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

Your path through the collection lead along Swarms, Firing tool, Aggressive mimicry, Learning broom-making again, Owls and cats, What the left hand forgot, Stopwatch, Zebras, View, A Fever Dream, Mirror, Straight in the morning, curvy in the afternoon, Raisins, Market, 12M m3 [7/8] A Fissure, 12M m3 [5/8] It’s Freezing, 12M m3 [3/8] Swell, 12M m3 [1/8] Rapid Snowmelt, Elevator, Cobalt, The first light of day

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 30.03.2024 23:36, printed on ____ and contains 21 documents on 46 pages. (https://the-documents.org/log/30-03-2024-5826/)

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.



July. Our eight-month-old son has a fever. We have a hard time getting him to drink enough. The tally marks on the back of a tortellini-box keep track of the diapers he wets and the millilitres of milk and electrolytes he’s able to hold down.
Stuck inside with worrying parents, a sticker-book about a farm is his brother’s favourite pass-time. Tired of having to go back and forth between the pastures and the sticker-filled sheets we decide to use my arm as a repository for animals that share a habitat.



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	23.01.2024	IMG_6467.jpeg	1,66 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
collecting, family, hand, sticker

21:59:29

Jolimont, December 2021. The place is in ruins. We occupy the domain with students of La Cambre in an attempt to practice ceramics with what is there. In the former ceramic atelier, we gather everything that was purposelessly there: a weird collection of things from the past, waiting to be organized, displayed, used or thrown away.

The firing tool was made to take out the accumulating ashes from the firebox, to keep the air flowing in the oven, raising the temperature, reaching our ceramic-making goal of 1150°C. Not very efficient, time or heat resistant, this savage, yet poetic composition barely survived the firing.

The wooden handle was borrowed from a broom.
The scraper is a fragment of a chandelier previously hanging in one of the salons.
The connecting element is an old electrical resistor we found in one of the dismantled ovens.

Notes

- Clementine Vaultier’s interests, although trained as a ceramist, are in the warm surroundings of the fire rather than the production it engenders.

Firing tool



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	01.09.2022	clementine_firing_tool.JPEG	991 KB	Clémentine Vaultier

category
alchemy, archaeology, architecture, brick, collecting, decoration, waste

22:36:18

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

Aggressive mimicry



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	21.08.2022	_44A3849.dng	50,83 MB	Michiel De Cleene

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

22:36:20

This video-still is taken from a documentary about ‘Le Coin du Balai – De Bezemhoek’, a Brussels neighborhood on the edge of the Sonian Wood. Historically, the inhabitants had the exclusive right to harvest young shoots of trees to make and sell brooms. In 1976, filmmaker Willy Biesemans captured the last broom-maker, still in possession of this vernacular knowledge.

Nowadays, the Sonian Wood is commonly understood as a place of natural beauty surrounding the city. The wood the forest produces is managed as a chain of production and sold in public auction to the best buyer. The bulk of the forest’s produce is exported abroad and eventually imported back as manufactured goods.

Notes

- Clementine Vaultier’s interests, although trained as a ceramist, are in the warm surroundings of the fire rather than the production it engenders.

Sources

- Biesemans, W. *De Bezemhoek.* 1976 (YouTube – De Bezemhoek)

Learning broom-making again



type	date	filename	size	author
screenshot	16.08.2022	clementine_learning_broommaking_again.png	3 MB	Clémentine Vaultier

category
botany, economy, landscape, tree

22:36:22

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	date	filename	size	author
photograph	12.08.2022	IMG_1944.HEIC	1,59 MB	Arnout De Cleene

category
animal, automobile, family

22:36:23

At the end of the day, riding home after work, I find a text on my hand:

> C
> D[…]ers
> Desk
> K
> Communication book

‘Diapers’, I recall, and stop at the shop to buy them. Sweat, dust, and manic hand rubbing have rendered parts of the writing illegible. ‘C’ is for Carl, whose newborn I need to visit as soon as possible. Sometimes, I can’t remember what the initial stands for. I don’t have any friends with names beginning with a K (who have newborns I need to visit).

The right hand writes, the left hand serves as the canvas. The back of the right hand, folded around the pen, is blank and tells the always already written on back of the left hand, whose palm never holds a pen, what to register. Right: an author. Left: a poem, sunken into the pores.

Back home, I trace ‘Desk’ again, as not to forget to clean it tomorrow.

What the left hand forgot



type	date	filename		size
photograph	18.07.2022	_MG_7728.JPG, _MG_7792.JPG	size	5,5 MB, 5,7 MB

author
Arnout De Cleene

category
data storage, literature, hand

22:36:24

the-documents.c



He’s wearing a digital watch. It looks like a Casio. It’s impossible to read the time, no matter whether you are studying the high-resolution scan of the negative or the negative itself, with the aid of a loupe and lightbox.

The device had a stopwatch function. When we were around eight and ten, we used to compete in trying to start and stop the stopwatch in the shortest possible interval. The smaller the gap, the closer to zero. Sometimes he would also have a try. We once managed to get it down to 00:00:00:03. Neither of us dared to press ‘reset’ and try again.

Notes



Stopwatch



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

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

22:36:26

On Mondays, before noon, I go to the supermarket with my two-year-old son. After passing the lasagnes, the loaves of bread and the fruit and vegetables, we make a short stop at the aquarium with the lobsters. Around New Year, there are two of them.

After we've paid for the groceries and have put them in the car, we walk into the pet shop. We look at the parrots (Jacques, Louis and Marie-José), the rabbits, the guinea pigs, the assorted caged birds and the fish and turtles. He's very fond of the Cyphotilapia Frontosa Burundi. He calls them zebras. They hail from Lake Tanganyika, the label says. It's the second-oldest freshwater lake, the second-largest by volume and the second-deepest. The pet shop has adorned their aquarium with a scene of ocean waste.

In an effort to avert guilt, I look for something cheap and more or less useful to buy: birdseed, a snack for the neighbour's cat, a comb for his grandparent's Labrador, etc.

Zebras



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	05.04.2022	IMG_0214.HEIC	1,5 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
animal, RDC, trompe l'oeil, waste, family, replica/copy

22:36:28

According to art critic Rosalind Krauss, nineteenth-century stereographic images presented ‘views’, not ‘landscapes’. Looking at a stereographic image through a stereoscope involves a particular experience that is altogether different from looking at other types of photographs, or paintings, as it is defined by ‘the isolation of the viewer with an image from which surrounding interference is masked out‘.[1] An image of a violent and sudden eruption, higher up on the mountain, hanging next to a stereographic image of a petrified lava flow, would not be perceived.

Sources

1. Krauss, R. *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths.* Cambridge, Mass./London: The MIT Press, 1986, 139.



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	03.04.2022	Foto_2022-02-17_110818.jpgFoto_2022-02-17_110818.jpgFoto_2022-02-17_110818.jpg	1,8MB	Arnout De Cleene

category
impact, landscape, seismology, technology, trompe l'oeil, Vesuvius

22:36:29

During the night, both of us get unwell. One of us is shaking, intensely and relentlessly. The windows are open. For minutes that seem to be hours, it feels like it’s freezing. We get extra blankets. Then, it gets too hot.

One of us dreams about *coccodrillos*. It starts out with a single animal, like the one we saw in the National Archaeological Museum, escaping from an aquarium, and ends with lots of little ones crawling all over the place. It’s impossible to know how many have escaped.

The other dreams about seismologist Luigi Palmieri’s unfortunate assistant and his family’s quest to redeem his good name. To deprive him of the burden and guilt set upon him by Luigi Palmieri’s report of the 1872 eruption of Vesuvius, the assistant’s offspring were building a monument just below the observatory in which their great-grandfather fell asleep. The monument was permanently, and continuously, unfinished.

We both dream of hearing fireworks in Naples.

In the morning, we’re slightly alarmed that we both got sick and feverish at the same instant. It’s the middle of January, and the weather has been summerlike all week. A gentle morning breeze flies in from the Neapolitan bay while we wait for the bus to take us to the airport.

Sources

- First published as part of De Cleene De Cleene. ‘Amidst the Fire, I Was Not Burnt’, *Trigger (Special issue: Uncertainty)*, 2. FOMU/Fw:Books, 25-30

A Fever Dream



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	24.02.2022	DCDC_napels_089_vuurwerk.tif	75,46 MB	De Cleene De Cleene

category
angst, animal, seismology, Vesuvius

22:36:31

On the online thrift shop 2dehands.be the homepage generates a ‘for you’ section. On November 9th this section listed, among other things, a picture of the sky on a patch of concrete. On closer inspection, it became clear that it was the sky’s reflection in a mirror with a red frame and four lightbulbs in it, the kind you might see at the hairdresser’s or backstage in a television studio or theatre. The seller estimates the mirror’s current value to be 45,00 EUR. The listing includes five photographs. In the fifth one, the object for sale reflects a bucolic landscape: a blue sky, white clouds, some trees and a fragment of a barn.



type	date	filename	size	author
screenshot	16.01.2022	Schermafbeelding 2021-11-09 om 20.54.40.png	2,92 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
economy, landscape, mirror

22:36:32

the-documents.c

On a pile of fresh hospital sheets, near the radiator, the tangerine curtains and the black marble window sill (the window looks out over the parking lot), underneath the two-day-old bouquet of flowers and next to a pile of magazines with a handwritten note on top (about a syrup that relieves slime and tastes like oranges), lie two sheets of paper.

Earlier that day the physiotherapist had come by. Twice. Once in the morning and once in the afternoon. He had each time drawn the first line, as an example. A straight line in the morning, a curvy line in the afternoon.

With a ballpoint pen my grandfather, who is recovering from an accident, diligently copied the examples (31 in the morning, 5 in the afternoon).

Straight in the morning, curvy in the afternoon



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	09.01.2022	IMG_9441.HEIC	862 KB	Michiel De Cleene

category
family, manual, medicine, parking, replica/copy, hand

22:36:33

the-documents.c

When I grew up, my parents told me that the number of raisins in the local baker’s raisin bread attested to the result of the most recent soccer match of KAA Gent. A victory was celebrated by throwing more raisins into the dough than usual, a loaf following a painful loss was hardly a raisin bread at all.

The baker retired long ago. Today my two-year-old son picked out all the raisins from his slice of bread. KAA Gent’s last game was a tie against Union.

org Raisins



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	30.12.2021	IMG_9810.HEIC	1,2 MB	Michiel De Cleene

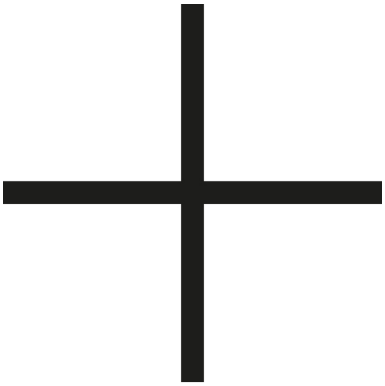
category
family, food

22:36:39

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

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

Notes

1. 
2. 
3. 

- Márk Redele pursues projects that fundamentally relate to architecture and its practice but rarely look like architecture. www.markredele.com

org Market



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	26.12.2021	market_.jpg	3,82 MB	Márk Redele

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

22:36:40

What they took for ice that slid down the dam’s slope, appears to be the reason for draining the reservoir: a fissure in the watertight layer. The dam became unreliable.

the-documents.c

12M m3 [7/8] A Fissure



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	06.12.2021	IMG_0515b	5,42 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
fissure, landscape, mistake, repair

22:36:41

On January 23, 2020 a young couple walks around the drained reservoir of Kruth-Wildenstein.

It’s freezing. They’re expecting their first child within a month.

the-documents.c

12M m3 [5/8] It’s Freezing



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	04.12.2021	IMG_0509b.jpg	3,31 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
family, landscape

22:36:42

The river swells and eventually overflows, causing the death of six people and extensive damage: washed away bridges, damaged homes, submerged factories, destroyed food stocks, heavily eroded roads and paths.

the-documents.c

12M m3 [3/8] Swell



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	01.12.2021	IMG_0507b.jpg	6,12 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
impact, landscape, precipitation

22:36:42

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

the-documents.c

12M m3 [1/8] Rapid Snowmelt



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	29.11.2021	IMG_0504b.jpg	8,68 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
landscape, precipitation

22:36:43

The building is almost finished. One apartment is still up for sale, on the top floor. The contractor is finishing up. There's a long list of comments and deficiencies that need to be addressed before the building can be handed over definitively to the owner. The elevator's walls are protected by styrofoam to prevent squares, levels, measures, drills, air compressors, chairs, bird cages, etc. from making scratches on the brand new wooden panelling.

In 1932 Brassaï began taking photographs of graffiti scratched into walls of Parisian buildings. On his long walks he was often accompanied by the author Raymond Queneau, who lived in the same building but on a different floor. Brassaï published a small collection of the photographs in *Minotaure*, illustrating an article titled 'Du mur des cavernes au mur d'usine' ['From cave wall to factory wall'].

Elevator



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	13.11.2021	IMG_0039.jpeg	2,57 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
architecture, decoration, sign

22:36:44

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

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



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	03.11.2021	_44A6301.dng; _44A6305.dng	47,32MB; 54,99MB	Arnout De Cleene

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

22:36:45

the-documents.c



22:36:45

A year ago, mid-August, just before sunrise, the mostly unlit office buildings line the road that leads to the underground parking. I turn off the ignition. I'm in F36. The walls are painted pink. Looking for the exit, I take the escalator and get stuck in an empty shopping mall. The music is playing but all the shops are closed off with steel shutters. So are the exits. I'm out of place. In keeping early customers out, the mall is keeping haphazard visitors in. I'm back in the parking lot. The elevator is broken. I take the stairs and walk by a homeless man, sleeping. There's shit on the floor. I open the door that leads out of the stairwell. It slams shut behind me. There's no doorknob. I find myself on a dark floor between mall and parking lot. People are sleeping; some are awake. Heads turn toward me. I start walking slightly uphill towards where I think I might find an exit, or an entrance. The scale of the architecture has shifted from car (F36) and customer (the closed mall) to truck. I find myself amidst the supply-chain. It takes five minutes, maybe fifteen, maybe more to get out and see the office buildings towering over me in the first light of day.

org The first light of day



type	date	filename	size	author
photograph	15.10.2021	_44A4965.dng	52 MB	Michiel De Cleene

category
angst, architecture, automobile, economy, map/plan, mistake, music, parking

22:36:45