

Architecture in a Bottle

The Time Capsule as a Design-Driven Method for the End Times

“We know now that the idea of the future as a ‘better world’ was a fallacy of the doctrine of progress. The hopes we center on you, citizens of the future, are in no way exaggerated. [...] Brothers of the future, united with us in the spirit and in this endeavor, we send our greetings.”

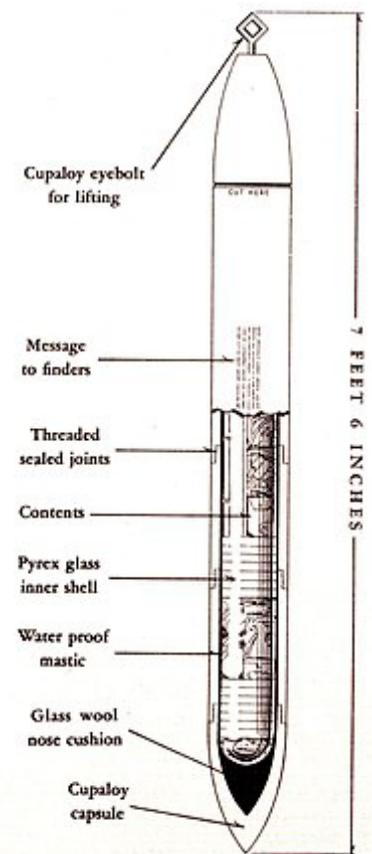
T. Mann, 1938

Taking up the idea developed in the forties by Thornwell Jacobs on the Time Capsule as a repository of knowledge for the humanity of tomorrow, our hypothesis imagines the transmission of a contemporary architectural notion and the recent past as an operational kit for spatial issues of the future society. Global warming, desertification, increasing social disparities, etc., are today dominant issues as they are determining causes of the imminent collapse of one or more dimensions of the civilized world as developed and conceived in our modernity. The idea of a more or less plausible *end of the world* is an integral part of cultures since the dawn of time. However, since the cause-effect relation between the activities of modern human societies and the possible catastrophes appears obvious, the apocalyptic narrative has been emancipated from its eschatological dimension.

Yet in specific contexts, the catastrophe is a condition with which part of humanity must interface daily: war zones, earthquakes, floods, slums. Whether it is to represent extreme apocalyptic conditions or to produce specific emergency solutions, the architectural discipline has produced ad hoc scenarios or projects thus determining a heritage of design strategies. Our work intends to select methods and processes within this field able to respond to hypothetical critical conditions, defining in this way an operative kit that constitutes our architectural time capsule. The capsule slavishly attends Jacobs’s instructions, following his method step by step:

- expiring date: 8133;
- archivist: the architect as an archivist;
- container: dark, secure, cold and dry;
- location: deeply, buried and in
- content: a selection from sublime to popular heterogeneous materials to extract strategies to face extreme future conditions.

As Jacobs used a strict procedure to design his message in a bottle for posterity, the research aims to experiment with his time capsule as a design-driven method. Of course, whether the archivist identified popular objects, our inquiry focuses on significant disciplinary tools through the production of drawings, diagrams, models and other visual materials.



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1. Westinghouse Time Capsules I, sketch, 1939.
2. Westinghouse Time Capsules II, storage, 1965.