

Georgia Institute of Technology / Spring 2019
Arch 8823/4823: Mind and the Built Environment
Instructor: Sonit Bafna <sonit.bafna@coa.gatech.edu>
Location and Time: TR 9:30 to 10:45, 260 Arch West



M C Escher. Lithograph. 1956

About

This course is about the reciprocity between the human mind and the built environment. It is framed around a single premise: that our perception, understanding, affective response, and ultimately behavior in a given setting is greatly shaped by what we carry of it in our minds. From this premise comes the proposition that our built environment is organized not just to fit human activity and patterns of life, but also the human mind; the limitations and particular propensities of the mind constrain the shape of the built environment as much as physical functional necessities do. The main purpose of the course is to explore this proposition.

Content

Students will be given a background in architectural morphology; this will include both theoretical concepts

and techniques for analytical descriptions. They will also be introduced to an assortment of mental representations: these include, but are not limited to, mental models, cognitive maps, images, frames, and aesthetical appraisal structures. Finally, the students will be exposed to some recent empirical research that explores how mental representation may be considered as mediating elements in explanations of the relationship between the form of the built environment and specific human response and behavior. Students will have the opportunity to pursue individual interests in techniques of data analysis, visualization and other aspects of developing extended projects of inquiry and research.

Organization

The course is project-based. Once the essential content has been delivered, students will work through the semester on exploratory studies done individually or in pairs. These studies will take one of two forms: explorations carried out through design exercises, or projects of empirical research. A set of potential projects will be made available to the students, but it will also be possible for them to pursue projects of their own interest, so long as they conform to the main themes of the course.