

CULTURE WATCH

The "punk ballerina," choreographer Karole Armitage, brings her NYC company, **Armitage Gone! Dance**, to YBCA. Classical ballet coalesces with edgy geometric movements in the Bay Area-debut program. **Oct. 13-14**; performances.org

Weaving Ukraine-born artist Louise Nevelson's personal history with her unique take on such art movements as Cubism and Dadaism, the de Young presents the 70-piece show "**The Sculpture of Louise Nevelson: Constructing a Legend**." **Oct. 27-Jan. 13**; thinker.org

Australian indie-prog octet **Architecture in Helsinki** bring their musical arsenal (stocked with calypso and Casio-keyboard beats off the band's latest album, *Places Like This*) to SF for a jamboree at the Fillmore. **Nov. 1**; livenation.com

Get caught red-handed with the crime issue of *Found* magazine, which includes rogue lit of the prison-guard-poetry variety. *Found's* own Davy and Peter Rothbart touch down in the Bay Area for the "**There Goes the Neighborhood Tour**," in which they'll share their latest "finds" on **Oct. 30**. See foundmagazine.com for venue.

Screening as part of the **11th Annual Arab Film Festival**, the film-within-a-film doc *VHS Kahloucha* follows Moncef Kahloucha as he converts his small town into a full-fledged movie set for his film *Tarzan of the Arabs*. **Oct. 18-28**; aff.org —ANN MARIE HARRISON



STRANGER IN A DREAM.

Idol Worship

FOR ARTIST STEPHEN ALBAIR, IT'S A SMALL WORLD AFTER ALL.

Stephen Albair is primed for his second coming. "The art world is geared toward emerging artists," he says wryly. "I've already emerged." Considering that the 60-year-old photographer has careers as both a goldsmith and a visual designer for Burberry listed on his résumé, and habitually skipped the line at Studio 54 while living in New York (where he once landed a solo show by walking into a SoHo gallery unannounced and presenting his portfolio), we're inclined to agree. But if 1980s Manhattan was the scene of Albair's Golden Age, it seems as if 2000s San Francisco will be the locus of his Renaissance.

"Catharine Clark [of Catharine Clark Gallery] says that there are 92,000 artists in the Bay Area," he says. "Open Studios gives [them] a venue." This year will mark Albair's third showing at Open Studios. Thanks to the exposure provided by last year's engagement, the artist is currently readying for a solo exhibition at Kathmandu Photo Gallery in Bangkok, which he'll be previewing this month at his Open Studios show at Garage Gallery (through Nov. 9).

Operating out of his Hayes Valley flat, Albair crafts photographic images using a 35-mm Nikkormat camera (the same model he's used since the '70s), mirrors to reflect natural light and a cast of found-object characters arranged on a single square foot of space atop his stereo and in front of his own photographed backgrounds. The artist says he considers his work to be nearly sculpture, due to the emphasis placed on "stage direction" (a process that takes weeks of meticulous arranging for each shot) and the fact that he doesn't print his images himself. "The idea of something being real or realistic does play into

my work, as it does for any tableau photography," he says. "It's not like diorama. The objects actually make it seem *more* real."

The figurine-populated results are steeped in a nostalgia that feels shoplifted from Gepetto's dream boutique: In *Leap of Faith*, a glass maiden stares wistfully through a portal in her aquarium home at the legs of an anonymous swimmer. ("It's the idea of looking at something that's sort of vanishing or appearing," says Albair. "That actual photograph is from a

“IT'S NOT LIKE DIORAMA—the objects make it seem more real.”

motel in California that had this funky 1950s swimming pool.") Four tuxedoed miniatures—meant for the top of a wedding cake—make a pilgrimage to an Easter Island-like head with a matching face in *Stranger in a Dream*. (Albair did this piece after losing his father and younger brother in quick succession. "And then there were four of us," he explains, referring to his remaining siblings.) And Albair's stand-in, an out-of-focus gnome, meets his real-life muse (a photograph of a onetime collaborator cut into the shape of a swan) accompanied by a pair of herons in *Journey*. "One of the things I really try to build into all of these pieces is a sense of longing for something other than what's there," says Albair. "Edgar Allan Poe said, 'All that we see or seems is but a dream within a dream.' I think that's what makes looking at images so exciting. They're appropriated from another part of reality—the dream within a dream." —Melissa Goldstein



LEAP OF FAITH.
STEPHEN ALBAIR IS AT GARAGE GALLERY DURING OPEN STUDIOS (ARTSPAN.ORG), OCT. 27 & 28. STEPHENALBAIR.COM