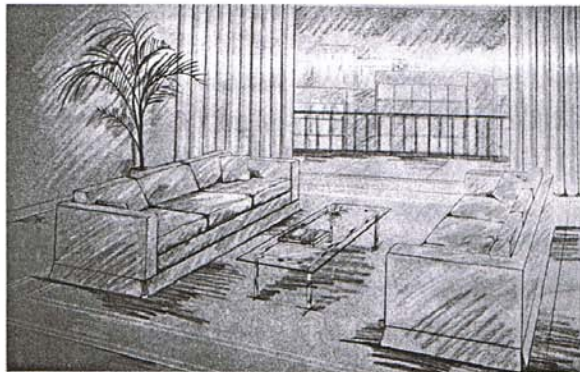


*Tableaux: Nine Contemporary Sculptors.* Cincinatti: The Contemporary Arts Center, 1982.

"Set Design for 'The Silk'", 1975, pastel on paper, 20" x 25".



**William Leavitt**

William Leavitt's "Installation" is a stage set where the objects become the text and the actors. A Los Angeles area resident, Leavitt's interests center on the production of soap operas and grade B movies. For the past twelve years his attention has been focused on the creation of scenic tableaux, a format which he discovered early in his career. Leavitt has been fascinated with the theme of the tropics, working on it periodically since the winter of 1974. Over the years his initial idea for the piece has generated drawings, scripts, theatrical productions, photographs, films and video tapes.

Leavitt's tableau here is the result of further and further refinement of this persistent subject now stripped of all the other clues, relying solely upon his choice of furnishings and their placements to engage us. This absolute efficiency of presentation and props allows Leavitt to focus on examining the conventions commonly associated with those artifacts of popular culture. Great attention is paid to the layout of the room, the position of the furniture, the atmosphere generated by the furniture and the details of such trivia as the kinds of plants that are in the room and where they are placed. Even the selection of the magazine on the end table, *Mañana*, suggests certain characteristics of the room's owner and implies a location for this setting. Like Adams' mysteries, the objects displayed are pieces of evidence, understood as devices to activate the emotional possibilities latent in other props when collected together. Each piece is of little intrinsic value but taken together they are invested with an ambiguous psychological content which serves to lead the audience along on an almost subliminal level by directing attention to the habits, customs and preoccupations of the imagined players who inhabit his set.

Leavitt's work virtually discards narrative, becoming more like a brief essay which indicates lifestyle or circumstances. He has imitated the technique of the theater stage but without the use of human gesture or expression.

Untitled, 1981, mixed media, 9' x 8' x 2'.

Tableau, 1979, mixed media. Courtesy of Artists Space, N.Y.

