

Buckley, Annie. Review. *Artforum* (online, 9 April 2009). <http://www.artforum.com>.

ARTFORUM

William Leavitt

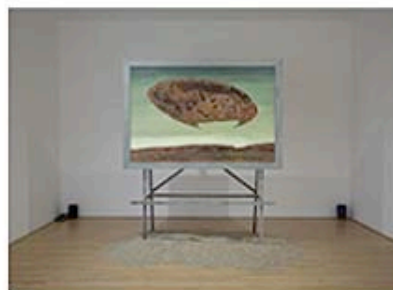
MARGO LEAVIN GALLERY

812 North Robertson Boulevard

March 21–April 18

The title of William Leavitt's latest exhibition, "Molecules and Buildings," is as straightforward as a three-word poem, which is to say that while its construction is simple enough, the phrase readily dissolves into labyrinthine layers of potential meaning. Likewise, the deadpan sensibility of the ten paintings and one installation included here belies the works' easy rapport with such diverse topics as our relationship to the built environment, molecular biology, pop culture, a Zenlike interconnection of all things, and traditional landscape painting.

If it sounds too easy to take this work in so many directions, one must consider that Leavitt is a ready conjurer of multiple perspectives and philosophical play. Having worked in theater, performance, installation, painting, and photography since the early 1970s, Leavitt is accustomed to keeping many balls in the air—juggling being an apt metaphor in light of the orbs hovering in the peach- and gold-tinged skies of Los Angeles in his new works. Leavitt's molecular structures, based on scientific and imaginary models, float above boxy modernist buildings characteristic of architecture in Southern California; their bright and pastel shades mirror the smog-stained sky. The most luminous of these skies is the near-apocalyptic dawn that surrounds a floating landmass in *Chaco Rising*, 2008, a painting and sound installation that depicts an ancient American Indian burial ground turned upside down and set adrift in the atmosphere—a broken-off asteroid threatening destruction or perhaps a scale drawing of a spaceship for a new network cartoon.



William Leavitt, *Chaco Rising*, 2008, acrylic on canvas, wooden stand, vermiculite, speakers, dimensions variable.

— Annie Buckley