

# Things to Come. Science – Fiction – Film Exhibition Review

Anja Neidhardt



How will the future look like? How will we work, communicate, travel, – live? How will new technological devices be integrated into our daily lives? Which impact will upcoming designs have on us? Those are questions that not only scientists and politicians are dealing with, but also the science fiction genre. In this genre people are trying to predict possible developments in society, culture and technology, and transform their visions into storylines.

The exhibition “Things to Come”, currently on show at the Deutsche Kinemathek in Berlin\*, presents a large number of science fiction movies from various times and analyses how they are visualising the near or more distant future. Curated by

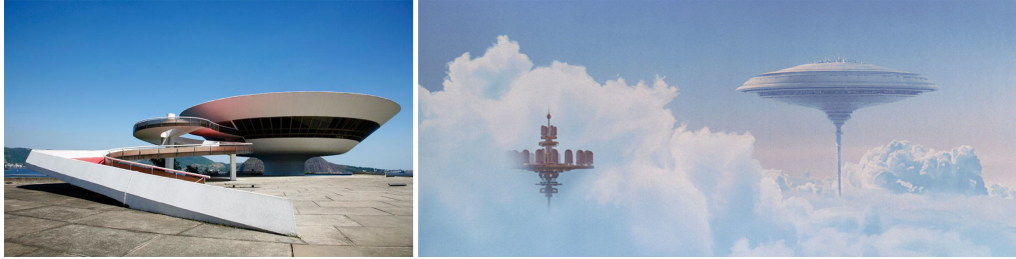
Kristina Jaspers, Nils Warnecke and Gerlinde Waz, and designed by studio Franke | Steinert, the exhibition is presented on three floors, each level giving the stage for one chapter: *Space*, *The Society of the Future*, and *The Other*.



*Exhibition view: "Things to Come" at Deutsche Kinemathek (Berlin), curated by Kristina Jaspers, Nils Warnecke, and Gerlinde Waz; exhibition design by Franke | Steinert. Photos: Marian Stefanofski*

When it comes to science fiction movies, design is involved in many layers and goes far beyond costume and set design. For Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey" (GB/USA, 1968) for example science advisers, illustrators and concept artists were consulted for their predictions of the technology of 35 years in the future. On top of this, also design teams of real-life spacecraft contractors including IBM, RCA and General Electric were asked for advice. The portable computer used in the movie was created in collaboration with Honeywell.

Often science fiction movies can offer an authentic outlook into the future: The concept and design of Cyberspace glasses used in "Until the End of the World" (D, F, AU, 1991) can be seen as predecessor for Google Glass or Zeiss VR One: Virtual Reality Glasses that were launched in real life in 2014. Looking at the design of rich people's flats in "Logan's Run" (USA, 1976) lets one draw links to current visions of smart homes.



*Left: Niterói Contemporary Art Museum by architect Oscar Niemeyer. Photo: Yadid Levy / Alamy.  
Right: Cloud City from "Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back" (USA, 1980). Image courtesy:  
[www.starwars.wikia.com](http://www.starwars.wikia.com)*

However, since science fiction films also always say something about the time in which they originate, some design is inspired by already existing things. The architecture of "Cloud City" designed by Joe Johnston for "Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back" (USA, 1980), resembles Oscar Niemeyer's sculptural buildings. And TARS Robot from "Interstellar" (USA/GB, 2014), which is meant to be the materialisation of future artificial intelligence, was inspired by the work of Bauhäusler Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. A prediction of the future is of course based on what is already known: This is due to the fact that nobody can escape their own time, but also because spectators need to be able to recognise certain things in order to understand and follow the storyline. Protest posters designed for the movie "X-Men: The Last Stand" (USA/GB, 2006), for example, are depicting the raised fist, a symbol used by various activism groups in real life since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Reading this exhibition from a design point of view does not only show with how many fields the design discipline is interlinked. It also makes clear what freedom can mean to designers: Being able to work on projects that are detached from customer markets, tight schedules and expectations from commissioners to simply re-design the tried and trusted, can animate to think out of the box and to truly be innovative. And this, in the end, can benefit everyone (industries, customers, society, and designers themselves).

***Anja Neidhardt, März 2017***

*\* Exhibition "Things to come" until 23 April 2017  
at Deutsche Kinemathek, Museum für Film und Fernsehen (Berlin).*

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