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Art exhibit: 'Plastic' is fantastic concept

By **Molly Glentzer** Updated 2:55 pm, Sunday, September 30, 2012

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IMAGE 1 OF 3

Artist Paul Horn's "Paul-Mart" is a retail installation of objects created by him and other artists.

What would our world be without polyethylene, polystyrene, polypropylene and polyurethane?

Cleaner, perhaps, but also less colorful, as an exhibit at **Deborah Colton Gallery** suggests.

"Plastic Fantastic" was curated by PaperCity's **Catherine D. Anspion**, one of Houston's most colorful personalities, as an ode to her 94-year old father, chemist **Harry D. Anspion**, who holds about 70 patents for improvements to plastics developed during a long career.

Bless him, he's still going. He speaks on a recently made 10-minute video near the exhibit's entry; a touch that gives context to the playful work of the show's five featured artists.

Although polys were first synthesized in the 19th century, a go-getter, post-World War II generation of scientists made them indispensable to human culture.

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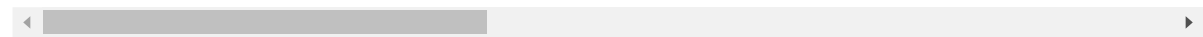
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Inevitably, plastics also became useful to artists. The exhibit illustrates a few of the myriad ways they're being employed.

Fittingly, the main room is dominated by a house made of clear plastic sheeting, a walk-in installation that was artist **Karen Arzamendi's** master's thesis project at the **University of North Texas**. The walls are like a 3-D quilt, made of hundreds of Baggies stuffed with little doodads and other domestic residue, much of it plastic. A "time line" of stuffed Baggies also snakes across the room's outer walls. You could spend hours examining it all and reminiscing about stuff you once owned.

Selven O'Keef Jarmon, better known as a fashion designer, is equally meticulous, but his material of choice is machine-made plastic buttons, strung together intriguingly to create "canvases" encased in glass frames. With the buttons' contrasting colors, he "paints" the word "STOCKS" - a thoughtful commentary on mass-produced society.

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"No one ever puts him in a show because of the medium he uses - plastic," Colton said.

Billy Zinser, an up-and-comer from Dallas, doesn't seem to have that issue. His hard, shiny biomorphic sculptures, crude figures that also show up in his paintings and as giant inflatable pieces, look like toys that have started to melt and lost their heads. They make me think about the nature of ugliness.

Andrea Morganstern, a Connecticut artist, forms resin into prettier hybrid creatures - part human, part animal - then places them into natural settings and photographs them. Her large C-prints have a magical quality.

Paul Horn, however, may encapsulate the plastic spirit best with his riotous installation, "Paul-Mart," a small retail space where visitors can buy multiples by about 20 artists priced democratically from \$4.99 to \$99.99.

They include toys by Zinser as well as Bill Davenport and **Daniel Johnston**. **Solomon Kane** collaborated with Horn on packaging that makes these little geegaws mighty collectible. Don't take a tween, or you'll be there all day.

It's crazy, fun and, yes, cheap. Long live "Paul-Mart." We're told that one well-known Houston collector has already pinned his "Paul-Mart" purchase up beside a painting by **Damien Hirst**.

See "Plastic Fantastic" at Deborah Colton Gallery, 2445 North Blvd., through October; 713-869-5151, www.deborahcoltongallery.com.

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