

Extraterrestrial Architectures (Spaceships Too)

Instructor: John McMorrough, Ph.D. (jdmii@umich.edu)
 Seminars: Wednesdays 1:00-4:00 pm, 2227 A&AB



Jack Kirby, Cover, *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Marvel Comics, 1976).

"Architecture is the will of an epoch translated into space."
 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

Every design, by its propositional characteristics, puts into motion assumptions, assertions, and arguments about how the world is (or could be) organized, creating its own "possible world." This seminar explores the world-building implicit in all design by examining its extreme cases - studying visionary schemes from architecture, films, and other structured narratives.

In Winter 2025, ARCH 533: Possible Worlds will again focus on the ideas, images, and ideologies floating around "spaceships." In the novelty of proposing such extraterrestrial architectures, the exigencies of vessels in space have generated an array of technological responses, and in parallel, the imagination of such settings has also precipitated numerous representational innovations. The requisite self-sufficiency of these wholly created environments, outside presumptive support networks of the world as given, embodies the potential (or impossibility) of achieving escape velocity from the gravity of earthly constraints and concerns.

Seminar participants review weekly texts (readings, projects, other media), write weekly topic responses, and contribute to collective discussions regarding issues raised. The course culminates in a term-length research project, an analytical case study of an assigned "world" - a motion picture spaceship considered as both real (within the story logic) and imagined (recorded in set and setting).