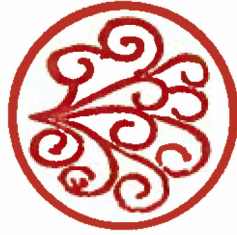


A Gust of Wind



No. 4

Ancient Knowledge Survivalist Manifesto

by

Studio for Propositional Cinema

We are on the brink of the abyss:

an impending self-extinction deleting human life, and, with it, our words, our cultural speech-forms, our cultural output, our meaning.

Our deletion will not be the end. The animal, mineral, and vegetable worlds will thrive in our absence. New biological hierarchies will be formed, other extinctions will occur, new species will emerge.

Perhaps some humans will survive and adapt. Perhaps some will resurface from subterranean shelters. Inbred ancestors of survivalist oligarchs may be forced to leave their bunkers after the last tins of food have rotted or been consumed. Or the newly emergent species may develop consciousnesses that lead them to build new civilisations, divergent communicative systems, and to attempt to reach for us, archaeologically.

What will these future-beings find?

Most of our buildings will have eroded with the winds. In their place will be piles of glass, rubble, metal beams, perhaps some plastic trinkets, bones. Foxes and pigeons will nest in the rusted shells of

our cars and oil-tankers. Mice and molluscs will make homes of our food packaging. Dordogne's caves will re-seal, forests will envelop our temples again, nuclear waste will pulsate underground, and our diseases, sealed in tubes or frozen under frost, will hibernate, anticipating new vessels.

All books will be dust, words carved into buildings or painted on aircrafts will be illegible, shit will cake over our statues, oil paintings will crackle under grime, Pompeii's walls will sink under ash once again.

What can we leave behind?

La Jetée's future scientists, trapped in catacombs, attempt to send "an emissary into time to summon the past and future to the aid of the present". To this end, what messages might we already leave for the archeologists of the future from their ancient past, which is to say from our present, before the doors to the future close? What would we say and how could we say it in a manner that could be both legible and locatable? In other words:

1. What must we say?
2. What form must our messages take?
3. Which materials must we use?, and
4. How must we distribute them?

1. **OUR MESSAGE:** Transfer of practical knowledge is how generations communicate. Compounding accrued knowledge is how we progress. Knowledge is conferred through communicational tools (alphabets, sounds, instruments, techniques, technology, etc.). Without access to these tools, knowledge is lost or left uncommunicated. When knowledge is left untransferred, the meaning of the past evaporates. In a cultural reality that is systematically precluding access to these tools, and in an economic reality that is systematically ensuring the unlikelihood of generational continuity, we must regain the means of production of our communicational tools and articulate them in a manner that can be legible to future receivers without the benefit of this continuity. Our means of message-making are the messages that we can gift to potential futures.

2. **OUR LANGUAGE:** We cannot assume that the languages of our present will be legible to future receivers. Just as instructions in foreign languages are useless to their potential users, the meaning encrypted in our phonetic writing systems will be lost in our absence. This translation problem can be mitigated by providing multilingual and pictorial cross-indices with the goal of facilitating decryptification

of texts, and/or by abandoning alphabetic writing in favour of ideograms, diagrams, pictures, and images. Human optical nature suggests that pictorial communication is a more probable means of temporally-durable legibility, while images' innate communicational ambiguity suggest that textual subsidisation, if transferrable, could increase the messages' directionality and clarity. Simultaneous multiplicity of languages and language-forms increases likelihood for future legibility.

3. **OUR PERMANENCE:** Our empirically accrued knowledge of material stability must guide all material decisions regarding our message construction. All material and environmental conditions must be considered to optimise maximum possible durability. The durational timeline should transcend the archival into the absurd.

4. **OUR MOVEMENTS:** The future's geographic and meteorological uncertainty necessitates maximum possible dispersal. Our messages should be placed on mountaintops, buried in seabeds, sealed in caves, locked in vaults, brought into bunkers, scattered near monuments, and buoyed on the waves; as many messages as possible distributed in as many places as possible, increasing likelihood of connection. Grasping towards the future is the essence of hope.

Assembly Guidelines

Our diagnosis of the future comes from logical conclusions extrapolated from the tendencies of the present. Our hope is to prove ourselves wrong. This requires a course-change. We must attempt to use tools dormant within the existing culture to imagine a way out of the inevitable, examining the past to find prototypes from which to begin. We must draw blueprints for structures that facilitate the imagination of alternate potential futures. To enact the impossible makes it plausible; such futures must be rehearsed until the plausible feels probable. Such visualisations facilitate the imagination of alternate futures within the experience of the present. These enactments must be placed within the culture so alternative realities appear as a home that others may desire to inhabit.

In the event of failure, the accrued information from our activities must be condensed into comprehensible and replicable blueprints for the future. If found, they can be used to start anew, but with the benefit of this accrued knowledge; our songs and our stories, our tenderness and our treachery. We currently inhabit the ancient world of the future. Our steps now must be careful and deliberate; they will determine if our present has meaning.

Ancient Knowledge Survival Kit

As likelihood of survival declines we can accept and fade out with the fate that ruin was in our species' designs, or optimistically anticipate a possible future in the distance and leave, to be found in this far off date, some traces of a last resistance; our warnings as well as some evidence of the beauty found in our existence. So the moment before our severance we propose as a final testament a message to future intelligence in an ancient knowledge survival kit.

Ancient Knowledge Survival Kit is an archive and diagram of what and how we have built and a mechanism to decipher it; a guide to make our future ruins articulate so our ruination may sound a foghorn guiding the future away from repeating our catastrophe, toward the future that we could have had and still, if we want it, may find.

PRODUCTION CONDITIONS

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