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Finding Chaos and Calm in the Pace of Modern Life

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In Your Imagination: Much is hinted at and little is laid bare in Torbjorn Vejvi's U.S. solo debut, a promising display of five formally sophisticated, conceptually coy sculptures. At Richard Telles Fine Art, the Swedish-born, L.A.-based artist's intriguing pieces fuse abstraction and representation in order to short-circuit sculpture's traditional relationship to space.

Made of such incidental, even flimsy, materials as cardboard, cloth, foam core, paper and vinyl (as well as thin strips of wood and sheets of Masonite), Vejvi's human-scale structures borrow freely from painting, architectural design, magazine layouts and commercial window displays. Set on the floor, "In a Band" resembles an emotionally contained painting that has been cut, folded and glued into the shape of an open cardboard box. Inside, a silhouette of a studio musician occupies each wall, as if the four tiny band members were playing for no one but themselves.



Puddle, 2001, 83 x 50 x 14 in.

Vejvi's empty box seems to occupy a point in time that has slipped away, leaving its traces temporarily imprinted in memory. All of his works fold space in complex ways, capturing your imagination with their light-handed touch and dramatic shifts in scale.

Modeled on such common experiences as watching tennis on television, paging through an engraved edition of "Robinson Crusoe" or fantasizing about what Mondrian would have made if he were a sculptor, Vejvi's carefully crafted objects inhabit a world in which the imagination rules.

Although the largest one stands nearly 7 feet tall and 4 feet wide, it doesn't occupy space aggressively. Only 2 inches thick, "Puddle" takes its shape from the aftermath of a rain shower. Drawn in black marking pen on each of its sides are partial images of a young man as he catches his reflection in a puddle's surface. Unlike Narcissus, Vejvi splits his image in two and tips it back so that it spills out of his vertically oriented sculpture, which functions like an old-fashioned picture frame or theatrical prop.

Unlike conventional three-dimensional works, which establish their impact by using mass, density and texture to momentarily defy gravity's incessant pull, Vejvi's materially slight pieces bypass such muscular struggles in favor of getting into your head. Like pop songs whose seemingly silly refrains won't stop running through your inner ear, the 28-year-old artist's deceptively simple sculptures resonate in your mind's eye long after you've stopped looking at them.