

“Biopic: William Leavitt,” *Modern Painters* (March 2012) illus. p. 33



BIOPIC

WILLIAM LEAVITT

The story behind an artwork, in the artist's own words

THIS PIECE IS ONE EXAMPLE in a series of drawings and paintings that I'm now working on, titled "Tensile Structures." These pieces feature tents or roller coasters with a house or a landscape in the background. Here I'm using an image from the real-estate section of a newspaper. It's a rather ordinary tract house, but I have chosen to put in its front yard a contrasting image: a kinetic carnival ride, which is something public. I chose this particular recreational structure for its sculptural and theatrical qualities—twisting expanses of steel designed to incite exhilaration in the rider. The houses I choose are usually not spectacular but have instead a generic aura of the existential. I then try to accentuate the blankness and solidity of the house by pairing it with something

temporary, such as a tensile structure or something that implies motion—a roller coaster, for example.

Before I became a painter, I was a sculptor, an endeavor which has changed for me into designing sets for the plays that I write and produce. The sets that I design and build are sometimes exhibited as installations on their own. My other interest is architecture, which I incorporate into the stage design. Architecture is another form of sculpture, which makes the references somewhat circular, as I further these three-dimensional concerns by representing them in two-dimensional work.

William Leavitt's paintings and drawings will be on view at Margo Leavin Gallery, in Los Angeles, from March 17 through April 21.

*Twist Roller, 2011.
Pastel on paper,
22¼ x 41¼ in.*