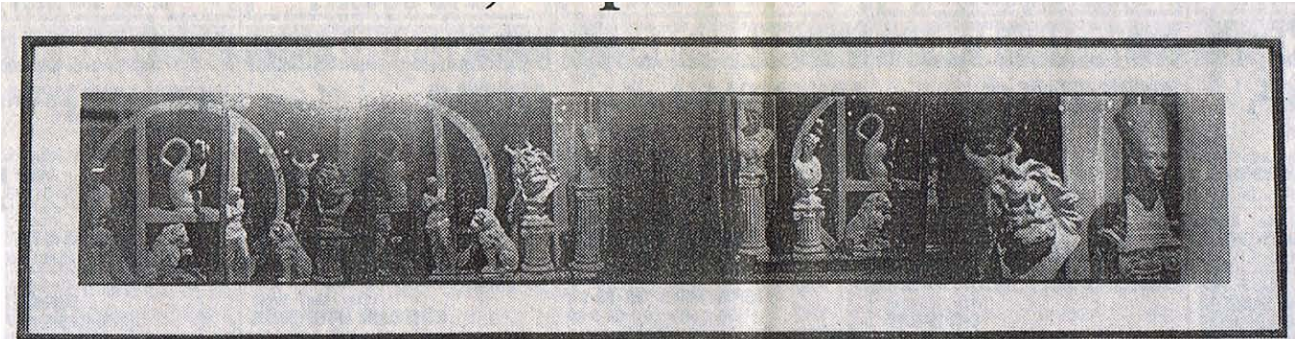


Pagel, David. "L.A. Mystique." *Los Angeles Times*, 29 February 1996, p. F12.



Margo Leavin Gallery

William Leavitt's "Assorted Deities—Western Avenue" [1995] depicts a shadowy world of details.

L.A. Mystique: With a new group of color photographs, **William Leavitt** turns away from his career-long exploration of the fakery that animates the movie industry and toward the mystique associated with the city of Los Angeles itself. At Margo Leavin Gallery, 10 intriguing C-prints depict a shadowy world in which mundane details hint at unfathomable mysteries without giving anything away.

Shot at night, all of Leavitt's pictures make the city look like an apparition, as substantial as an illusion and as fleeting as a dream or nightmare. The longer you scrutinize these photos, however, the more their charged atmospheres fade away. With time, they look less like backdrops for dramatic narratives and more like quietly mesmerizing studies of the uncertainty at the root of modern urban experience.

Each of Leavitt's long, narrow prints consists of between two and five separate scenes, each surrounded by a halo of darkness. Often these generic, outdoor scenarios are very similar to one another, if not identical. "Double Red Building" shows two views of the same structure, shot from slightly different angles. "Corrugations" presents three views of a shiny metal shed, from two perspectives.

"Four Part Swimming Pool" and "Extended Park in Fog"—respectively measuring nearly 4- and 5-feet long—suggest that the more points of view from which you see something, the less you actually know about it. As you follow the sequence of images from left to

right, very little changes. Time seems to stand still as conventional narrative sequences go nowhere. Rather than disappear, mystery intensifies.

Leavitt's images thus represent something like the photographic equivalent of the Heisenberg principle: The more closely something is scrutinized, the more uncertainty is revealed. The city of Los Angeles has more built-in intrigue than a movie can possibly match.

■ *Margo Leavin Gallery, 812 N. Robertson Blvd., (310) 273-0603, through March 23. Closed Sunday and Monday.*