

ART IN REVIEW

Andrew Lenaghan

*George Adams
41 West 57th Street
Manhattan
Through Jan. 26*

From a distance, Andrew Lenaghan's easel-size cityscapes have a freeze-dried Photorealist look. Up close, however, one is gratified to discover they are painted with a deft, lively touch, and the extreme detailing reads not as cold-blooded copying but as an affectionate alertness to the world's surfaces. Everything from rooftop water towers, skylights and vents to scum on the glassy surface of the Gowanus Canal and weeds growing from the blue floor of a vast abandoned swimming pool in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, is observed with an exhilarated clarity.

Although it's hard to believe, given the extraordinary verisimilitude of his pictures — especially a series of wonderfully complex views of New York City painted from the roof — he works not from photographs but from life. Mr. Lenaghan is drawn to scenes of urban decrepitude: vacant lots, abandoned factories, a decaying concrete pier strewn with rotting lumber. Depicted in panoramic compositions, these forsaken places have a wild beauty.

Two interior pictures, by contrast — one of the artist's studio with his wife working glumly at a computer off to the right and one with a baby lying on its back in the middle of the floor — feel cluttered and oppressively claustrophobic. It's the adventure of the undomesticated outdoors, evidently, that quickens Mr. Lenaghan's soul.

KEN JOHNSON
