



Harvard University  
Graduate School of Design

# Shapeshifter

Contemporary architecture is in the middle of an extended shift from drawing to computation as the foundation of design practice. As such, issues of automatism are increasingly prominent in the design process, with architects occupying the subsequent tension between control and the release of control.

This studio will use Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris* to reflect upon the figure of the architect. Specifically, we will analyze the three distinct form generation modes of the shapeshifting Solaris Ocean as models for autonomous formal production in architecture. As progressively more 'inhuman' elements are introduced into the design process, what are the remaining points of control? In *Solaris*, we find prototypes for several current design paradigms that will inform the studio exercises and final project: (1) animate form – abstract, protean, mathematically complex mutations; (2) analogs – the mimetic scaling of source objects from nature; and (3) unconscious production – the projection of architectural fantasies.

Architecture could be described as the control and organization of form; by definition, form is inextricably associated with matter. Yet even today the fundamental nature of matter remains an open question. The final project will apply the *Solaris* model to a program that reflects the heterogeneity of the material substance of form. Situated between the natural sublime of the Swiss Alps and the technological sublime of CERN's Large Hadron Collider, the Museum of Matter will be an archive of form and formal dynamics at a variety of scales. The architectural typology of the museum will confront the irreducible ambiguities inherent in the medium of form itself. In this context, we will use *Solaris* as a model for form generation – attempting to reconcile automatic processes with the traces of the architectural unconscious.

The design work will be extensively supplemented by a bibliography from architectural theory, aesthetics, literature, and science.

<b>Course Number</b>	STU-01308-00
<b>Hours/Location</b>	Wed, Thu 2:00 PM - 6:00 PM Fall 2012 Option Studio 8 Credits
<b>Instructors</b>	Zoë Prillinger Luke Ogrydziak
<b>Department</b>	Architecture