

# **THE ARCHITECTURE OF SCIENCE FICTION**

## **REFLECTION PAPER**

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## **The architecture of science fiction**

As architects, we are trained to design the built environment of the real world. But what happens when we are designing a world that does not exist? In films and games, stories are often set in a fictional environment. The aim of this project was to research the design process behind fictional architecture and implement this process into my own design project.

The genre of science fiction seemed like a good genre to learn from, as topics like the future of society, innovation in technology and social issues are themes that often can be found in science fiction stories and are also themes that we deal with in real architecture. Yet, because the designs researched and designed were not in set in a real world, this asked for a completely different design approach than what I learned so far during my architectural degree. So the research question for the paper was:

How can we imagine science fiction architecture based on a scenario?

## **The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject**

Explore lab has given me the complete freedom and combine the knowledge that I have gained both inside and outside my architectural degree. My interest in designing films has been there for years and was the actual reason I started with my architectural degree. Design for the fictional environment is not a topic that is offered by any other graduation studio, as architects are trained to design for the real world.

Explore lab lies great emphasis on the research part of the project. The knowledge gained during the research has been essential to successfully complete the design phase. Because the method used in the design is quite unprecedented at this faculty, the insights of the interviewees have been of great importance. The design would not have come together from just a context research, usually done in most other design studios.

## **The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student**

The extensive time given for research in Explore lab gave the opportunity to combine different methods for in the research. The research combined literature studies, in the form of film analyses, and interviews. The film analyses were a great way to reflect on existing science fiction environment and take in my own position and approach towards the architecture of science fiction.

There has not necessarily been a gradual transition from research to design which the studio opts for. This has to do with the fact the research was more about the design method rather than the design itself and that it formed the base from which I started designing.

## **The relationship between research and design**

The design method and process that came from the research was used as a base in my own design process. All the steps of the design process that were found in the research, were also used in my own design process. During the design process, I often referred back to the research paper I had written. The advice from the interviewees was very helpful as a guide during the design process.

For the design, a building was chosen which combined several design themes that were found in the films watched and that are typical for science fiction stories. The story is set in the future and reflects on a society that we are headed towards. Also, the scene designed for is set on another planet with different physical laws.

Design based on purely references was something I did for the first time during this project. The insights from the interviews were very helpful in this process. The subject of using references as a base for the design and as a way to ground the design is something that came back during every single interview. That is why after analysing the story and writing the script, the first step was collecting references that fit the contextual, action and emotional aspects of the script. This project has given me the insight to use a broader scope of reference as inspiration for a design than I usually would in traditional architecture.

What made the design process different than the design process of the interviewees is that there were no other members of film crews involved. A big part of the design process is also decided by the collaboration and director of photography, and that sometimes was missing in the current project. The design project turned out to be more focused on the actual design than the story. This makes sense as the aim of this graduation is gaining an architectural degree.

## **The relationship between the project and the wider social context**

Science fiction is one of the main genres in film where the stories reach far beyond what we know from our daily lives. It gives designers the chance to let their imagination run wild and explore new and innovative design solutions. Science fiction design can help inspire humankind. The futuristic civilizations portrayed in science fiction are an incredibly powerful to reflect on contemporary society and its technological advances. It can be a warning for where our world is headed or an inspiration to show us where society could go. Science fiction scenarios can project the possibilities of the future, as the seminal 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) shows, or leave us in fear about our own reality, like The Wachowski Brothers' The Matrix (1999) does.