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Stas Orlovski @ Traywick

MAY 15, 2016



Installation image of Troika,
2016, still image from
projected animation on
wooden sculptures, 27:00

by Julia Couzens

Somber fantasy gardens, slow falling figures and birds on the wing populate Stas Orlovski's richly layered, multi-media fabrications. Based in LA, with recent exhibitions at the Pasadena Museum of Art, LA County Museum of Art, and the 56th Venice Biennale, Orlovski combines drawing, printmaking, painting, sculpture and stop-motion animation to create finely crafted works that evoke mystery and desire. Despite the work's clean,

almost clinical presentation, it is imbued with an unabashed 19th-century romantic sensibility. The Victorian predilection for a *mélange* of styles in the decorative arts is refreshed by Orlovski's postmodern, pluralistic aesthetic. Pulling from an array of sources — Japanese ukiyo-e prints, Dutch botanical illustrations and Russian folklore — Orlovski delves into the subjective realities of dreams, memory, fetish and fantasy: the stuff of Lewis Carroll, Jules Verne and Freud.

Like Bay Area artist [Naomie Kremer](#), Moldova-born Orlovski comes to moving projections over static forms from a painting background. Using a modular approach that accommodates an infinite array of projected forms, Orlovski threads recurring motifs throughout his work. A cut-out of a standing figure, for example, appears as a



repeating element, which when scaled to life-size in wood, serves as a backdrop for ethereal, densely composed graphic imagery. Orlovski creates metaphorical grottoes of mystery and melancholy, and like a puppet master manipulating a cast of characters, installs his work in the gallery as if it were a stage.

Several appear as theatrical totems. *Waterfall*, a bronze torso mounted on a white wooden shelf, serves as the setting for a animation on bronze, 2:34 two-and-a-half minute video loop of a cutout figure in free fall, darkly silhouetted against a silent, streaming waterfall. The silence, pace and dark anonymity of the falling figure is eerily reminiscent of the 9/11 victims that haunt collective memory. It is mesmerizing, ominous and tragic. *Head*, presented similarly, screens a looping, 24-minute graphic animation in which flocks of birds, layered over a pastiche of landscape engravings, suggest visions of Emersonian pantheism. The collaged elements, using 19th century landscape imagery are reminiscent of Jonathan Herder, a New York artist who uses particles of postage stamps to create similar scenarios of nostalgia. The radiant halo of cinematic light outlining the

head supports its participation as more than a backdrop; it is an equal component to the whole, firm in its identity as a contemporary minimal form.

Troika, the exhibition's title and centerpiece, consists of three wooden cutouts: a head, a figure (bearing a resemblance to *Les Femmes d'Alger*), and a misshapen armless torso. They stand on easels, serving as backdrops for the projection of a graphic montage of morphing images. Orlovski's poetic narratives



Troika, 2016, still image
from projected animation,
dimensions variable, post-
production: Beau Leduc

point to the transitory nature of life. Nostalgic pastorals, sequences of dissolving cosmic phenomena, and flickering cinematic light command our attention and beckon reverie. But the cumbersome and insistent wooden supports seem extraneous and disruptive to his reach for mystery. If the intersection of the virtual and the physical were integrated into the environment less obtrusively, viewers would have no difficulty falling under Orlovski's undeniably numinous spell.

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Stas Orlovski: "Troika" @ Traywick Contemporary through May 28, 2016.

About the Author:

Julia Couzens is a Sacramento-based artist and writer whose work has been widely shown, most recently at the di Rosa Preserve. Her drawings and hybrid objects are in museum and public collections throughout the U.S. These include the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts; Berkeley Art Museum; Oakland Museum; Weatherspoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina; and Yale University. She lives and works on Merritt Island in the Sacramento River delta.

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