

Bay Area Now 4

Untitled (Fountain)

2004

Acrylic on panel

36 x 48 in.

Collection of Javier Peres

Photo: courtesy of Peres Projects, Los Angeles

chris ballantyne

The trees look lonely in Chris Ballantyne's paintings. They stand marooned on five square feet of spindly grass that peeks through a concrete sea of a parking lot. A stretch of lawn looks equally sad, the only vestiges of green lying in the truncated paths of inadequate sprinklers as most of the grass yellows under the sun. The clean aesthetic of Ballantyne's landscapes is reminiscent of the compositions in Japanese woodblock prints, yet their seeming order is upended by sinister elements of fantasy that could almost be lifted from a Dr. Seuss book. Ballantyne uses minimalism to its full effect to lend character and absurdity to our modern-day repertoire of earthworks and backyards. His imagery profiles dams, jetties, pools and fences that have materialized out of nowhere, waiting to serve a function that is not yet clear, for a population that does not yet exist. "Build it, and they will come," seems to be the order of the day, yet construction and planning appear to have gone topsy-turvy somewhere down the line.

