

Art in America

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Greg Lindquist

Elizabeth Harris

The role of industrial architecture in 20th-century American art was largely that of a generator of mighty forms and dynamic signs: think of Ralston Crawford or Stuart Davis. But the last decade of the old century and the first of the new have seen a paradigm shift, as we now anxiously regard the physical plants of many industries and the hulking shells of their many empty buildings. The sign value is still there, but it is less celebratory and more apt to beset us with premoni-



Greg Lindquist: *City of Facades (On the Migrating Pulse)*, 2007, oil on linen, 18 by 36 inches; at Elizabeth Harris.

tions of an environmental and economic apocalypse. Greg Lindquist, just one year out of the graduate program at Pratt in New York, has been mulling over this condition along the Brooklyn waterfront and already has crafted an extensive body of work driven by these concerns. Wonderfully, Lindquist seems to be captivated by the possibilities and presences of painting as much as he is by any ideological drive, and he achieves a tense ambiguity as beauty and rue vie for control of his panoramic canvases.

It was a nice coincidence that Lindquist's show of oil and metallic paintings on linen was running at the same time that Rackstraw Downes's most recent paintings were on view at Betty Cuninghams

gallery, giving viewers a chance to see how each manages to make utterly contemporary (and extremely horizontal) landscapes while echoing and updating different aspects of 19th-century painting. If Downes distributes plain air glare with Eakins's brightness and precision, Lindquist steepens his factory-buildings-going-condo in the brooding grays and chromatic silhouettes of Vuillard. The architectural intrusions in Downes's landscapes look relatively pristine, and thus their geometries, while providing illusionist perspective, are in keeping with the polished esthetic of his Minimalist contemporaries. The battered structures under Lindquist's scrutiny relate more to a Post-Minimalist poetics of memory. Downes, of course, is the savvy vet, while Lindquist is the brash newcomer, but . . . not so fast: the bright light and curving desolations of Downes's paintings strike me as far more brash than Lindquist's canny, elegiac tonalities. And this is where they separate, for it's not that Lindquist isn't up to Downes's vigor, but that his intent leads him to another emotional range, a Symbolist reverie, if you will.

Lindquist's melancholy marks him as a Romantic. When I look at his work I see layered influences bouncing back and forth across history: Morandi painting Friedrich painting Hopper. The crumbling waterfront is disappearing under pressure from developers, and these ghostly warehouses and skeletal piers are memento mori on the scale of urban planning. The mise-en-scène may initially seem as intrinsically unappealing as the bombed-out port city in the film *Children of Men*, but Lindquist's framing, elimination of the figure, close-valued light and the subdued animation of his touch together rehabilitate these sites without necessarily inviting back a human presence.

—Stephen Westfall