

**CONSPICUOUS COLLAPSE**  
**Andrea Kastner**

**May 29 - June 28, 2014**

Opening Reception: Thursday June 12, 7:00 - 9:30 pm



Andrea Kastner, *The Inventory of Dreams*, 2014. Oil on canvas.



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# **New Landscape: On Andrea Kastner's *The Wasteland***

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Mountainous heaps of trash, vast spaces of disarray and neglect, remnants of the many things invariably left behind by many people. Andrea Kastner paints them with reverence. In this exhibition of thirteen paintings, we are asked to consider what we've all tried to put behind us: garbage.

Kastner's paintings, romantic and dramatic, portray the ubiquitous scenes of our urban world that are often, if not always, rejected by art. And though they may seem like dystopic scenes of consumerism's ruins, and though it may seem novel for an artist to elevate this refuse to be the subject of painting, Kastner's work is, in many ways, a continuation of traditional landscape painting. When asked to conjure a landscape scene, you might imagine a vast depth of glowing greenery with a moody sky hanging above; autumn trees arching over a gently moving brook; imposing mountains towering from some great distance. But landscape as we know it and live it looks nothing of the sort, and hasn't for generations.

French activist Henri Lefebvre was one of the first thinkers to theorize upon "the urban." Prescient in distinguishing the urban not as a space characterized by dense populations, towering architecture and fast-paced living, Lefebvre conceptualized the urban as "the society that results from industrialization, which is a process of domination that absorbs agricultural production."<sup>1</sup> Within this model, even the picturesque, rural lives that seem an escape from city bustle are in fact implicated in the same social and political economies that are driven by capitalist desire. It does not seem too absurd, then, to characterize the work of Andrea Kastner as a new type of landscape painting – where it is not the pastoral made holy, but the urban sediment; the discarded objects and materials of every person's past, made perfect and beautiful in its representation.

With her paintings, Kastner attempts to recreate the world that exists amongst the things we wish to no *longer* exist. Her process is often collage based: most of the composite images are taken from photographs she captures herself during long walks throughout the city. "I take walks sometimes just to look for new things," Kastner says, "alleyways, construction sites, landfills, the house across the street and their magnificent pile of hoarded junk" (see *Travelers*, 2013). These images are then photocopied at various sizes and pieced together until each component is scaled to create a realistic yet otherworldly composition. In addition to her personal photographs, Kastner occasionally uses pictures from other peoples' collections and archives. *Keepsake* (2013), for example, combines a picture of a burning building found in the Kamloops Archives, along with a photograph

<sup>1</sup> Lefebvre, Henri. "From the City to Urban Society." *The Urban Revolution*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2003. 2. Print.



Andrea Kastner, *Woodlands*, 2014. Oil on Canvas

Kastner took at a recycling facility. Kastner refers to her collages for composition, and then paints from the original colour photos. "I am relatively faithful to the images, because I think details really matter," she says, "but I take some liberties with tone and colour." Her palette, indeed, is constrained yet dynamic. We see the greyness of preposterously massive piles of trash, butted up against banal architecture (see *The Inventory of Dreams*, 2014), yet sharp yellows and reds burst out of *Beautiful Losers* (2014). Using these compositions of waste as a lens into our unconscious minds, Kastner wonders what is revealed about us when we look at all we've left behind through this act of forgetting.

Though she doesn't talk about her paintings as landscapes, Kastner is nonetheless aware of how her works relate to more traditional representations of the natural world. And yet, is what Kastner paints really anything *other* than nature? It seems high time in the history of the cosmos that we understand human activity – and all its requisite construction, deconstruction and waste – as very much a part of nature. It seems Kastner is already on board with such a conception, which she cleverly reveals in the titles of her works. Without seeing it, you might think *Woodlands* (2014), for example, was a view into an idyllic forest. Instead, it features a scene where a dense fog hangs over a pile of wooden pallets, mountains of wood pulp receding into the background. The wistfully titled, *The One That Got Away* (2014), shows a construction site where all but the façade of a heritage building has been demolished. Through this play on words, Kastner shifts the perspective of this discarded waste: it is not simply stuff, set to be erased forever. Instead, it is revealing of our selves, our (past) desires, and the world we've created as natural beings.

*Marissa Neave*

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**Andrea Kastner** is a Kamloops-based painter who makes work about the sacred nature of rejected things. Raised in Montreal, she completed her BFA at Mount Allison University and her MFA at the University of Alberta. Her work has been exhibited across Canada and she was selected as a finalist in the 2012 RBC Canadian Painting Competition.

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**Marissa Neave** is a Toronto-based writer and curator. Currently pursuing an MA in Art History at Concordia University, Marissa's SSHRC-supported thesis utilizes the City of Toronto's 2003 *Culture Plan for the Creative City* as a case study for a spatial analysis of cultural policy. Marissa has a BFA in Criticism and Curatorial Practice from OCAD University.

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