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Critic's Choice Ricky Swallow sculpture: Where zero plus zero equals eight

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"Double Zero With Rope," bronze sculpture by Ricky Swallow at David Kordansky Gallery. (Fredrik Nilsen / Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery)

historical resonance, back to one of the milestones of art incorporating "the real," Picasso's 1912 cubist collage encircled by actual rope. There is also a tinge of the surreal to these semi-wrapped fetishes, as well as straightforward association with the nautical. Swallow works fairly small, but his sculptures never stop expanding in the mind.

David Kordansky Gallery, 5130 W. Edgewood Place, Los Angeles, (323) 935-3030, through Oct. 31. Closed Sunday and Monday. www.davidkordanskygallery.com

The 10 sculptures in Ricky Swallow's show at David Kordansky occupy their spacious gallery quietly but potently, releasing their force and intelligence over slow deliberation rather than at a glance.

Swallow works in bronze, casting objects he has fashioned from cardboard, wood and rope. The casual, utilitarian nature of the original materials lingers in these handsome forms (all from 2015) like a fondly regarded past life and spurs the frisson of illusion, the tactile ventriloquism of one surface passing as another.

In "Double Zero With Rope," Swallow stacks two mustard yellow block numerals, joining them with humble twine to form a figure 8, empowering the zeros to add up to more than the sum of their parts: Nothing plus nothing now equals something. The coy play of signs mimics the play of materials. Swallow patinates the surfaces to appear worn, aged, suggesting the sculpture as an assemblage of found cast-offs, raised, synergistically, to elegant significance in enduring metal.

The L.A.-based Swallow engages in serious mischief again and again here. A stretch of cherry-red molding cast from conjoined cardboard tubes of different diameters registers as a long italicized dash, punctuation scaled to the room.

In three tabletop sculptures that give the show its name -- "/SKEWS/" -- he sends fat white rope meandering through structures that slant open. The pieces induce a shiver of art