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## Taking some readings

**Christopher Orr's** curious little paintings meld scientific sobriety with lush romanticism. It's an intriguing mix that we barely get a chance to savor in the Scottish-born, London-based artist's first area show.

Some type of observation or measurement is taking place in most of the five small canvases (averaging about 7 inches per side) at Sister. "Events in a Dense Fog" has a man in a teal jumpsuit kneeling on the ground, holding out a small device in his left hand while indicating a short span of space with the fingers of his right.

In another of the paintings, a youngish man stands on the edge of a meandering fault in the earth. A bulky, boxy instrument is slung over one shoulder, and headphones cover his ears as he extends a radar dish toward the abyss.

The image brings to mind the Everyman in the staged photographs of Robert and Shana ParkeHarrison, a lone crusader taking the Earth's pulse and healing its wounds. In Orr's work too, an air of officialdom (with roots in the pages of National Geographic and illustrated textbooks) mingles with reverence for lush wilderness and the natural phenomena that animate it.



Sister

### **CHRISTOPHER ORR:** "Events in a Dense Fog."

Orr points to the past in every inch of these diminutive works. He favors brown tones so dark they suggest aged varnish. The linen weave of the canvas shows through in parts, as if the surfaces were worn and abraded, and the characters wear clothes and carry technical equipment at least two generations out of date. An entrancing whiff of nostalgia results.

**Sister**, 437 Gin Ling Way, Chinatown, (213) 628-7000, through Oct. 22. Closed Sundays through Tuesdays. [www.sisterla.com](http://www.sisterla.com).