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**SOCIETÀ
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3RD
**INTERNATIONAL
SYMPOSIUM
ON UNDERGROUND
QUARRIES**

Napoli
Castel dell'Ovo
10-14 July 1991



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A T T I

a cura di R. Paone e C. Piciocchi

Napoli - Castel dell'Ovo - 10/14 July 1991

USE OF THE WALLS IN THE LIMESTONE QUARRIES OF THE NETHERLANDS AND BELGIUM

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Riassunto

Le pareti delle cavità calcaree in Olanda e in Belgio sono una importante fonte di informazione storica. Lavoratori, abitanti del luogo, soldati, tipografi, turisti, artisti, monaci e molti altri usavano quelle pareti per scrivervi o inciderele. Pertanto esse risultano essere un archivio con un sostanziale valore storico.

Queste iscrizioni sono state attentamente studiate dal SOK (Gruppo di studio delle cavità calcaree sotterranee) e questo articolo riporta alcuni dei risultati.

Introduction

One of the best things about walking around in our subterranean quarries, is the presence of products of earlier visitors. The product directly visible are the writings and inscriptions on the walls. These remains are preserved rather well, so they can last for centuries, and are therefore very important as a historical source.

Visiting the quarries, you can see that various persons have used the walls for various reasons, for expressions of craftsmanship, art, etc.

Use of the walls by quarrymen

The limestone quarried in the south of the Netherlands and in Belgium is locally called "Mergel". It is a soft, yellow limestone. To cut the stone various tools were used by the quarrymen such as chisels, picks and saws. Especially the sawn galleries leave very smooth walls, it invites to write on and to carve in.

The oldest inscriptions and writings that can be found are the ones made by the quarrymen. The quarries are probably from the 12th century, so the oldest writings must be medieval. The oldest datable inscription that was found was a text in gothic script. It says:

*"Lambier le po(n)deur fut ici
l'a(n) MCCCCLXVIII
le XIX^{me} jo dauost"*

*"Lambier the (art)painter was here
in the year 1468
at the 19th day of august"*

Very nearby some pictures on the walls are in medieval style. Maybe this painter made them, we probably will never know.

* Study-group SOK, Maastricht.

The working faces result in straight walls. The quarrymen left many signs on the walls created by themselves.

In Photo 1 you see a man with a saw and a long chisel. Typical tools of quarrymen. This drawing dates from 1834 and can be found in the "Kloosterberg" in Geulhem.

The inscriptions directly involved with the quarrying-work are the workman's signs. Quarrying stone was dangerous work. To warn colleagues for possible hazardous situations, the quarrymen used warningsigns. They seem to have had some kind of symbollanguage. (Not everyone could read and write). Some gallows on the ceilings nearly always relate to cracks in that ceiling. These are always made with soot. The quarrymen used oil-lamps, so this was the easiest way of writing on the ceiling. (See photo 2)

Falling roofstones were a real danger to the quarrymen. If a rooffall occurred, it must have been impressive to them. If they survived, a personal memorial was made on the wall. An example of such a writing can be found in the quarry named "De Hel" ("Hollow"), some quarrymen witnessed a rooffall, and they wrote on the wall:

*"Op heden den 1 (February)
Omtrent 12 ure
1823 is een schromelijke
getal van blokken afgevalle
waar wij met drieen onde
gestan hadde, genamt
Matthijs Ramakers van Margeraten
Mathieu Schrijnemaekers Gronsfeld
W. Theunissen
Wij danken God dat hij
oos bewaert heft
van den dood".*

*"Today on the 1 (february)
around 12 o'clock
1823 a terrible number
of blocks have fallen
where the three of us
stood under just before, named
Matthijs Ramakers from Margeraten
Mathieu Schrijnemaekers Gronsfeld
W. Theunissen
We thank God that
he saved us
from death"*

They very often had problems at their work. It reflects on the walls. If the stone was bad, you could find some sighs on the wall like:

*"Dit werk is het slegste van den Berg,
Daniel Prevo en Johannes Starmans
hebben dit geschreven in het jaar
onseres heere 1825.
Zij roepen om bermhertigheid".
"Joaennus Staermans heft hir gewerkt,
hir is neit werken waent
het maer baenden en seiej vezen aerde,
1826 Staermaens Jo".*

*"This is the worst work of the quarry
Daniel Prevo en Johannes Starmans
Have written this in the year.
of our Lord 1825
They call for mercy".
"Joaennus Staermans worked here,
It is no good working here because
it was and still is dirty earth,
1826 Staermaens Jo".*

Wellknown are housemarks as some sign of ownership. These can be found all over the quarries. Most of the quarrymen were illiterate, but a housemark on the wall got recognised by everyone. An example of a housemark is given in photo 3. It can be found in "Zonneberg" in Maastricht and is from 1586. It is the housemark from "Pieter Stas", a Maastricht quarryman. The text that is written above the housemark and date says:

*"Mijn merghel tot
... op den 5 november"*

*"My limestone till
... the 5th of november"*

Names of the quarrymen were seen as some kind of ownership signs as well. Sometimes just a name, sometimes with a date. An example is:

"Gilis Vranck 1698"

Another one is given on photo 4.

"Evert Raats A° 1694".

The quarrymen also used the walls as a signpost like in a quarry in Zichen-Zussen-Bolder (Belgium):

*"1718 - den 28 janarius begost
hier te wercken - Renier Marres"*

*"1718 - 28 january started
to work here, - Renier Marres"*

In the same quarry, in the next gallery:

*"A° 1718 - den 28 janaius hier
begonst te wercken - Jories Maraes
- uit den berch"*.

*"A° 1718 - 28 january started
to work here, - Jories Maraes
- From the hill"*.

Tally marks can be found all over every quarry. Counting and bookkeeping must have been very important, as it still is today. The meaning of most of these signs is not clear. Were they countings of blocks, of days or of maybe carts? Every quarryman had his own system of keeping his books. On the other hand, the tally marks show a remarkable similarity, all over the area. It probably will remain a mystery. Most of the tally marks are simple scratches or superscriptions on the wall.

When in the parish of "Heer en Keer" in 1826 a tax on limestone blocks was introduced, all stones had to be marked (To control the quarrymen, or to raise the taxes?). In one of the quarries on a wall the text can be found:

*"Hier den 21 mei 1827
gemerkt 32 blokken"*

*"Here on 21 may 1827
marked 32 blocks"*

The quarrymen were very religious people. Working inside was considered dangerous, so heavenly protection could be a help to them. Devotion signs can be found everywhere. For example the IHS sign with the cross attached to the H (See photo 5) a well known Jesus symbol, maybe drawn to protect against danger. An unchristian word was never said in spite of the darkness. On some walls a warning says:

*"Sondaer, God ziet u overal
tot in den bergh"*.

*"Sinner, God sees you everywhere
even inside the quarry"*.

Another symbol that can be found on several walls is the figure of a jester. Sometimes you see a jester with the tools of a quarryman, or is it a quarryman, with the jester's symbols? The jester symbolises a split personality, or in this case, a quarryman between good and evil, darkness and light (so possibly a religious symbol). The dark underground quarries were seen as the territory of evil. In local folktales many encounters with the devil inside the quarries are described.

Use of the walls by locals

After the quarrymen left the working place, the galleries were adopted by the local population.

But even then, ownership of the galleries was very important. This means that house-marks can be found not related to quarrymen. Those subterranean galleries got a secondary use. Many of them were later used as a winestorage, mushroomfarm, tithbarn, etc., etc. All this secondary activity left its marks on the walls as well.

When the galleries were used as a storage room for wine, potatoes, farm-equipment, or other affairs, why take pen and paper, if the walls are very good for writing storage inventories on. The following is an interesting example:

*"In het jaar 1840 heeft
Joannes Sarus 180 vat
aardapelen in de berg gehat doen.
Koos sy een frang het vaat.
...van Zussen".*

*"In the year 1840
Joannes Sarus had 180 barrels
of potatoes in the quarry.
Costing one franc for each barrel.
...from Zussen".*

To establish ownership boundaries, surveying was necessary. As this is a very specialized job that needs accuracy and impartiality, specialist were called in. Some very old surveyor marks are found dating from 1750 when Hendricus Jentis was surveying the quarry Zussen.

But many writings could be called very old "graffiti". Local events important to the population found its reflection on the walls. In the "Geulhemmergroeve" some drawings can be found that relate to events taking place outside. One of the drawings show three soldiers, one shot, two persons not being soldiers and the text "Vater en Den zoon" ("Father and the son"). The soldiers are very clearly french, dateable around 1795. That was the time when this area was occupied by the french armies. What is the story behind it? Maybe a deserting soldier being executed? We probably will never find out. (See photo 6)

Some writings made by local people go back to typical folk traditions. Many of those traditions have now been lost and have never been recorded. On the walls of the quarries you sometimes find remains of those folk-traditions. Most of the time, it is very hard to understand its meaning. One such remarkable writing was found in "de Sibbergroeve". Reading the text was not difficult, but understanding the meaning of it was. Thanks to thorough research, discussions with elderly people and luck, the meaning of this was discovered.

The writing on the wall says:

<i>Y</i>	<i>Ostenwynt savons sneew</i>
<i>S</i>	<i>Seuden wint en het begon te doyen en savons regen</i>
<i>Meert</i>	<i>Doeyweer suydenwint ongueren regen saevens</i>
<i>Apryl</i>	<i>Snaghts gevrozen en suydenwynt overdagh goet weer</i>
<i>Mey</i>	<i>Bys meddagh goet weer en douregenlyk avont en suyden wynt</i>
<i>ljuny</i>	<i>Es smorgens regen bys 7 uren en doen den helen dagh goet weer</i>
<i>Julijns</i>	<i>Den hele dagh goet weer en schuilden wynt</i>

<i>Augustus</i>	<i>Bijs miyddagh goet weer en dou regen om half twee by avond en suyden wint</i>
<i>Spetm:</i>	<i>Den helen dagh goet weer en suydenwint</i>
<i>October</i>	<i>Snagts gevroren en klar loght bijs 9 uren en nortost wynt van 9 uren bijs avont betroken loght</i>
<i>November</i>	<i>Den helen dagh goet weer en suydosten wynt</i>
<i>December</i>	<i>Nevelweer en suydenwynt</i>
<i>7 dagh</i>	<i>Goet weer en suyden wynt</i>
<i>8 dagh</i>	<i>Smorgens geregent en dou den gansen dagh schon weer en half-suyden wynt</i>
<i>9 dagh</i>	<i>Osten wint en goet weer snaemyddaghs kalt</i>
<i>10 dagh</i>	<i>Smorgens sterk gevroren ont osten wynt ont klaerloght</i>
<i>11 dagh</i>	<i>Nog sterker gevroren ont klaer loght</i>
<i>12 dagh</i>	<i>Gevroren en byswynt en klorloght</i>
<i>Translation:</i>	
<i>January</i>	<i>East wind. In the evening snow.</i>
<i>February</i>	<i>South wind and the thaw set in and rain in the evenings.</i>
<i>March</i>	<i>Thawing weather and south wind. In the evening rough weather and rain.</i>
<i>April</i>	<i>In the night frost. During the day good weather and south wind.</i>
<i>May</i>	<i>Till noon good weather and a drizzly rain in the evening and south wind.</i>
<i>June</i>	<i>Till 7 o'clock in the morning rain and after that the whole day good weather.</i>
<i>July</i>	<i>The whole day good weather and windy.</i>
<i>August</i>	<i>Till the afternoon good weather and than at half past one till the evening drizzly rain and south wind.</i>
<i>September</i>	<i>The whole day good weather and south wind.</i>
<i>October</i>	<i>During the night frost and open sky till 9 o'clock. North-east wind from 9 o'clock till the evening a cloudy sky.</i>
<i>November</i>	<i>The whole day good weather and south-east wind.</i>
<i>December</i>	<i>Foggy and south wind.</i>
<i>7th day</i>	<i>Good weather and south wind.</i>
<i>8th day</i>	<i>In the morning it rained and then the rest of the day nice weather and half-south wind.</i>
<i>9th day</i>	<i>East wind and good weather, afternoon cold.</i>
<i>10th day</i>	<i>In the morning strong freeze and east wind and open sky.</i>
<i>11th day</i>	<i>Even stronger freeze and open sky.</i>
<i>12th day</i>	<i>Frost and strong wind and open sky.</i>

Day 1 to 6 seem to have been written over by the month notations later on. It is very clearly a record of the weather on some days, but what is the meaning of it? Thanks to luck the meaning was found. In former days the local farmers believed that the 12

days following the 25th of december (between Christmas and Epiphany or twelfth-nights) were representative for the weather in the coming year. The morning weather for the first half of the month and the evening weather for the last half. It is an old Roman believe, but the Romans took the 24th of november as their first day (pagan/christian adaptation). It is remarkable, that a tradition like this can disappear in just a few generations, as this part of the quarry was made around 1820. Thanks to the protective environment of the quarries the notion of this old folklore was preserved. Otherwise it would have completely disappeared and forgotten.

An escaped prisoner named Gerardus Rosier took his refuge in St. Pietersberg and he painted the story of his criminal tribunal on the walls of the quarry in 1806. The place was lost soon after, and got rediscovered in 1930. On the two sides of the gallery he painted the tribunal (See photo 7) and at the working face he wrote a text:

*Die myn kamer vint
die moet se niet bederven
laet uwen besten vrint
niet schryven op de verven
Diet is een gedagtenis
Bid aan Godt den soon
Daet hey ons genadig is
Een synen hemeelsen troon*

*He who finds my room
He should not spoil it
Let your best friend
not write on the paint
This is a reminder
Pray to God the son
That he may be merciful to us
At his heavenly throne*

Just outside Maastricht, there is a quarry named "Fallenberg". This quarry was made between 1704 and 1880. In 1860 some of the monks and student-monks of the Jesuits, who had a theological school in Maastricht, started using this quarry as a recreational place on their free wednesday-evening. This meant that every man reserved an area for himself and let his artistic expressions go. This lasted till 1960 when the theological school was closed, and most of the Jesuits left Maastricht.

As the school was international, there were students from all over the world. This means that you find nearly every culture in this quarry. An Indonesian student rebuild part of the Borobudur and decorated the walls with Indonesian reminders like batik motives, wajang puppets etc, etc. Another student reconstructed part of the Spanish Alhambra, with a real fountain and a pond. It took him from 1927 to 1932 to complete this work only on his wednesday evening. But there is also a very beautiful painting in charcoal that really comes to its absolute beauty if lit by a candle, because this is the way the jesuits made their work.

After the Jesuits left Maastricht, the Jesuits quarry was handed over to the "Stichting Jezuietenberg" ("association for the Jesuits quarry"). They now give limited guided tours and guard the place against hooligans.

Use of the walls by the military

The city of Maastricht was strategically seen an important town. It was a stronghold on the river Maas, one of the important north-south routes through Europe and situated

just north of the hills of the Ardennes. The town was besieged many times by as many passing armies from all nationalities. The hills in the Maastricht area played two major roles. At first as a strategic place for lookouts and canons. And secondly as a refuge or shelter for the local population. Knowledge of subterranean galleries was essential for both parties concerned to prevent surprise attacks through the galleries.

Examples of the military surveyors can be found in St. Pietersberg in Maastricht. At the top of the hill, Fort St. Pieter was a key in the Maastricht defence. Through a waterwell and a stair it was (and still is) connected with the galleries underneath. In 1830 Belgium separated from the rest of the Netherlands. Most of the local population wanted to belong to Belgium, but Maastricht stayed an important Dutch stronghold. The Dutch army in Maastricht was afraid the Belgians would try to take the fort through the galleries with the help of the local population. Therefore in 1837 the Maastricht military decided to make maps of the galleries and do a proper survey. The soldiers who were surveying left their names and their ranks on the walls. The date 1837 is nearly always present. Some of their writings refer to resting, or dining underground.

During wartime and military occupation, the local population used the quarries for many purposes. If their lives were in danger they fled into the quarries. If their stocks were in danger (An army is always hungry) they hid their cattle inside. Many remains can still be found, like a bakery oven, stables, feeding places, etc, etc. Even in the second world war some parts of St. Pietersberg were transferred into an air-raid shelter for the Maastricht population. Quarry "Zonneberg" was divided into sections, and every person got a number and followed the signs leading to his/her section.

Use of the walls for/by tourists

Visitors to the Town of Maastricht have always been attracted to the mysterious galleries. Even centuries ago Maastricht was an important restpoint for travellers. The quarries were very often visited. You can call them very early tourists. Many of them left their names on the walls. One of the most famous visitors was Duke Alva and at one point there is an autograph of Napoleon who visited Maastricht in 1803, but we are not sure if that is genuine. (See photo 8)

The South Limburg area is totally different from the rest of the Netherlands, and therefore very attractive for Dutch and international visitors up till today. At the turn of the century it was considered a luxurious holiday resort. It was for these wealthy tourists, that special decorations and drawing were made in some quarries.

In Valkenburg in 1910 a quarry was turned into a model of the Roman catacombs. A visit to Rome was too expensive for most people, so a copy of the catacombs was taken to the people. Walking through these catacombs really gives you the impression that you are in Rome. The walls have been painted into the same colour as the Rome stone. Even the faded fresco's are copied faded, and the cracks in marble slabs are exactly the same as the original. One of the best copied examples is the Caecilla chapel.

In that time they even produced some commercial drawings on the walls. (See photo 9) Today the limestone quarries are a major tourist attraction. About 12 quarries all over

the region have guided tours in the so called "Marl-caves". To give the tourists more to see, some artists made a lot of painting and sculptures. Some galleries were even used by the artschool to practice their students on sculpturing and painting on large walls. Some of the paintings show local picturesque places. As an example you can see two photo's (10 and 11) that show the same view. A drawing made in St. Pietersberg of a nice place in the city of Maastricht. It is not very important or artistic, but it shows the use of the walls.

Another feature that always attracted the visitors is the presence of the fossils, especially the mosasaurus. A fossil of this sea-reptile was found in Maastricht for the first time in history in 1770, and in nearly all the tourist-caves a reconstruction of the mosasaurus (as it could have been) is cut out in the wall.

If there is a major event taking place in our area, and you want to make the event immortal, you can ask for a small bit of surface of a wall, to put a memorial on. In photo 12 you see a remembrance plaque on the world championship of cycling that took place in the Valkenburg area in 1979, with the signatures of winners and VIP's.

One quarry in Valkenburg is turned into a model coal mine. Galleries are painted black, and, old and modern, coal-equipment is installed. Former coal-miners give guided tours and demonstrate the equipment. On photo 13 you see a coal front with the pneumatic drills.

In 1990 a quarrymuseum was opened in Valkenburg. All the aspects of quarrying, tools, later use, flora, fauna and art are exhibited. In this museum all the different types of using the walls are displayed. (See photo 14)

Today the value of these subterranean archives are finally receiving the attention and recognition they deserve. Our studygroup SOK (Studygroup Subterranean Limestone quarries) is doing a lot of work on collecting, studying and publishing parts of these archival walls. We try, amongst many other studies related to these interesting subterranean quarries, to find the meaning and history of the writings. Some of the results are described above, and are taken from our bulletin "SOK-Mededelingen".

As you see, there is wide variety of "using the walls". Every aspect of former and today's life is present inside those subterranean labyrinths. We will preserve them well. It is like walking through a history book.

Maastricht, oktober 1991

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Photo 1



Photo 2

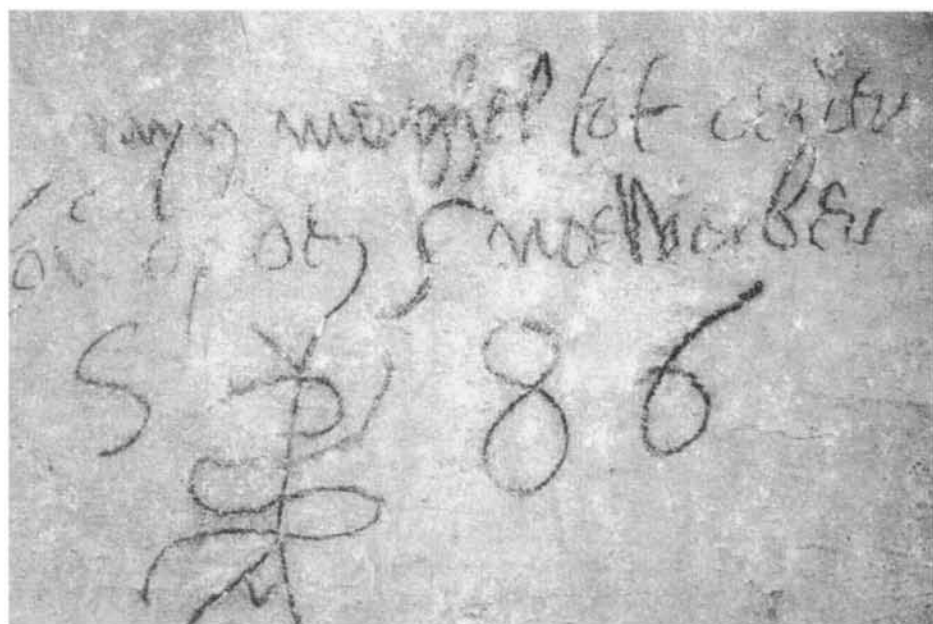


Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7

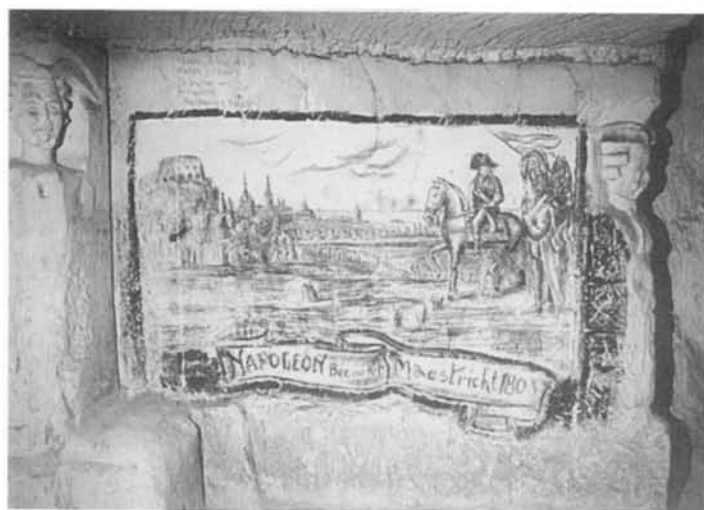


Photo 8



Photo 9

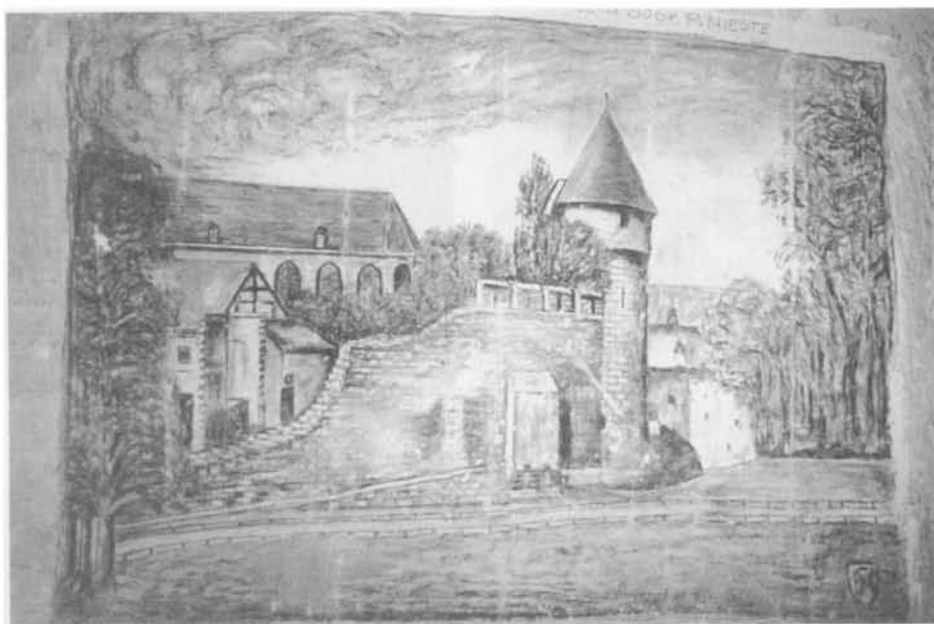


Photo 10



Photo 11



Photo 12



Photo 13



Photo 14