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

Your path through the collection lead along Invalid Testament, 2024, Schelp, Crash (2), Crash (1), The first light of day, At the copyshop, Une étoile est-elle un document?, Lemon, Mushroom Picking Prohibited, Dust, Bent Concrete, The Imaginary Edge of the Roadway, From Asturias, Into Cantabria, Border, A Transparent Forest, Backpack, 12M m3 [1/8] Rapid Snowmelt

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 30.05.2024 10:14,
printed on	and contains 17 do	ocuments on 37 pages.
(https://the-doc	uments.org/log/30-0	05-2024-6321/)

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.







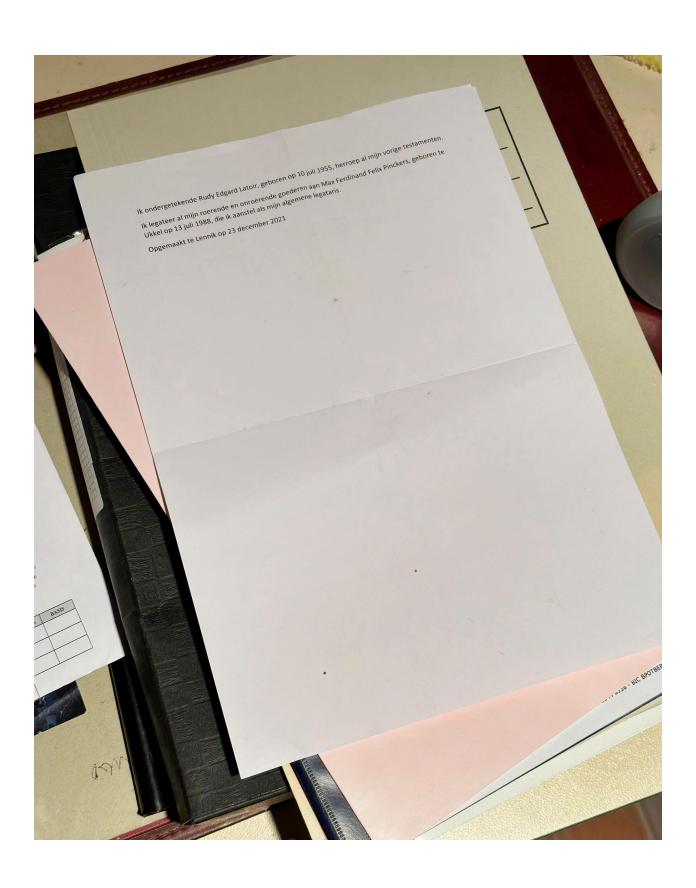
The invalidity of this official document is caused by the fact that it is produced by a machine. Unlike a photograph, the authenticity of this document relies on direct contact between hand, pen and paper.

### the-documents.d

#### Notes

- Max Pinckers (°1988, BE) and Victoria Gonzalez-Figueras (°1988, CA) are based in Brussels, Belgium. They have been working together for the past ten years on documentary photography projects. Victoria works in the cultural field as a researcher and producer. Max is a speculative documentarian, teacher and occasional writer on photography. They are married, in love, and have a son. Victoria has consistently assisted Max in his projects as a production manager, but they have recently been making new work together as co-authors. "Double Reward" is the first such project.
- In spring 2024 the-documents.org and <u>Trigger</u> co-publish a series of online articles with a focus on the meeting ground between photography and the document.





type photograph date 30.05.2024 filename Testament.jpg size 4,4 MB author Max Pinckers Halfway March my dad started finding empty clam shells on the banks of the Zuidlede along the pasture where he used to herd sheep. He had never seen this type of clam before. There were easily seventy of them along a hundred metre stretch of riverbank.

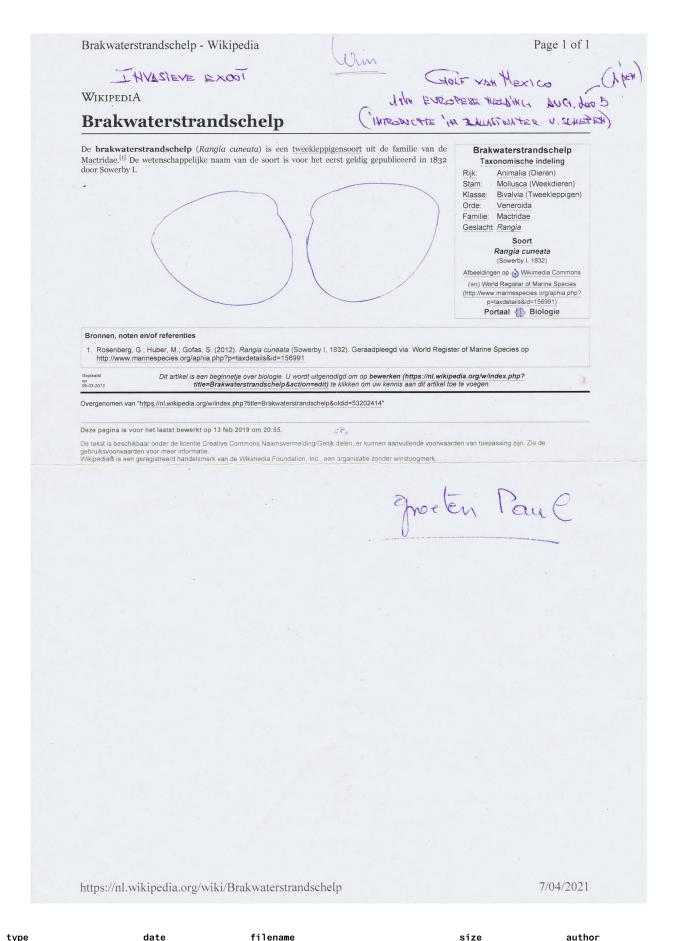
He brought two specimens to someone he knows in the neighbouring provincial domain. She would look into it, she said, and that she would probably pass it on to someone at the educational department.

Yesterday he (my dad) received a printout of the Dutch wikipedia-page on the Brakwaterstrandschelp (Rangia Cuneata). On the page Paul (who sends his regards at the bottom of the document) traced around the scallops with a blue ballpoint pen.

My dad added in capitals – also with a blue ballpoint pen – that the Rangia Cuneata is an invasive species, native to the Gulf of Mexico. The first time it was observed in Europe was in Antwerp in August 2005, most probably they reached Europe in the ballast water tanks of large ships.

#### the-documents.d

## rg Schelp



type scan

11.04.2021

filename schelp2.jpeg size 7MB

thor

Michiel De Cleene

Near Avenue 61 on an artificial island close to Seef, a truck is being towed after the driver lost control over the vehicle and flipped it onto its side. A warm wind blows in from the Persian Gulf.

A police officer signals us to come closer. 'Why are you taking pictures?' he asks. 'This is just an accident. You have to delete the pictures from your phone. Now.' After checking the pictures-folder on our phones, he gets in his car, drives a few metres, stops the car and rolls down his window. 'And don't do it again!' he yells. Then he drives off, raising a cloud of sand in his wake.

### the-documents.c

# Crash (2)



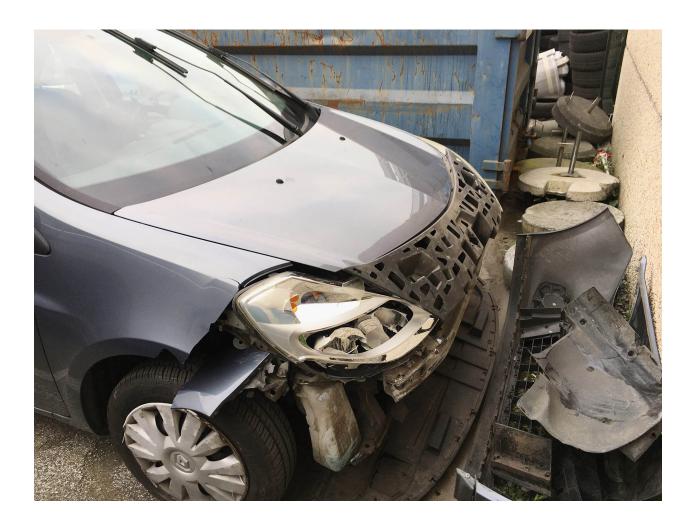
type photograph date 08.05.2021 filename IMG\_5071.jpeg size 2,71MB

In June, 2014, a severe hailstorm hit Belgium. Warnings were broadcast. A football game between the national teams of Belgium and Tunisia was paused. The morning after, there were small dents in the hood and the roof of the car, each a square centimeter in size, some 10 centimeters separated from each other. The storm didn't get a name.

Assessing the damage, the insurance company's expert took the dents into account to establish the wreck's worth.

## the-documents.d

# Crash (1)



type photograph date 16.10.2020 filename IMG\_2236.JPG size 2,8MB author Arnout De Cleene

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.

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# The first light of day



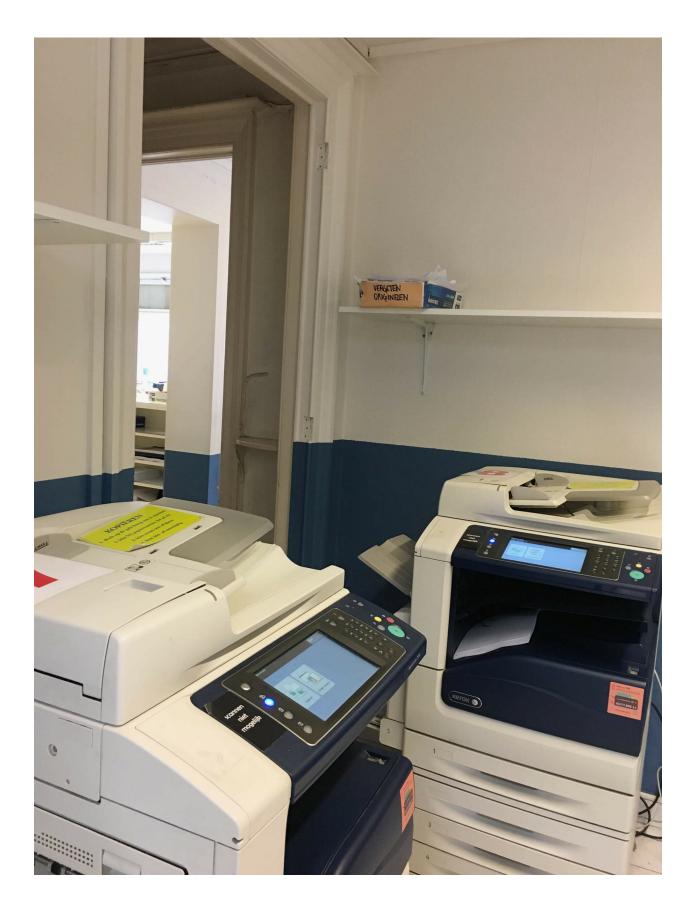
type photograph date 15.10.2021 filename \_44A4965.dng size 52 MB

At the copyshop, on a shelf above photocopier 8, the lid of a box of paper serves as the container for 'forgotten originals'.

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# At the copyshop

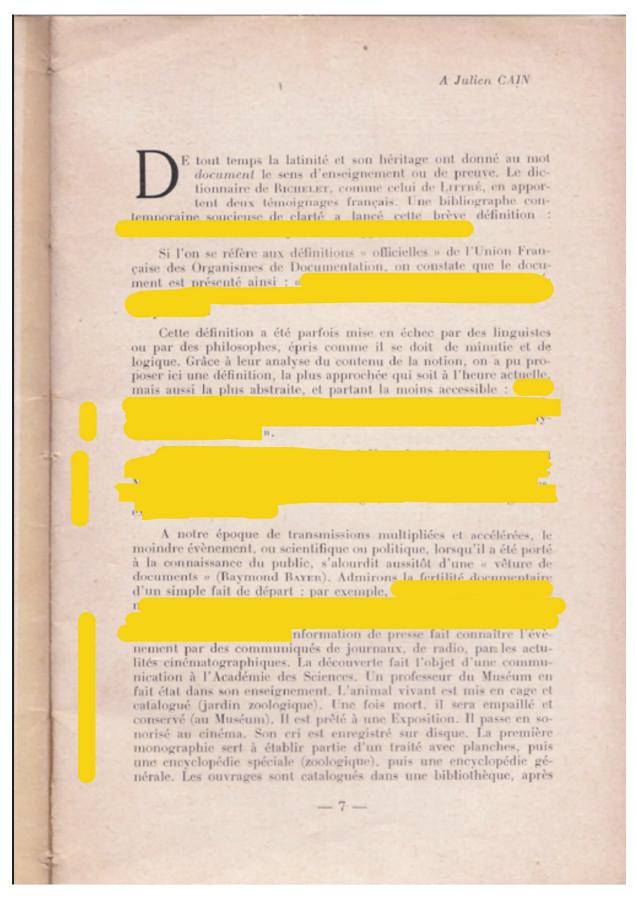
org



type photograph date 28.09.2021 filename IMG\_0105.JPG

size 1,8MB author Arnout De Cleene In the introduction to her book *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?*, French 'documentalist' Suzanne Briet asks what a document is. In a scrappy scan of her book I found online I am highlighting almost everything she writes. Is a star a document? Briet says it isn't. But the catalogues and photographs of stars are. When I quickly opened the file with Apple's 'Preview' application to check the above paraphrase, the highlighted sentences were illegible.

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type screenshot date 17.05.2021 filename Schermafbeelding 2021-05-13 om 11.41.58.png

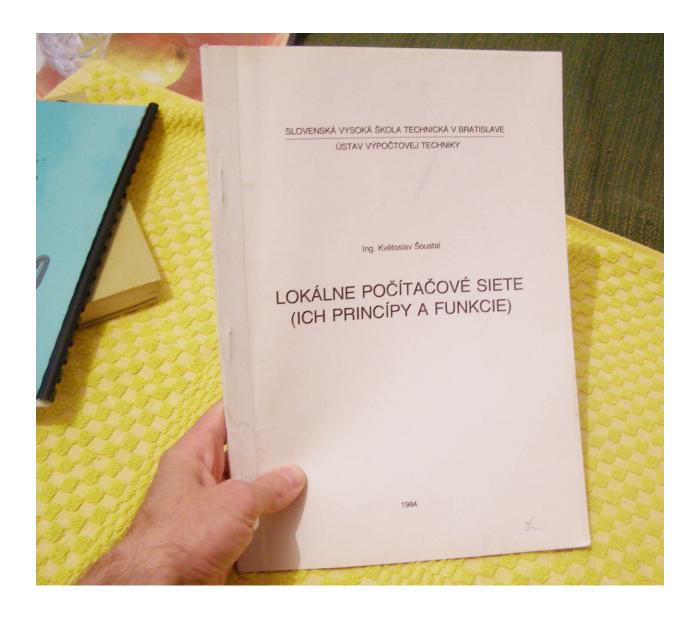
size 201KB author De Cleene De Cleene Depending on the language one chooses, the Wikipedia entry for 'document' shows a different picture. The French-language page shows what appears to be a Slovenian thesis written in 1984. The caption states it is a 'book of Czechoslovak computer science author Květoslav Šoustal about computer networks'. The image was uploaded by Kelovy, a Slovakian mushroom-picker.

The anonymous hand rests on a lemon-yellow tablecloth, on which a yellow book and a blue binded file lie. The top left corner is the most intriguing, however: the tablecloth seems to be draped over a lemon, alongside a drinking glass. The cloth, however, does not get shaped by the lemon. Nor does the shadow-side of the lemon coincide with the shadow the other documents throw on the tablecloth. A closer look seems to indicate that the lemon is in fact an image of a lemon, printed on a plastic napkin.

The Russian wikipedia shows the image of a lease agreement. The German wikipedia for 'document' is text only.

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### Lemon



type photograph date 23.12.2020 filename
KVETOSLAV\_SOUSTAL\_BOOK.JPG

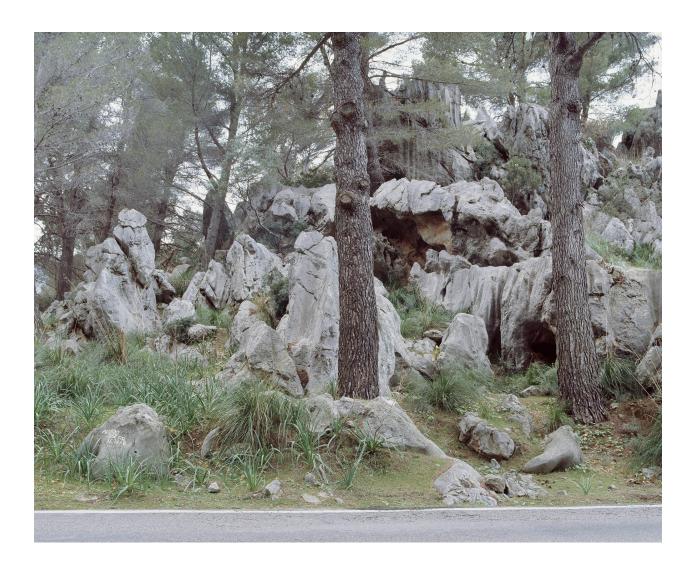
size 956KB author Arnout De Cleene I must have driven past this rocky landscape about sixteen times, going back and forth between viewpoints and the house the parents of a friend let me stay in. On the last day, I left early for the airport, pulled into a lay-by, took my tripod and camera out of the trunk of the red Volkswagen Polo rental car and made two photographs. It was only when I got home, had the film developed, scanned it and was removing dust particles from the file, that I discovered the hand painted text on the rock: 'PROIBIDO BUSCAR SETAS'.

### the-documents.d

Notes



# Mushroom Picking Prohibited



type photograph date 19.05.2021 filename Untitled99993-dustfree-nosharpencrop2.psd

size 365,37MB

Ten years ago, in November, I drove up to Frisia – the northernmost province of The Netherlands. I was there to document the remains of air watchtowers: a network of 276 towers that were built in the fifties and sixties to warn the troops and population of possible aerial danger coming from the Soviet Union. It was very windy. The camera shook heavily. The poplars surrounding the concrete tower leaned heavily to one side.

I drove up to the seaside, a few kilometers farther. The wind was still strong when I reached the grassy dike that overlooked the kite-filled beach. I exposed the last piece of film left on the roll. Strong gusts of wind blew landwards.

Months later I didn't bother to blow off the dust that had settled on the film before scanning it. A photograph without use, with low resolution, made for the sake of the archive's completeness.

The dust on the film appears to be carried landwards, by the same gust of wind lifting the kites.

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## Dust



type photograph date 06.09.2021 filename LWT-Oudemirdum0002.tif size 28,17 MB

A block of concrete. Fissures are showing and rebar is sticking out from all sides. If it were still straight, the block would measure approximately  $130 \times 15 \times 40 \text{cm}$ .

It is lying by the side of the road, a few hundred meters from a construction site. It appears to be shaped by impact. Maybe the block plummeted to the ground from a great height. Perhaps, something heavy hit it. For all one knows, it served as a column and was exposed to an unforeseen amount of pressure, causing it to buckle.

According to Eyal Weizman '[a]rchitecture emerges as a documentary form, not because photographs of it circulate in the public domain but rather because it performs variations on the following three things: it *registers* the effect of force fields, it contains or *stores* these forces in material deformations, and, with the help of other mediating technologies and the forum, it *transmits* this information further.'

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#### Sources

## **Bent Concrete**



type photograph date 02.06.2021 filename \_44A7339.dng size 42,54MB

Article 75 of the Royal Decree containing general regulations for road traffic and the use of public roads, published in *Het Belgisch Staatsblad* on 9 December 1975, lists the rules for longitudinal markings indicating the edge of the roadway.

According to 75.1, there are two types of markings that indicate the actual edge of the roadway: a white, continuous stripe and a yellow interrupted line. The former is mainly used to make the edge of the roadway more visible; the latter indicates that parking along it is prohibited.

In 75.2, the decree focuses on markings that indicate the imaginary edge of the roadway. Only a broad, white, continuous stripe is permitted for this purpose. The part of the public road on the other side of this line is reserved for standing still and parking, except on motorways and expressways.

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# The Imaginary Edge of the Roadway



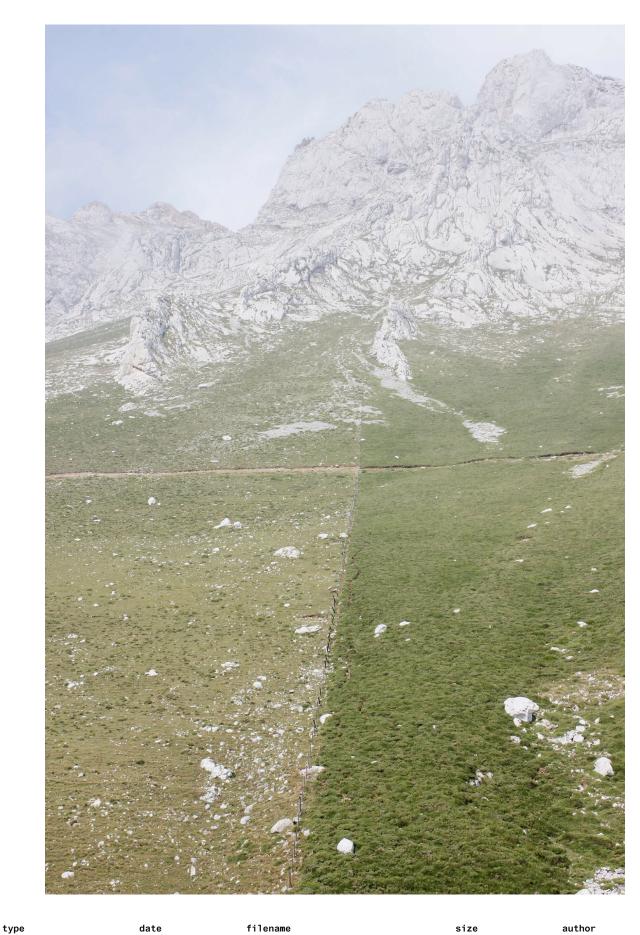
type photograph

date 08.08.2021 filename IMG\_7943.HEIC size 659 KB

A half a day's walk from the Fuente Dé *teleférico*, there are less and less traces of passers-by. The path to Sotres suddenly runs through a lusher green. The fence between two pastures keeps the sheep from crossing and coincides with the border between two regions. A hole in the fence would change the landscape's hue.

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## From Asturias, Into Cantabria



photograph

date 15.05.2021

filename \_MG\_9795.jpg size 4,6MB

author Arnout De Cleene

category animal, landscape, government Belgium, approximately 1.5km from the French border, photograph made on 16.06.2018.

The European flag symbolises both the European Union and, more broadly, the identity and unity of Europe. It features a circle of 12 gold stars on a blue background. They stand for the ideals of unity, solidarity and harmony among the peoples of Europe. The number of stars has nothing to do with the number of member countries, though the circle is a symbol of unity.<sup>1</sup>

- 1. Coat of arms of Gmina Puck, a rural district in Puck County, Pomeranian Voivodeship, in northern Poland.
- 2. Illegible.
- 3. F.C. Hansa, Mecklenburg, Pommern, FC Hansa Rostock is a German association football club based in the city of Rostock, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. They have emerged as one of the most successful clubs from the former East Germany and have made several appearances in the top-flight Bundesliga. Hansa Rostock's official anthem is "FC Hansa, wir lieben Dich total". Hansa struggles with hooliganism, estimating up to 500 supporters to be leaning towards violence. The club's logo consists of a red sailing ship with a blue sail showing the Rostock Griffin.
- 4. Mon École Écologique.org is an organization for environmental conservation. On 07.01.2021 there was no website listed on this URL.
- 5. Illegible.
- 6. Illegible, apart from '1962' in the middle.
- 7. Innocenti Bruderschaft, EL, 2018, a community of German Lambretta Innocenti riders and aficionados.
- 8. Imag'Ink, Bretignolles Sur Mer, Tatoueur, 06 06 44 13 51, a French tattoo shop.
- 9. Illegible.
- 10. Hardly legible, the only word that can be made out is 'Futbolom': Russian for soccer.
- 11. Kaluga on tour. Kaluga is a Russian city 150km southwest of Moscow. It is often called the cradle of space exploration thanks to the city's most famous resident: Konstantin Tsiolkovsky.
- 12. Hansa Ultras, F.C. Hansa. The Ultras are a group of F.C. Hansa fans (see: '3').
- 13. Illegible because '12' was stuck over it.
- 14. Illegible.
- 15. La Hutoise is a regional student-association for higher education students from the Belgian town of Huy and its surroundings. Its aim is to

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- bring together students from Huy in a spirit of camaraderie and to perpetuate student folklore. The logo consists of a two headed bird of prey with a cap on each head. The bird wears a scarf over one shoulder and holds a glass of beer in each paw.
- 16. F.C. Hansa, Grimmen. The F.C. Hansa logo (see '3' and '12') is combined with the coat of arms of Grimmen: a griffin on a pile of 10 bricks. Grimmen is a German town in Nordvorpommern on the banks of the river Trebel.
- 17. Illegible.
- 18. Heil Hansa. To the left of this text the F.C. Hansa logo (see '3', '12' and '16'), on the right a logo consisting of a black bull with his tongue out and a golden crown on his head.

  This controversial sticker lead to several arrests in the run-up to the match between F.C. Hansa Rostock and Bayern München in February 2020. Supporters of F.C. Hansa had attached this sticker to public buildings on their way to the stadium.
- 19. Illegible because '16' was stuck over it.
- 20. The Cuban flag.
- 21. Illegible.
- 22. Illegible.
- 23. Kaluga (see '11').
- 24. De Veterinnen, a round, black sticker with a red print of a head wearing a round hat and a carnivalesque collar with a carrot for a nose. No further information found.
- 25. Zlombol 11. Zĕombol is a yearly charity car rally racing event that starts in Katowice Poland. Contesters must drive a car that was built or designed during the communist era. The destination of the 2011 edition was Loch Ness
- 26. F.C. Hansa, Mecklenburg, Pommern, identical sticker to '3', see also '12', '16', and '18'.
- 27. Torpedo Moscow, only for white. Football club Torpedo Moscow is a Russian professional club based in Moscow, founded in 1930. Some fans of the club wave far-right symbols and banners, both during and outside of matches. Massive fan-protest ensued when the club tried to sign a black player in 2018. The player's contract was cancelled.
- 28. Heil Hansa. See '3', '12', '16', '18' and '26'.
- 29. Illegible.
- 30. Illegible.
- 31. Illegible.
- 32. Illegible.



type photograph date 20.01.2021 filename \_44A2787.dng size 52,4MB

- 33. F.C. Hansa. Variation of '3' and '26' with a circle of yellow crops around the logo. See also '12', '16', '18' and '28'.
- 34. Live animals, contents: Rivne UA. These stickers are required by the International Air Transport Association for airline cargo pet travel. Rivne is a city in western Ukraine (UA) with an international airport. The sticker does not specify the transported animal but displays a dog, two birds, two fish and a turtle.
- 35. Illegible.
- 36. Illegible.
- 37. Illegible.
- 38. Illegible, apart from 'lska' on the bottom.
- 39. Norrland Fly Guys, Reading Water. The sticker displays a minimal landscape with two pine trees, and a shed on a chunk of floating ice, a single four-point star shines in the sky. Norrland is the northernmost part of Sweden. No further information found. Whether the 'fly guys' own airplanes or are involved in fly fishing is unclear.
- 40. This sticker displays what appears to be a smiling potato in front of an enlarged snow crystal. No further information found.
- 41. Traumsucht is an artist collective from Berlin. Their website lists German rap-artists
- 42. Illegible.

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During the second half of April 2018, passers-by complained on Twitter about the massive chopping of trees and bushes in the area of the park site in Ranst, Belgium, along the E313 highway, in close proximity to the city of Antwerp.

Initially, the Department of Road and Highway Maintenance answered on Twitter that no pruning activities had taken place. They wouldn't want to disturb breeding birds. But soon after, they admitted to the pruning. Their argumentation took a turn: 'These are pruning activities in the context of the transmigration-problem on parking lots, as requested by the Police Department and the State Governor, so that transmigrants will no longer be able to hide. In the future, we will take up this discussion in our pruning policy for the upcoming breeding season.'

Upon closer investigation (an inquiry by Nature Inspection), the scale of the chopping became clear. The trees closest to the highway and the parking lot were chopped, while other trees were pruned at the bottom. Species such as European black elderberry, maple tree, sorbus, hazel, English holly, wild black cherry and breaking buckthorn disappeared. Rare species, only found in ancient forests, such as Solomon's seal, were severely damaged.

These activities resulted in what the investigators described as a 'transparent forest' – a forest without density at lower levels, which is ecologically speaking not valuable. It has no 'forest feeling'.

#### Notes

 In spring 2024 the-documents.org and <u>Trigger</u> co-publish a series of online articles with a focus on the meeting ground between photography and the document.

#### the-documents.

# A Transparent Forest



type image date 27.05.2024 filename DCDC\_ranst\_2\_039.psd

size 1,03 GB author De Cleene De Cleene

#### \_44A6588.dng

At 13:26:43 I took a photograph of a concrete building without windows in an industrial zone just south of Brussels.

#### \_44A6590.dng

At 16:46:15 I photographed a succession of office buildings in the same industrial zone.

#### \_44A6589.dng

I must have walked about 1 kilometer between the concrete building without windows and the section of the industrial zone with the offices. At 13:43:49, the camera, safely stored in my backpack, recorded 0.4 seconds of the 20 minutes it took me to get there.

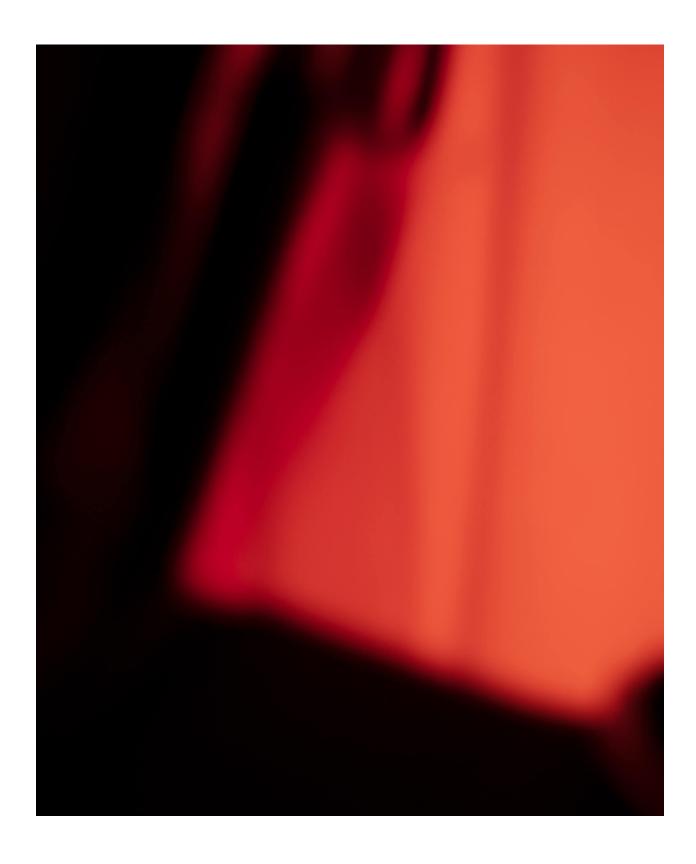
In The Snows of Venice, Alexander Kluge wonders whether he can take the liberty to conjure up what the sky looked like on 31 December 1799, as Schiller made his way to Goethe's house. He goes on by saying that, historically, there's a 'LACK OF SENSORY ATTENTION AT CRUCIAL MOMENTS'. There are exceptions, though, like the cameraman that was sent out to document the fireworks on New Year's Day 2000. The camera was turned on prematurely. The batteries were used up by midnight, but 'certain gray tones, however, filtered through the cracks of its protective case, conveyed the motion of the walking cameraman, the transportation. The incompletely shut, lowinformation container was documented exactly [...] To this day it provides inexact testimony as to the qualities of the leather of a twenty-first century carrying case and the precise sensitivity to light and dark demonstrated by a twenty-first century recording medium.'2

#### Sources

#### the-documents.o

Lerner, B., Kluge, A. The Snows of Venice. Leipzig: Spector Books, 2018, p. 53

# Backpack



type photograph date 15.02.2022 filename \_44A6589.dng size 37,87 MB

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

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type photograph date 29.11.2021 filename IMG\_0504b.jpg size 8,68 MB