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FROM IMAGINATION TO REALITY: THE ART OF SCIENCE FICTION
THROUGH FRI., JAN. 28

BETWEEN INTERCONNECTEDNESS | THROUGH SUN., JAN. 16

ART AND SCIENCE are old companions, yet they rarely meet today, as science has become extremely complex and art increasingly self-absorbed. We normally think of art as the more inspiring practice, but two shows currently running explore the role of science as muse.

"From Imagination to Reality: The Art of Science Fiction"—curated by Vincent Di Fate, a leading sci-fi illustrator and author—is on display at the New York Academy of Sciences. A small but impressive collection of paintings, the show considers aliens, androids, man-eating monsters, altered states, other worlds and dire predictions for this world.

Straight out of a sci-fi B-movie, the Academy is the perfect home for a "mad scientist." Located in a beautifully preserved, 1919 neo-Renaissance mansion, it still has its original, dark, Elizabethan-era woodwork, large creaky doors and tiled floor. Originally created as book covers, the finely painted illustrations of colorful bug-eyed monsters, irate cyborgs and stylish spaceships are on display in the main hallway and waiting room. Divided thematically, sci-fi film props punctuate the images, such as an alien rocket, the head of the Creature from the Black Lagoon, and—gracing the 16th-century Florentine mantel—the severed hand of X.

Highly skilled, these sci-fi artists are unconcerned with contemporary art theory. And the ethical conundrums that do concern them border on the futuristic, like John Schoenherr's picture of an alienated astronaut, Michael Whelan's robot at the moment of self-awareness and Donato Giancola's depiction of species-to-species communication. What's missing in the sci-fi art exhibit can be found in profusion at Smack Mellon's exhibition "Between Interconnectedness," curated by Suzanne Kim. Illustrating art theory, the seven artists use engineering and science's pictorial qualities to dress up their ideas, rather than explore ethics or future horizons.

Angie Drakopoulos applied the terminology and imagery of physics and biology to create a video, a deck of cards and a series of resin paintings. Her paintings apply the natural abstraction of cells and stars to create intriguing necklaces of dots and diagrams suspended in layers of milky resin.

Shown upstairs at this foundry-turned-spice warehouse-turned gallery, Eva Lee's three videos, titled *The Liminal Series*, blink hypnotic patterns and rhythms that also refer to the micro and macro.

David McQueen created kinetic landscapes. One portrays a desert with a slowly rising and setting sun (lamp); the other features snow falling on a cabin. The snow is made by spidery wire fingers striking suspended chalk cubes. Inside the tiny cabin, a camera feeds a live picture of the snowy scene to a back room, where yet another snow machine dusts the floor.

Though several of the works are visually serene and others mechanically entertaining, the rhetoric is overbearing, the artistic outcome meek, and the science a playful device.

New York Academy of Sciences, 2 E. 63rd St. (5th Ave.), 212-838-0230; 9-5, free.

Smack Mellon, 56 Water St. (Main St.), Dumbo, 718-834-8761; 12-6, free.

—Julia Morton