

ARTnews

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Daina Higgins, *Red Sky*, 2008, oil on wood panel, 20" x 30".
Elizabeth Harris.

reviews: [new york](#)

'Urban Landscapes'

Elizabeth Harris

The notion of an urban landscape doesn't immediately summon up verdant pleasures, but this enchanting cluster of paintings demonstrated that the genre can reach beyond true grit and find something close to sublime in our battered, overdeveloped cities.

Veteran realist Rackstraw Downes, who might be said to have pioneered tableaux exploiting the weird beauties of industrial blight, was represented by two fine but uncharacteristically small works. One of them, *Irving Trust and the College of Insurance* (1985), carries an unexpectedly melancholy charge, with the pale towers of the World Trade Center in the background. Greg Lindquist achieves an even spookier ambience by using oil and metallic pigments on linen to capture decaying shipyards: *Red Hook Ikea (Everyday Living, Everyday Forgetting)*, 2008, finds the subtle ironies between the construction site for the megastore and its scruffy environs. While delicate sadness sets the

tone for William Carroll's monochrome washes of a city's geometries, Daina Higgins exposes some razzmatazz in outer Brooklyn by juxtaposing strings of flags in a car lot and modest prewar houses.

Other painters reveled in dramatic perspectives. Ron Milewicz's *Citiwide* (2005) is a panoramic sweep—128 inches wide—of curving freeways backed by a lime green sky. Giving a nod to the quick brushwork of the Impressionists, David Kapp presented a blurred rush of traffic from a bird's-eye view. And Lachlan Goudie, a descendant of the Scottish Colourists, paints on copper and aluminum panels to show the mystery in London's dark streets. There was little evidence here of the natural world, but Doug Martin struck a humorous, summery chord with a tangle of blue morning glories climbing a fire escape, almost camouflaging a tiny bird hanging upside down near the center of the canvas.

—Ann Landi