

Levin, Kim. *Tableaux*. New York: Wave Hill, 1981.

W I L L I A M L E A V I T T

William Leavitt's indoor tableaux installations are like stage sets, his drawings are often vignettes, and he has scripted short films and theatrical performances. He takes atmospheric cues and clichés from a stage-struck society, evoking an ambience of melodrama with literary detail and theatrical mood. His installations often allude to the banality and emptiness of polite middle class contemporary life, but he handles this theme with a romantic sensibility, creating ambiguous scenarios of estrangement by his almost fetishistic attention to trivial details.

His piece at Wave Hill, set in a small niche-like clearing in a grove of trees, is a departure from his usual work. It consists of three parts, with the trees as a backdrop. On one side is an apparatus "that looks sort of chemical"; on the other a classical column topped by a plastic bubble like a crystal ball. In the center, a plaster torso of a statue rises out of a pile of rocks. Combining allusions to scientific experimentation, magic, cultural history, and raw nature, it relates to his recent exhibition of a tableau installation and drawings about "a pseudo-scientist magician in a theatre-like laboratory in a desert." He describes the Wave Hill work as "like Pygmalion and Galatea — something magically coming alive."

Kim Levin



Untitled
12' w x 10' d
mixed media
Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures