

Art review

Stas Orlovski

By Laura Pearson

“Echoes,” Peter Miller Gallery through Feb 19.



A disembodied eyeball blossoms from a delicate wildflower. A thick cluster of blooms obscures a grayish-blue human foot. Whimsical images recur in Stas Orlovski’s mixed-media collages: Hairy human heads poke halfway out of bodies of water as though they’re islands; songbirds are accompanied by tiny musical notes.

The Moldova-born, L.A.-based artist creates a mood at once somber and fantastical, romantic and portentous in these meticulous arrangements, which he made from 2000–06. Combining techniques such as watercolor, charcoal drawing, Xerox transfer and silverpoint, Orlovski references Russian folklore, Persian miniatures, Japanese woodcuts and Dutch botanical drawings. The show’s earlier compositions are almost too tidy, but he adds interest by covering his canvases with thin handmade paper that reveals every stain and smudge. The aforementioned *Garden with Foot* (2002) produces the effect of wallpaper in a creepy Victorian nursery: We expect its yellowed paper and dull blooms to give off a whiff of decay.

Orlovski combines his techniques to masterful effect in *Small Sculpture Garden with Rain* (2006). “Echoes” contains quite a few larger works on canvas, but this 24"x24" collage is the most textural, layering abstract ink scribbles and long, vertical lines depicting rainfall—like those in Hiroshige’s *Sudden Shower on Ohashi Bridge*—over cutouts of broken statuary and a column by Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi. Framed by dark clouds, the scene is captivating and mysterious—in the realm between dream and nightmare.

