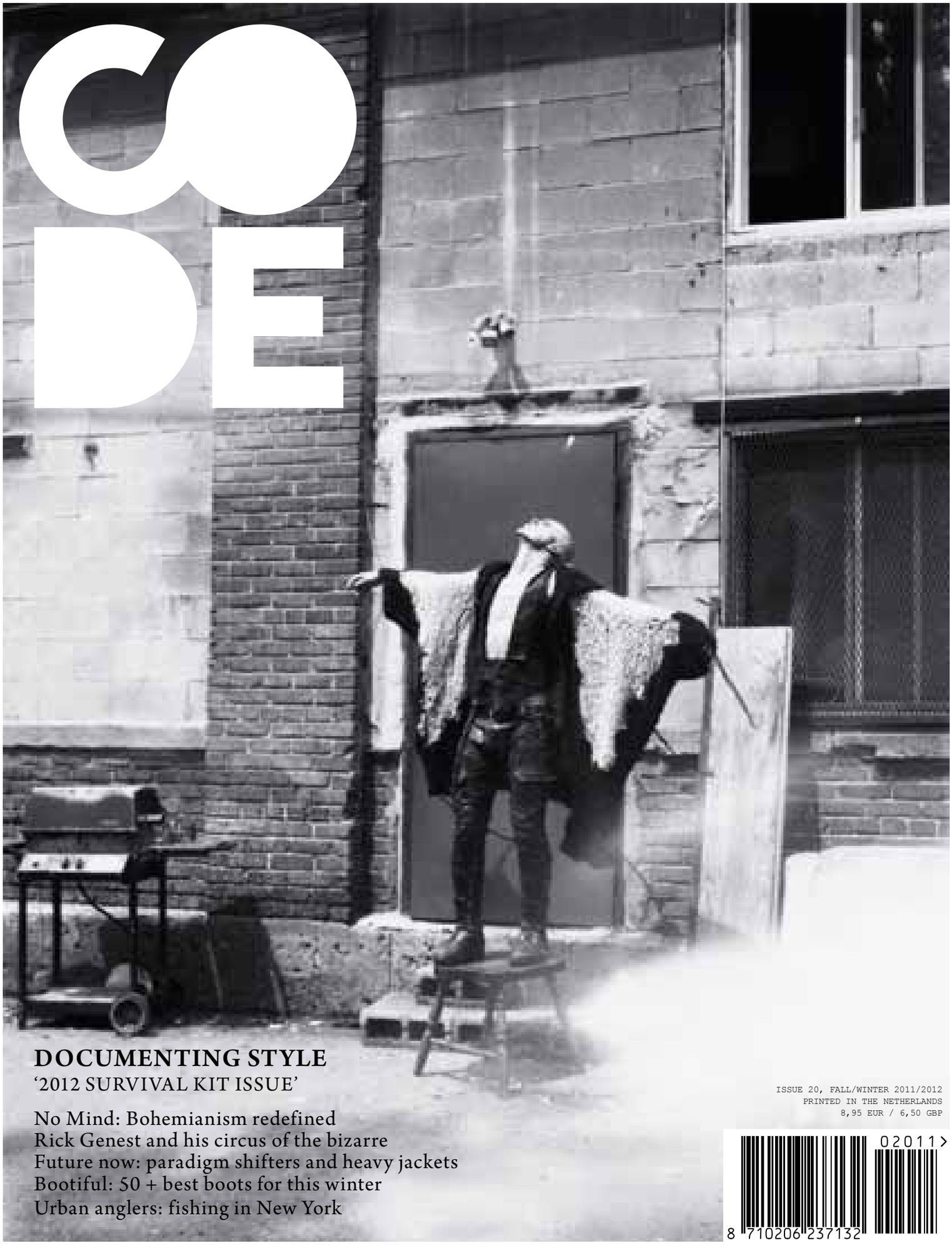
CODE



DOCUMENTING STYLE

'2012 SURVIVAL KIT ISSUE'

No Mind: Bohemianism redefined
Rick Genest and his circus of the bizarre
Future now: paradigm shifters and heavy jackets
Bootiful: 50 + best boots for this winter
Urban anglers: fishing in New York

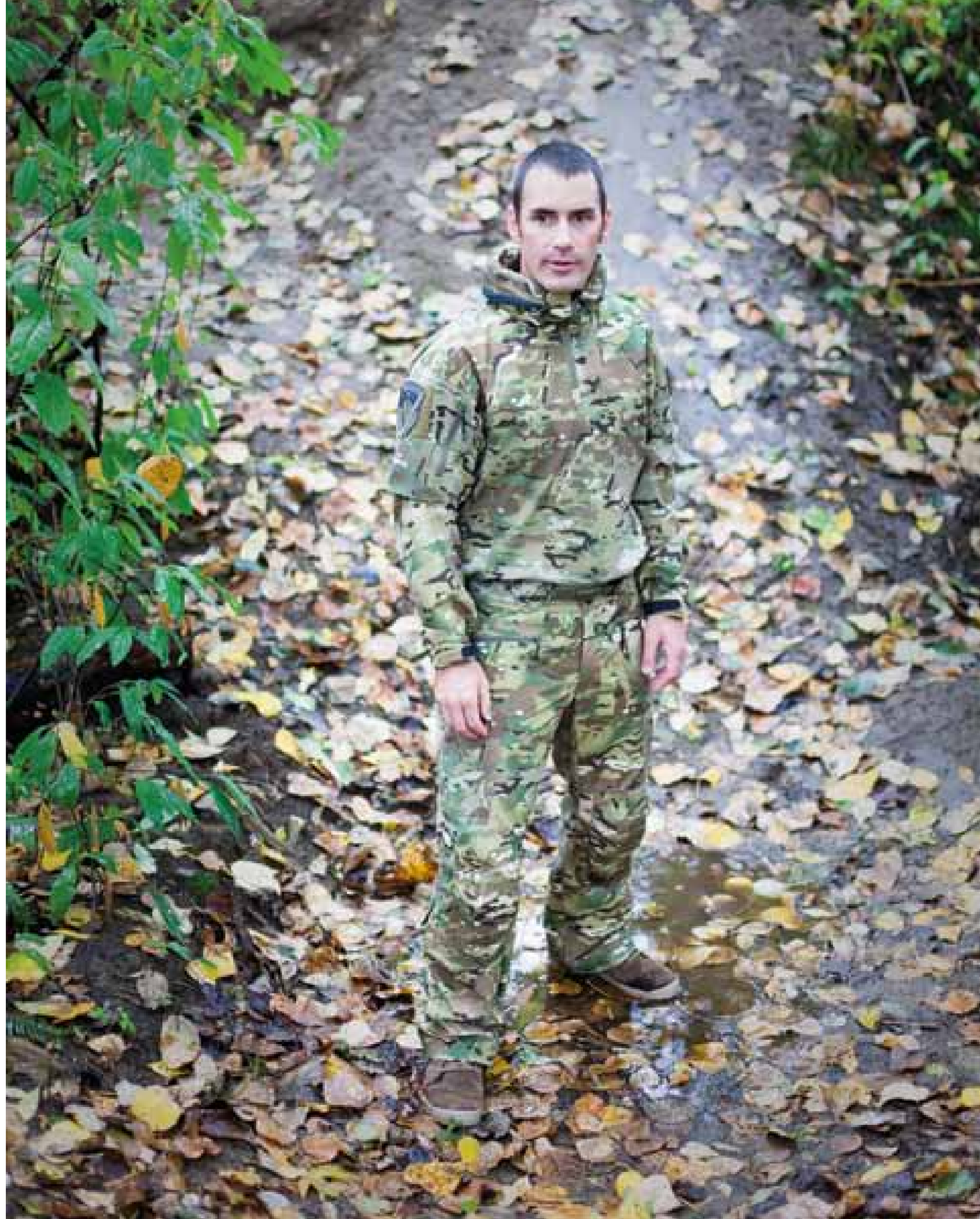
ISSUE 20, FALL/WINTER 2011/2012
PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS
8,95 EUR / 6,50 GBP

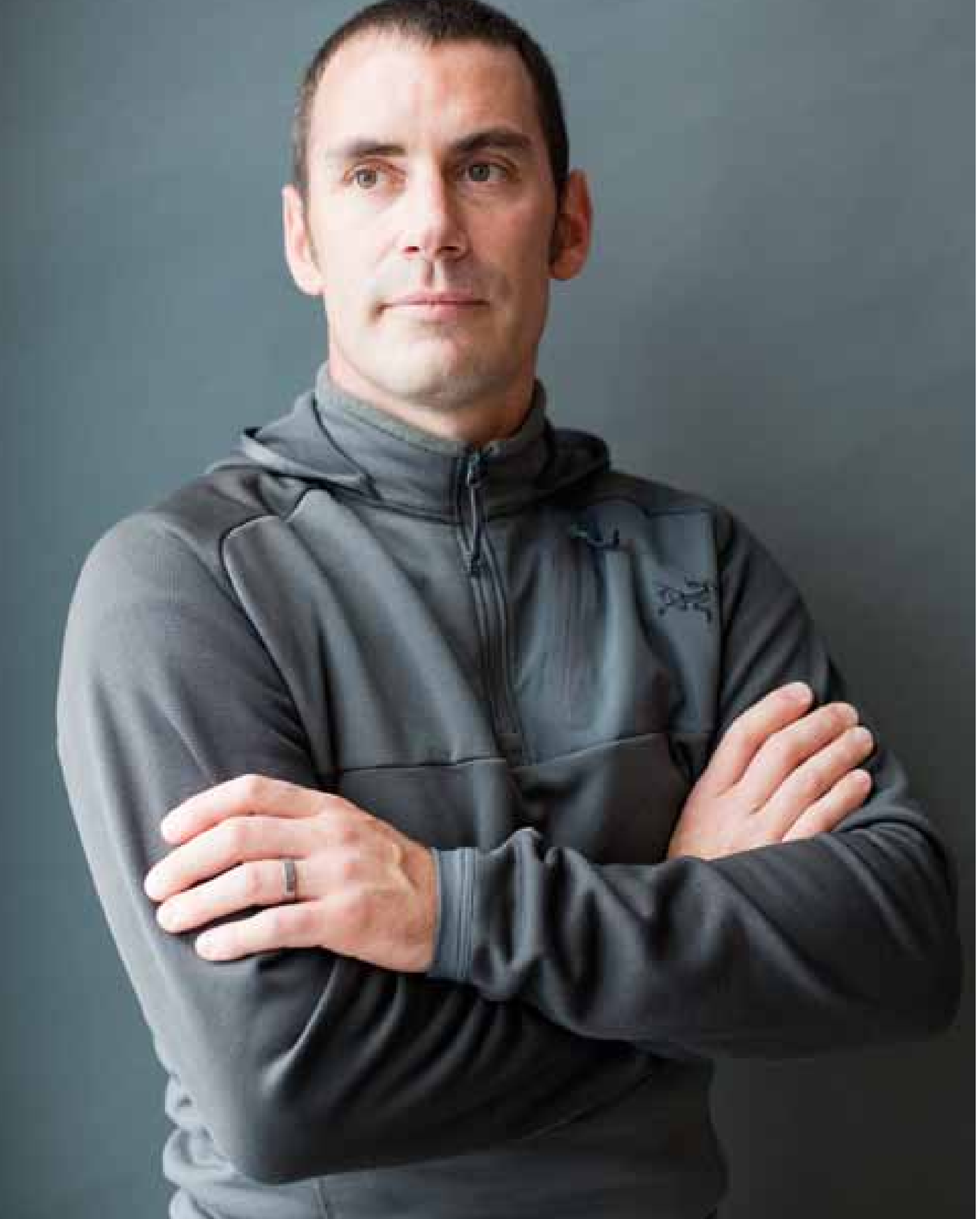
8 710206 237132 02011 ›

FUTURE
DESIGNING FOR
WARFARE

According to Special Forces designers Arc'teryx LEAF, camouflage will be out and grey in, as insurgencies increasingly move from the mountains and jungles and into the cities. Be prepared.

LEAF'S DESIGN MANAGER
DAN GREEN





A second-hand Arc'teryx LEAF jacket is almost impossible to find. Those who actually own one – elite soldiers and security professionals – don't generally sell it. If they do, Japanese fans are willing to pay up to 3,000 dollars on eBay.

The Canadian outdoor brand Arc'teryx is probably the most innovative outdoors label. In 2009, the Vancouver-based company introduced Veilance, a high-end technical casual line. Five years earlier, they had entered the military market with the LEAF (Law Enforcement & Armed Forces) line.

With military apparel always having been a massive source of inspiration for menswear, Arcteryx LEAF is on the cutting edge of design. They make jackets that change silhouette when the sleeves are rolled up, a belt that converts to a rappelling harness in two clicks and a color that makes you almost invisible against a concrete background.

Welcome to the world of Arc'teryx LEAF's design manager Dan Green and product line manager John Felushko. Often they don't know the names of their clients, who range from secret services professionals to high-end security personnel. *CODE* had an exclusive conversation.

You both shape the direction of Arc'teryx LEAF. What are your backgrounds?
Dan: I sort of landed in the outdoor industry by accident. I've been exploring caves for 20 years, and this is a very niche segment in the outdoors market. I find and map new caves, making expeditions to areas no one has explored before. Sometimes we spend a week in an underground camp. When you explore a new passage, it's like walking through a hallway with doors that have never been opened before. You don't know what's behind them until you enter. That's the rush.

When you are into caving, there are very few quality sewn products you can buy. You can't use regular outdoor gear, so you have to be resourceful and make your own oversuits and backpacks. Years ago I bought sewing machines and became one of the few cavers who could sew. The demands of caving inspire a lot of my inventions for LEAF. It's a different mindset and much less about recreation than, for example, mountain biking.

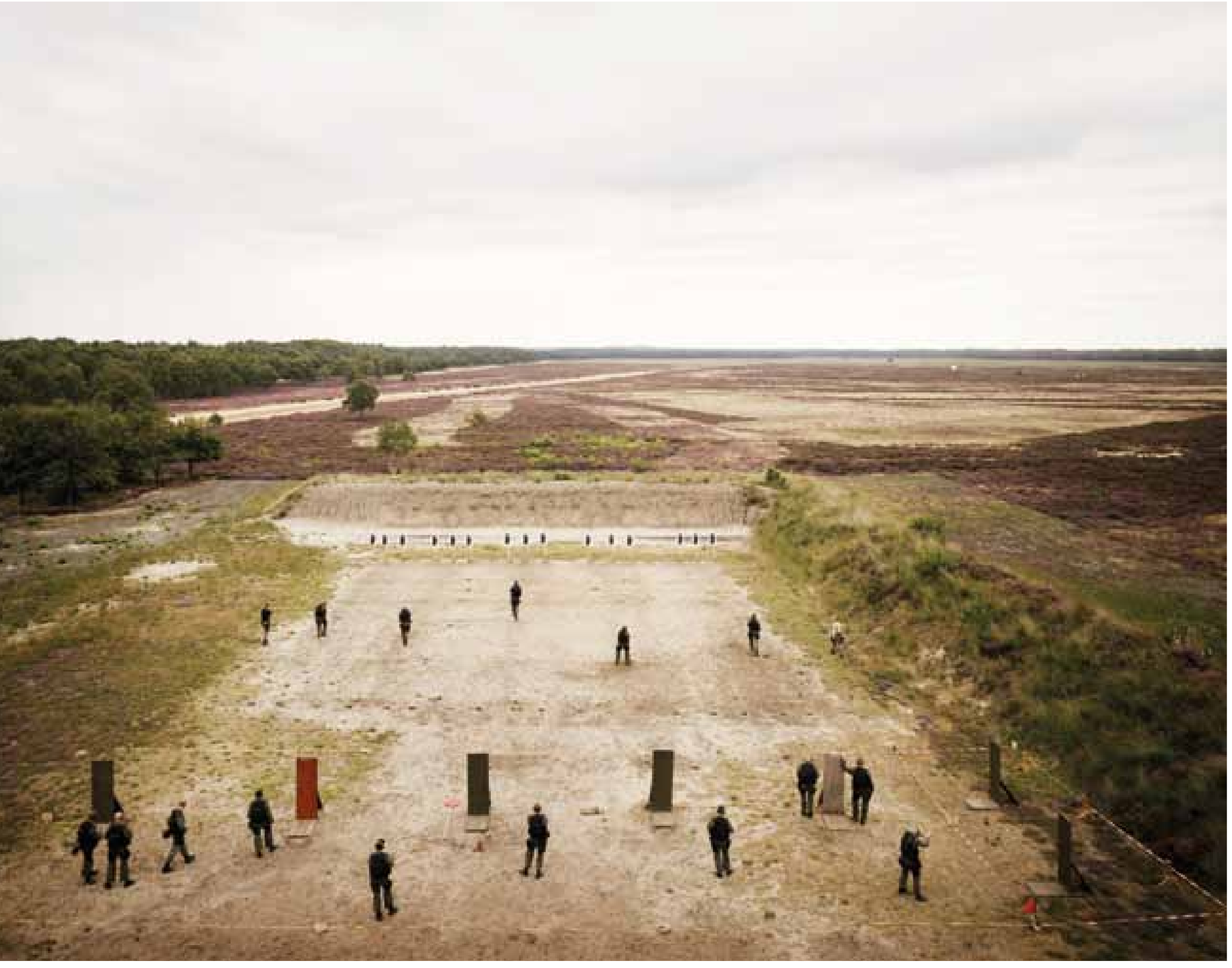
At the end of the day, I design our products in the field. I don't think you can learn from school what I do – however, I did go to art college for a year, but quit because it was too formal. It's more about when you're hiking, skiing or caving and realize how bad your gear is, and then improving it. From experience I knew, for example, that webbing – the stuff straps on backpacks are made of – is the most durable material for knees and elbow protection, so we started to use it for our LEAF products. The guys who were crawling through caves in Afghanistan looking for Osama Bin Laden were amazed by our jackets.

It's my job to develop the best product, no matter what the cost is. If that means I have to start with developing a new material in order to make a jacket, then that is where I'll start. My designing is also inspired by a drive to break down a product to as minimal a design as possible. Things have to be light and strong and you don't get that by putting a whole lot of seams and lines in to make it look cool. Function is everything. You have to understand how these technical fabrics work and what they will be used for. The look comes from that.

John: During my political science studies in Ottawa I focused on counter-insurgency. With few exceptions, most conflicts since World War II have been insurgencies – because with nuclear warfare as an option, large-scale warfare has become suicidal. But even during the war in Vietnam, the US was not yet focused on insurgencies, and most budgets were allotted to the Cold War. It was only after the collapse of the Soviet Union and then again after 9/11 that defense spending became more focused on counter-insurgency. And because there are no established military solutions to insurgencies, we are living in a time of experimentation.

Before my studies I had been working for several aid companies. I worked on the largest garbage belt in Manila, Philippines and spent time in Cape Town, South Africa. When I was working in Soweto with kids with AIDS, we were always escorted by these two guys, and I eventually asked them what their deal was. The first said, 'I was a government counter-insurgence expert during the apartheid regime and hunted down ANC informers to boil them alive on the hilltops of townships.' The other guy had also worked for the Botha regime and trained Zulus to assassinate ANC leaders. And now they were both working for the same agency as I was! They'd make sure we were safe so we could do the good work. I realized that you cannot even do aid work without being backed by the threat of insane violence.

'It's my job to develop the best product, no matter what the cost is. If that means I have to start with developing a new material in order to make a jacket, then that is where I'll start.'



FIRING RANGE HARSKAMP
GELDERLAND, 27 AUGUST 2009

NEW MEMBERS OF THE MARINE CORPS'
'SPECIAL ASSISTANCE UNIT' ARE TRAINING
AS PART OF THE ENHANCED MARKSMANSHIP
PROGRAM. THEY ARE AMONG THE FINEST
MARKSMEN IN THE NETHERLANDS, AND ARE
STRICTLY FORBIDDEN TO BE RECOGNIZABLY
PHOTOGRAPHED.

Later, during my studies, I worked in an outdoors store and in the autumn of 2001, Canadians soldiers coming back from Afghanistan asked me: 'Hey man, it's a horrible, horrible place, what do you have to make us more comfortable?' So I applied for a job at Arc'teryx and was hired.

So what determines where LEAF is going?
John: If you design something for the current set of problems it's going to be obsolete by the time it gets to production. So we have to think ahead to what the problems will be in 36 months. To work, insurgencies need complex terrains such as jungles, mountains and cities – with cities being by far the most complex. In the short-term, there are going to be a lot of jungle actions, for example in Venezuela, Columbia, Mexico, Central Africa and on the edges of South East Asia. But I figure these conflicts will eventually move to the cities. So we must ask the question: how can Special Forces operate effectively in cities?

What is an outdoors company doing in the military business?
John: After World War II, the middle classes had extra money and time for leisure for the first time. Outdoor activities started to boom, and alpinism became the field that drove innovation in functional clothing. And if you compare an outdoors catalogue from 1935 with one from 1955, you can see how the military changed technology with inventions such as nylon.

With the recent focus on counter-insurgency, and therefore on lighter and more versatile gear, the knowledge from outdoors is now inspiring military apparel. And this makes sense. The average Special Forces guy was an outdoors guy before he joined. The whole outdoors market was largely formed by a group called the First Special Forces Group during World War II, mainly Canadian and American former mountain guides. The guy who founded the British SAS, Archibald David Stirling, was a mountaineer who climbed Mount Everest.

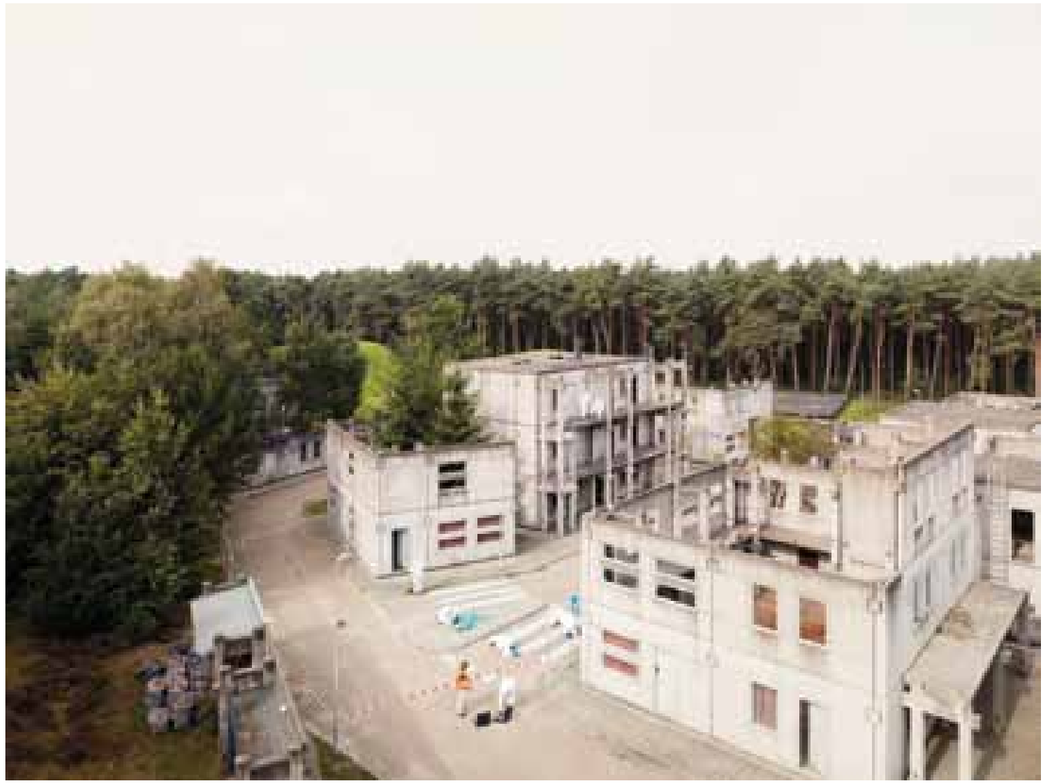
Moving fast in bad conditions is at the core of Special Forces and outdoor skills, and outdoor gear helps you to do so. That's why a lot of outdoor companies have ventured into the military in the last 10 to 15 years. Look, for example, at a company like Patagonia. They are probably the largest apparel supplier to the American army right now and have recently built a multi-million dollar research facility especially for military applications. Innovations in outdoor clothing are now coming from the military field again. The circle is being completed. I dare say that LEAF now has some items that are eight years ahead of the outdoors world.

So who exactly are your clients right now?
Dan: We do not supply our products to the regular army – or at least not on a contract basis. We cater to the top of the Special Forces, the so-called 'Tier One' guys. They are hardcore users, tasked to do difficult things and free to choose their gear themselves. If they think they need something, they can purchase it. A Special Forces guy on his first day on the job has already cost his government roughly one million dollars in training. By the 15th or 20th year in, when his career is over, he will have cost his government around 100 million dollars in training. So if he needs a thousand-dollar jacket to do his job, that's not a problem.

By giving them the best personal gear that's available, a government communicates they care. In a way, it's a cheap way of keeping these guys in the service. The moment they start to work in the civilian world, for example as contractors in high-tension zones, a top SF guy earns 1,500 to 2,500 euros a day.

Most of these guys start in their early 20s and stay in the service for 20 or 25 years if they are really fit and really lucky. But their injury rate is incredible. These guys are performing at 85 per cent of an Olympic athlete in 12 different disciplines, so their bodies wear out. We design stuff to make their life a little easier by making it lighter, stronger and more weather resistant

'Hey man, it's a horrible, horrible place, what do you have to make us more comfortable?'



– and, of course, more comfortable.
All Special Forces operators are selected on the base of their cleverness. They are intelligent, often speak several languages and have to be open-minded. A lot of these guys end up in management positions. But they won't brag about their past. The CEO and CFO of Patagonia, for example, are former Navy SEALS, and a lot of guys in the British banking world come from the SAS. Secrecy is just part of the business, and often we deal via intermediaries. In the States there's a guy who I have met several times, but I still don't know whom he works for. There are a lot of groups who don't even have names.

What is the future of military apparel?
John: A lot of strange things are going to happen. Right now I'm working on 2014 and 2015. I define the nature of the problem in my design brief and then Dan has to solve it. Twenty years from now, you are not going to be able to tell an operational SF guy from any of the commuters standing at a train station – and actually that's already true. Uniforms are now about marketing: a camouflage print in an urban context is no longer about camouflage but about saying 'we are around! Don't you dare to break the rules!' But that's regular army. Our customers are above that. They do not wear a uniform; they are in the business of not being recognized.

Uniformed guys running around with guns is just not what counter-insurgency looks like. I'd say you can walk past one of the biggest battles in the war against terrorism on your way to work and not know what's happening. The apparel has become a technological mix of urban casual, outdoors and military. Eventually electronics will be integrated into the clothes. And I do not mean off-the-shelf augmented reality. Air traffic controllers in Afghanistan can flip down a visor and can see all the aircraft and weapons on their vision – that's easy, as far as our customers are concerned. The future will, for example, be about how to manipulate the electromagnetic spectrum without any visible hardware.

POLICE ACADEMY OSSENDRECHT
NORTH BRABANT, 2 OCTOBER 2010

FORENSIC RESEARCHERS INVESTIGATE A SIMULATED CRIME SCENE WHERE A PERSON HAS BEEN KILLED WITH A FIREARM.

code
FUTURE WARFARE

image
JEROEN HOFMAN

issue 20
2012 SURVIVAL KIT

John: There are directions we're looking at that are very science fiction. But it can also be very simple. Why is it that a bodyguard for Obama has to wear a regular suit while waiting to hold up an umbrella for the president? That doesn't make sense.

So with camouflage growing obsolete, what colors are you coming up with?
Dan: We have five designers working on developing colors and creating a match between all the components of a garment. As an example, our Wolf Gray acts as an effective urban camouflage. Black and white are the easiest colors to spot. For example, if you have a huge building and someone opens a window, you will immediately see a black spot. So if you're hanging on a building wearing dark colors, you'll be seen immediately. But if you are in gray, you'll blend in.

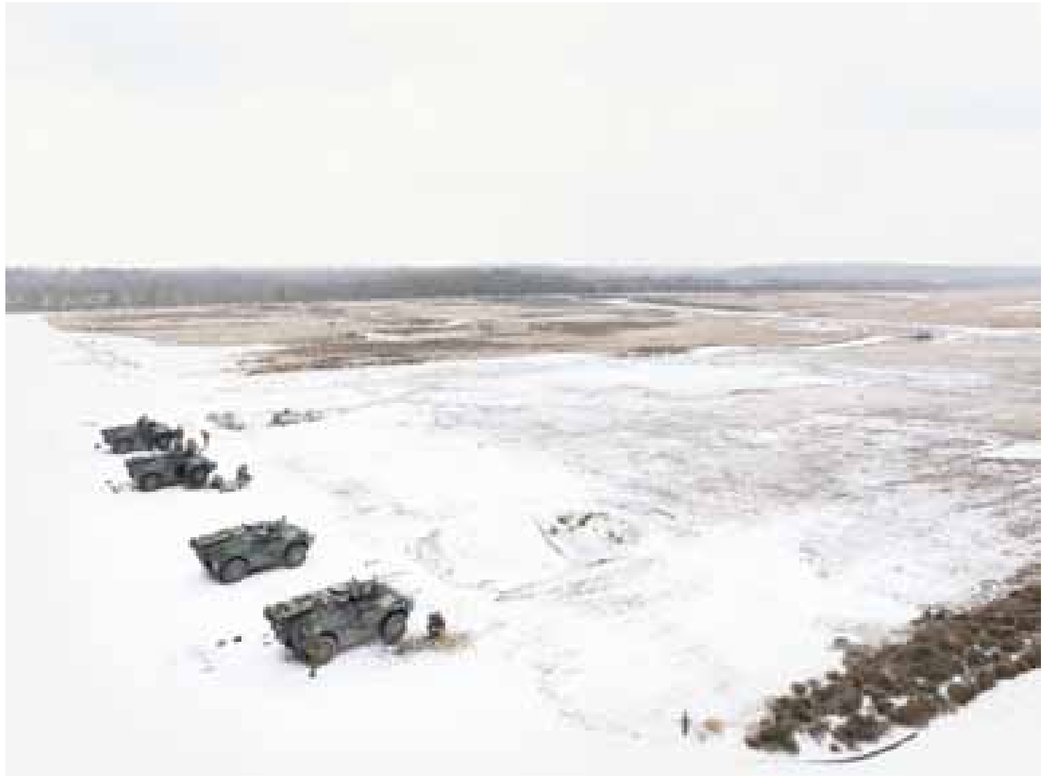
What are the most innovative products in your portfolio that would be in your survival kit?
Dan: The first one would be the H150 Riggers Belt. It's essentially the upper part of a belt from a climbing harness. We made it twice as light as standard belts by removing the weft yarn of the webbing by hand, and we spread out the warp yarn and made it narrow enough to wear with regular pants. If you have to get off a building, then you've got an instant harness. We launched it two weeks ago after three years of work, and it looks like all Special Forces of the American army will be purchasing them.

There's also our Gryphon Halfshell jacket with our new roll-and-stow sleeve system. But I'd probably choose our Alpha LT jacket, which is like a protective tent for your body. Our Gore-Tex gloves were very hard to develop, too. I think we got one of the few patents ever given out for a pattern. They are more like a jacket and a fleece for your hand.

'I could not even do aid work without being backed by the threat of insane violence.'

POLICE ACADEMY OSSENDRECHT
NORTH BRABANT, 12 JANUARY 2010

A SQUAD OF RIOT POLICE IS PRACTICING FORMATIONS UNDER THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE COMMANDER.



Our clients would probably top this off with a small machine gun, a few fake passports, some medical gear and a couple of thousand dollars. Then you'd have a good Blow Out Kit, a survival kit for when things go wrong. Some of our customers wear a heavy diamond-studded Rolex. So you have the diamonds as a universal currency to buy your way out. It sounds like James Bond, but it's very real.

Which other company in the field do you admire?
Dan: There's a company called Crye Precision with a head designer called Caleb Crye. Looking at some of their stuff was the first time I've ever thought, 'damn, I wish we had done that.' His kneepads are very smart. He also came with the first modern combat shirt, and his body armor has become the standard. I haven't met him, but apparently he's a great guy. He's continually evolving stuff, and when he started ten years ago, that was a way of thinking that was still lacking in the army.
Nemo make amazing inflatable tents, but also waterproof gun bags you can shoot through and energy-blocking envelopes you can put your cell phone into to make them untraceable and impossible to hack. Hacking was happening a lot in Afghanistan, and then guys' families would receive threatening messages. The envelope is also good for the RIFD chip on your passport. With a certain level of technology, someone can grab all the data off it and hijack your identity. For me, that would be an essential item for any 2012 Survival Kit.

http://leaf.arcteryx.com

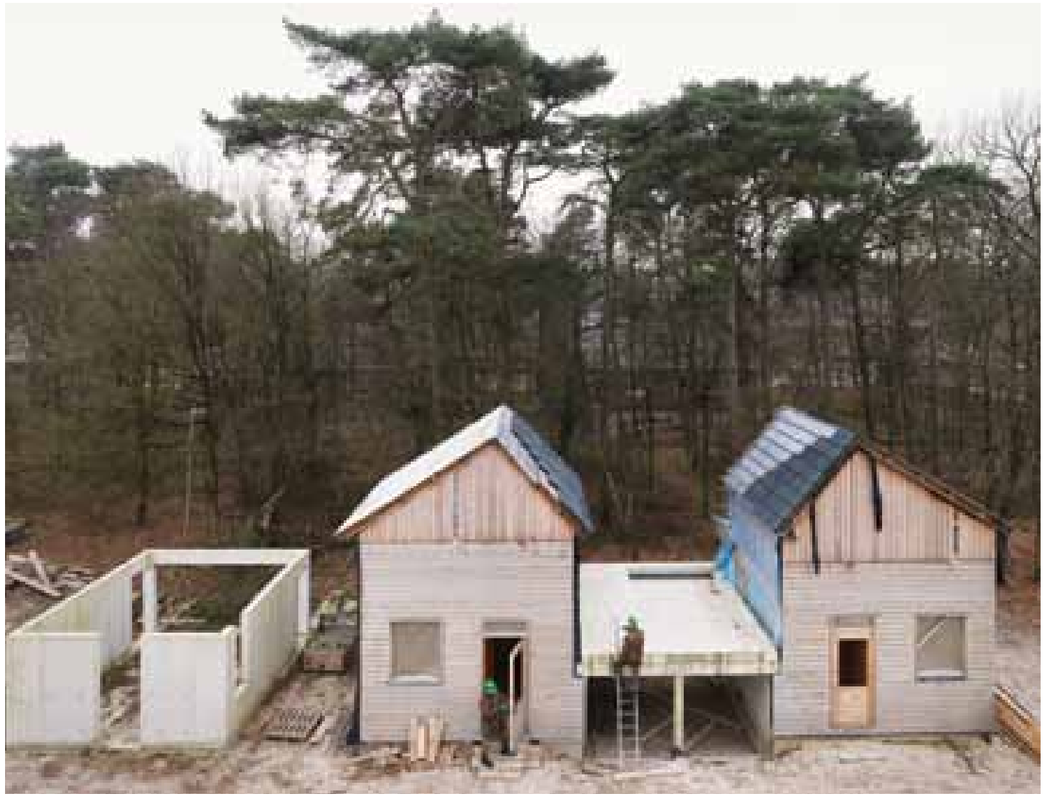
FIRING RANGE HARSKAMP
GELDERLAND, 10 FEBRUARY 2010

AFTER THE STATIC FIRING DRILL WITH THE .50 BOARD GUN OF THE 'FENNEK' RECONNAISSANCE VEHICLE, THE SHOOTING RANGE IS BEING CLEANED BY CAVALRY SCHOOL SOLDIERS. ALL SHELL CASINGS ARE COLLECTED TO BE RE-USED.

code
FUTURE WARFARE

image
JEROEN HOFMAN

issue 20
2012 SURVIVAL KIT



BERRY AMENDMENT
The US has a law called the Berry Amendment that says that the Ministry of Defence can only buy more than 150.000 dollars' worth of a sewn product if it is made in the US. This means that the vast majority of sewing in the US is done for the military, and that any US company with this kind of manufacturing ability does business with the military. The military industry has been the engine for the US economy since 1938. In general, defense is the single largest industry of any western country.

PLAYGROUND
Jeroen Hofman (1976) is an editorial and commercial photographer who also does personal work. The photos for this feature are taken from his long-term project 'Playground', which features Dutch training facilities where members of the fire brigade, the police force and the Netherlands Ministry of Defence are prepared for a wide range of scenarios. The resulting book, Playground, will appear later in 2011. See www.jeroenhofman.com for more information.

TRAINING GROUND DE KAMP
NORTH BRABANT, 28 JANUARY 2011

CLASS 40 OF THE 'TECHNICAL TRAINING KMS GENIE' ARE LEARNING TO BUILD A BASE, INCLUDING A HOUSE GENERALLY USED IN DEPLOYMENT AREAS.