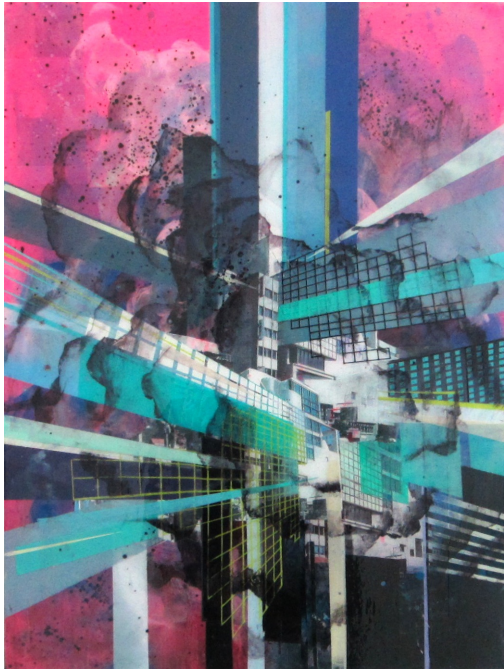


Austin American-Statesman
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Leah Haney's paintings offer a glimpse of the past's future
By [Jeanne Claire van Ryzin](#), Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2013

Leah Haney's art exists between several different worlds, not all of them of real. In her intriguing solo exhibit, "Divergent Space," now at Tiny Park, Haney give us a mash-up of futuristic utopias and dystopias, ulterior visions from times past.



That might sound like a lot of doom and gloom. But Haney's collaged paintings and works on paper aren't simply apocalyptic landscapes. Haney — who last spring had an equally impressive solo exhibit as part of AMOA-Arthouse's "New Works" series at Laguna Gloria — offers a visual celebration of humankind's unwavering fascination with, and hope for, the universe.

Deeply inspired by an often dark kind of science fiction (Haney lists the writings of William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Frank Herbert, Alastair Reynolds and Philip K. Dick, among others, as influences), Haney nevertheless invests her newest batch of images with a definite nostalgic sense of the future.

The artist culls images from old design magazines and architecture publications, isolating building fragments or decorative patterning. She then collages the dated-looking images, adding her own painted forms and lines, while also painting on layer after layer of clear resin until the surface of each work has a glass-like depth that intriguingly catches and holds the light. What Haney ends up with are paintings that depict unlikely architectural structures free floating in nebulous voids, such as strange cities aloft in outer space. There's typically the visual remnants of an explosion, too, clouds billowing away from the strangely hovering and seemingly function-less architectural conglomerations.

In the current series, Haney uses a 1980s color palette of neon pinks, turquoises and yellows. And those out-of-style hues only add to the already retro feel of Haney's sci-fi world. (Some of the found images are actually from early models for a super-computer.)

With their precise geometric forms and categorical perspective lines, Haney's man-made — or really man-imagined — structures run amok when they collide with the infinite boundlessness of the universe.

And isn't that what makes the futuristic visions of the past so intriguing and endearing? There's a beauty to what was once imagined for a future utopia, but perhaps the architecture for that utopia wouldn't really work in the end.



The human imagination might do better when it has a few boundaries. After all, given the true limitlessness of the universe, can we really build when we have no horizon?