



Kim Dorland  
VOICES

*Kim Dorland's work is on view through May 10 at Freight + Volume in New York, and at Bonelli Arte Contemporanea in Mantova, Italy from May 10-August 15.*



Kim Dorland, *Woods*, 2007. Oil, acrylic, and spraypaint on canvas, 72 x 96 in. Courtesy of the Artist.

Where I was raised, in the low income areas of town, it wasn't unusual to see a drunken fist-fight and then stumble across an elk or a deer a block or two away. The real and the romantic crossed paths quite often. This is the North I am interested in: North as a romantic construct, North as the real space where I grew up white trash in various small towns.

I'm a slut when it comes to visual culture, especially painting. I use a mess of different approaches and mediums that come together in a really disparate way—the deadness of acrylic, the sheen of spray paint, the density of oil paint. I've been asked many times why I use such thick oil paint and my answer is that I want the viewer to recognize they're looking at a painting. But it's also a Canadian thing. We love thick paint. Lots of paint piled up on little wood panels depicting heroic landscapes cover our national museum walls. I wanted to find a way to use this regional dialect in my work because it's problematic and beautiful at the same time. In many of my paintings this landscape is the backdrop for social gatherings, bush parties, or fistfights or lone figures walking in the woods. Other times, the landscape is disrupted by the ghost of an event—beer bottles strewn about, porno magazines littering the forest floor—or by suburbia.

When I know a space intimately I can convey some kind of truth about it. The scene seems more natural, realistic, and psychologically charged. This past Christmas, driving through the Rocky Mountains, I was knocked over by the majesty and beauty of the scene that surrounded me—and then I was embarrassed by my reaction. I'm trying not to be seduced by beauty, but I'm working equally hard not to obfuscate it either. It's taken me a while to realize that beauty isn't such a bad thing. But neither is ugliness or awkwardness. There's room for everything and I want to include it all.