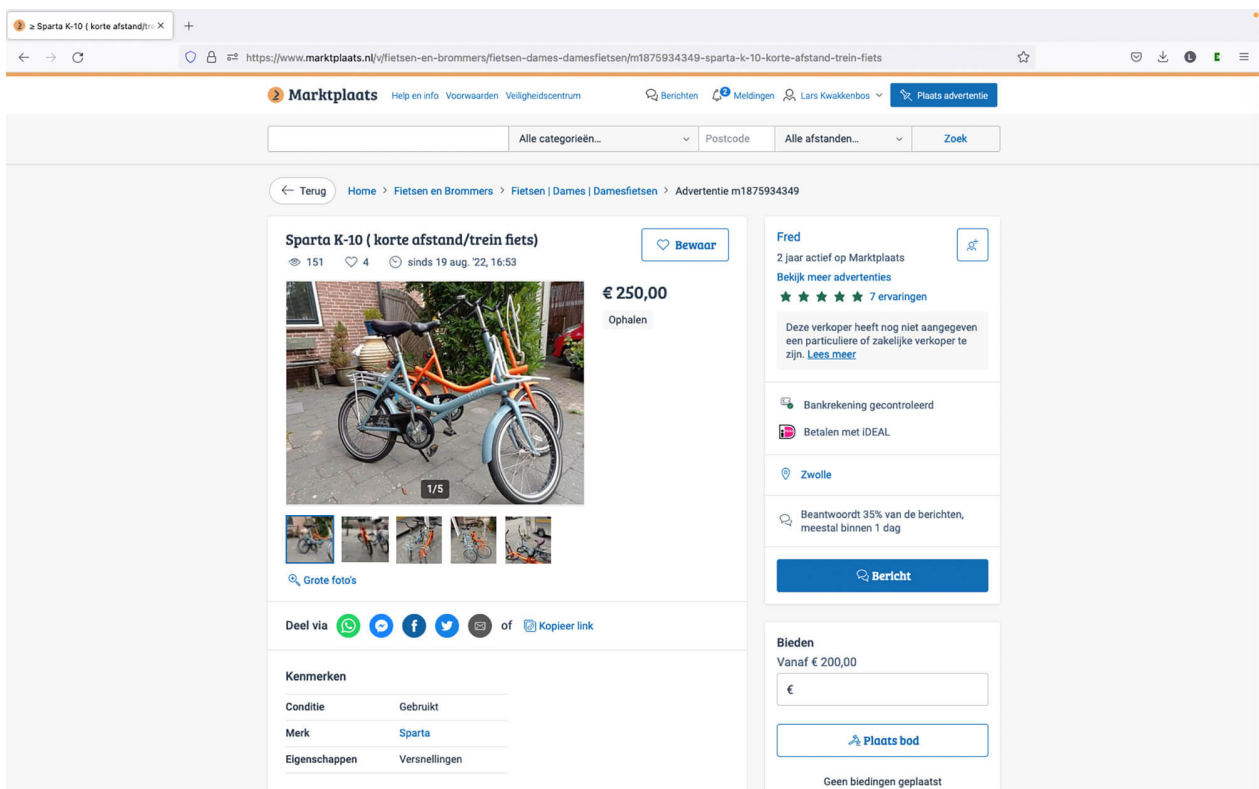
category
bicycle, encounter, mistake

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.



filename

Screenshot 2022-09-29 at 12-19-38

≥ Sparta K-10 (korte
afstand_trein fiets) – Fietsentype
screenshotdate
18.01.2023Dames Damesfietsen –
Marktplaats.pngsize
522 KBauthor
Lars Kwakkenboscategory
bicycle, economy

22:06:06

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

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type
image

date
17.01.2023

filename
20200420_141733.webp

size
141 KB

author
Lars Kwakkenbos

category
bicycle, economy

22:06:06

John from Middelburg offers a K-10 without a loop at the back on marktplaats.nl. His K-10 does have a front light, which strangely never seems to be mounted in the front of the long tube of the frame. The asking price is 75 euros, bids may start from 50 euros.

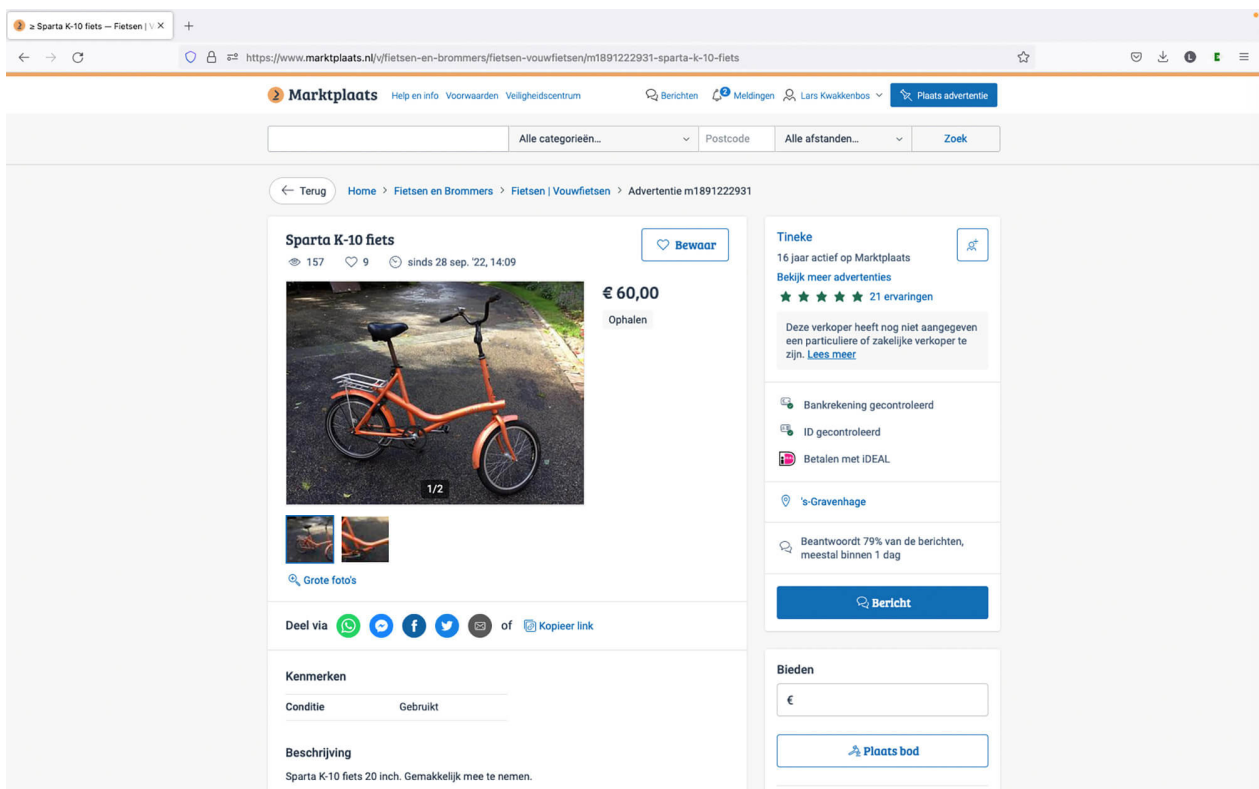
Notes

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On 29 September 2022, I search the internet for the factory details of an original Sparta K-10. First I come across some second-hand K-10s. On marktplaats.nl, a Sparta K-10 is for sale for 60 euros, but anyone interested may also make an offer. The seller's name is Tineke. She lives in The Hague and writes that the bike is 'easy to take along'. The K-10 she is selling has no chain guard, but it does have a chrome luggage rack. This makes the bike more practical, but in my opinion also less attractive. Her bike also has a bell, but no elegant loop at the end of the long, curved tube around which the frame is built – most other K-10s do have such a loop – or has it disappeared behind the top tube of the luggage carrier? If Tineke is also the owner of the bike, she is much taller than the owner of the Brussels bike, as her saddle is a lot higher, and it is also more or less straight. Moreover, the handlebars are very high thanks to a different stem, which makes the model of the bike a bit unbalanced. I don't know if I would have photographed the bike for sale in The Hague.

Notes

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type	date	filename	size	author
screenshot	14.01.2023	Screenshot 2022-09-29 at 11-38-18 ≥ Sparta K-10 fiets – Fietsen Vouwfietsen – Marktplaats.png	471 KB	Lars Kwakkenbos

category
bicycle, economy

22:06:06

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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type
photograph

date
13.01.2023

filename
20210604_081159.jpg

size
5,09 MB

author
Lars Kwakkenbos

category
bicycle, landscape

22:06:06

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/english/document>)

'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.

7



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."'¹

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

22:06:07

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.¹

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
scan

date
10.11.2022

filename
48b_08.jpg

size
427 KB

author
Michiel De Cleene

category
archive, family, landscape, sea

22:06:07

The two photographs arrived in Belgium inside a used hardback¹ in spring 2016, though it is unclear

the-documents.c

how long before that time they were actually taken.²

Notes

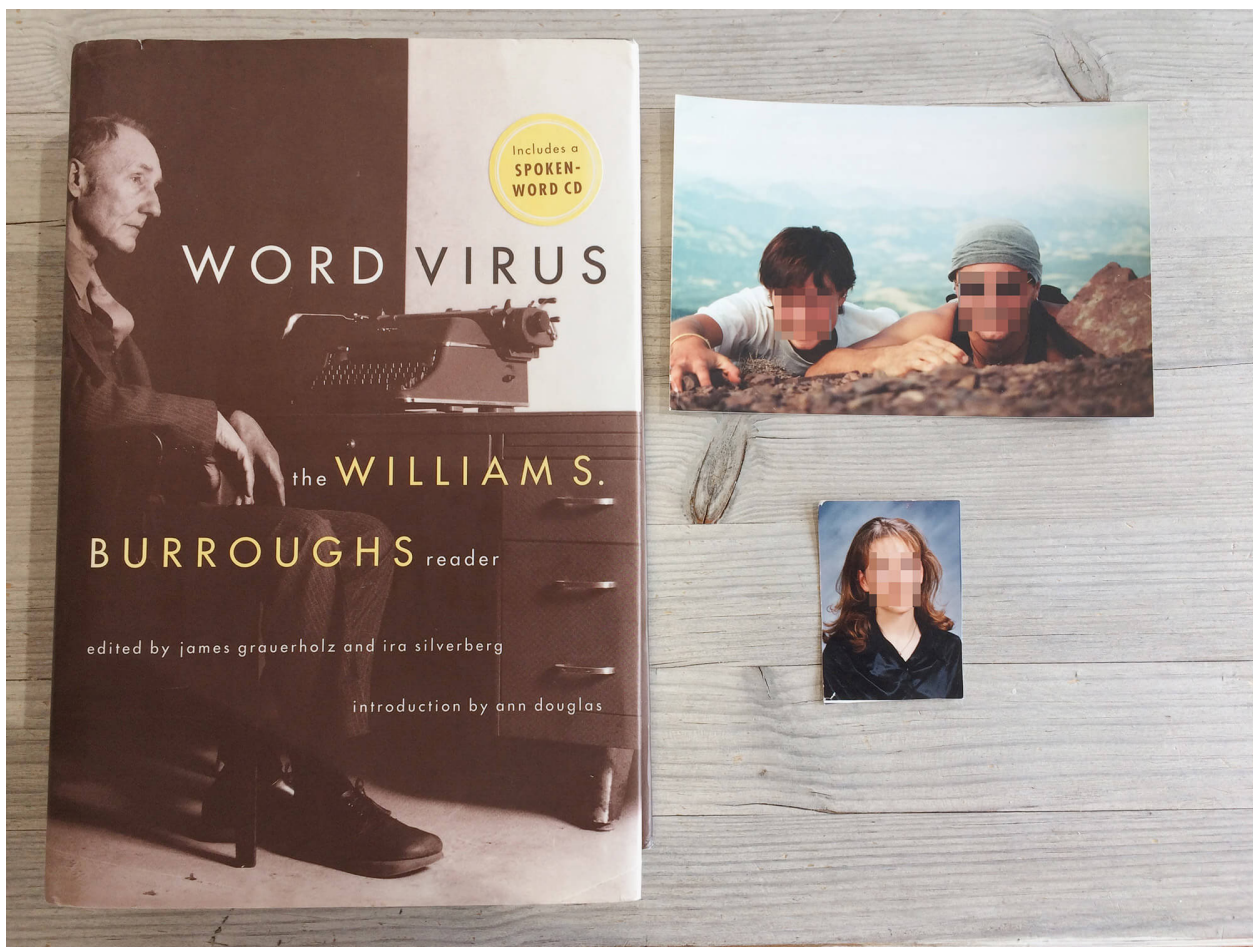
- 1 The book is a first edition, first printing hardback copy of *Word Virus: the William S. Burroughs reader*, edited by James Grauerholz and Ira Silverberg, with an introduction by Ann Douglas, published by Grove Press (New York) in 1998 (160mm x 235mm, 532pp.). On the used book aggregator webstore, 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.

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



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				

22:06:07

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 watching

In the philosophy aisle of the largest used and remaindered book shop in the city — which is a regular stop on my lunchbreak walks to escape the dreariness of my office job — that particular day a set of books caught my eye. They were four copies of the same edition of a title I had never had any inclination to read. It was the near-uniformity of the four books that made them stand out. Upon closer inspection, there were two more copies of two other editions of the book on the shelf.

It was immediately apparent to me that only three minor moves were required to bring the six copies together on the shelf, and to arrange the four copies of the same edition so that the level of sun fading of their spines would make their lettering form a white to dark pink gradient. I could think of no shade of the letters that would tastefully match the very light blue of the rest of the spine, which had remained relatively uniform across the four copies.

After having moved the books, I took a photograph of them with the camera in my smartphone.

It occurred to me only afterwards that while handling the books I had not leafed through them.

Some days later, going through my photo folder, I came across the picture I had taken to document my somewhat neurotic but oddly satisfying action and noticed that the camera had been in square mode and that the photo was blurry. I have not yet gone back to take a better picture.

Notes

- 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.



type
image

date
14.10.2022

filename
Comfort 1.HEIC

size
777 KB

author
David Depestel

category
book, interference, literature, mistake, replica/copy, technology

22:06:07

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:
 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
 Kunsthall 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)



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				

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

22:06:08

‘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.



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	02.10.2022	_44A6751.dng	48,84 MB	De Cleene De Cleene
category				
animal, astronomy, house, Neptune, technology				

22:06:08

Each night a plethora of amateur-astronomers gazes into the sky. Their instruments and locations are often inferior to the means available to professionals. Yet, what they lack in terms of technology and location, darkness and mirror surface, they make up for in the collectivity of their observations. They are patient observers, spread around the globe, not bound to the strict schedules and limited availability of the large telescopes in the Atacama Desert.

When amateur astronomy became fashionable, it led to a surge of information stemming from a large group of distinct observers: seafarers, physicians, typists, masons. Theirs were valuable data, but if they were to be put to scientific use, they needed to be standardised. How to overcome the subjective element inherent in every empirical observation? The amateurs had to be instructed to recognize patterns, by means of visual examples. They had to be trained to use the right terms to describe their observations. They had to turn chaos into order. Recognize what they were looking at. A nebula. A red giant. Neptune's faint blue-greenish colour resembling the flame of the gas stove.

Sources

- Hueso, R. e.a., 'Neptune long-lived atmospheric features in 2013-2015 from small (28-cm) to large (10-m) telescopes', *Icarus*, 295, 2017, 89-109.
- Lorenz, R.D. e.a. 'Backyard spectroscopy and photometry of Titan, Uranus and Neptune', *Planetary and Space Science*, 51, 2003, 113-125.



type
photograph

date
29.09.2022

filename
_44A6734.dng

size
43,77 MB

author
De Cleene De Cleene

category
astronomy, manual, mirror, Neptune, sign, technology

22:06:08

