

The Shape of Things to Come

The universe inhabited by Ben Steele's paintings is carefully balanced between optimism and ruin. All of time collapses combining both a sense of humanity's greatest moments of ingenuity while simultaneously that we are subject to fate and a world which returns us to a state of entropy. His paintings address the greater questions in life, causing viewers to search for meaning while creating connections between otherwise disconnected objects, images, and events.

Steele is drawn to the utopian ideals put forth in futuristic architecture and sees this as a way humanity continually strives for a world that is just out of reach. The promised future is never here. Forms refer to futurism and invention in multiple times and places in our world's history. They also at times appear to be in a state of ruin or construction. He is interested in how representing ideas of the future from the past creates a tension and feeling of displacement in time. Across multiple paintings a single form may appear more than once, seen at different scales, from diverse angles and in changing environments, as if in a shuffling of a giant deck of human history.

Through many works there is a relationship drawn between earthly concerns and those from above. Searchlights, rainbows, fireworks, and comets serve as backdrops indicating a quest for knowledge, redemption, disaster, or celebration. Contemporary concerns involving space exploration, rising water levels, and natural disasters feel of the moment, yet possess a deep reach back through human imagination. Steele's work takes inspiration from the vast history of landscape painting, futuristic architecture, designs and inventions, science fiction literature, and special effect cinematography. In the studio, he employs a variety of media from which to inspire paintings: Projection, 3D printing, Mold making, Carvings, Laser -Cut Constructions, Mirrors, and Found Objects all form expansive installations which serve as subject matter for an ever-expanding universe of forms and juxtapositions. *The Shape of Things to Come*, is a title taken from H.G. Wells 1933 classic science-fiction novel. A vision of the future written in the far distant past is a perfect portal through which to enter this painterly universe.