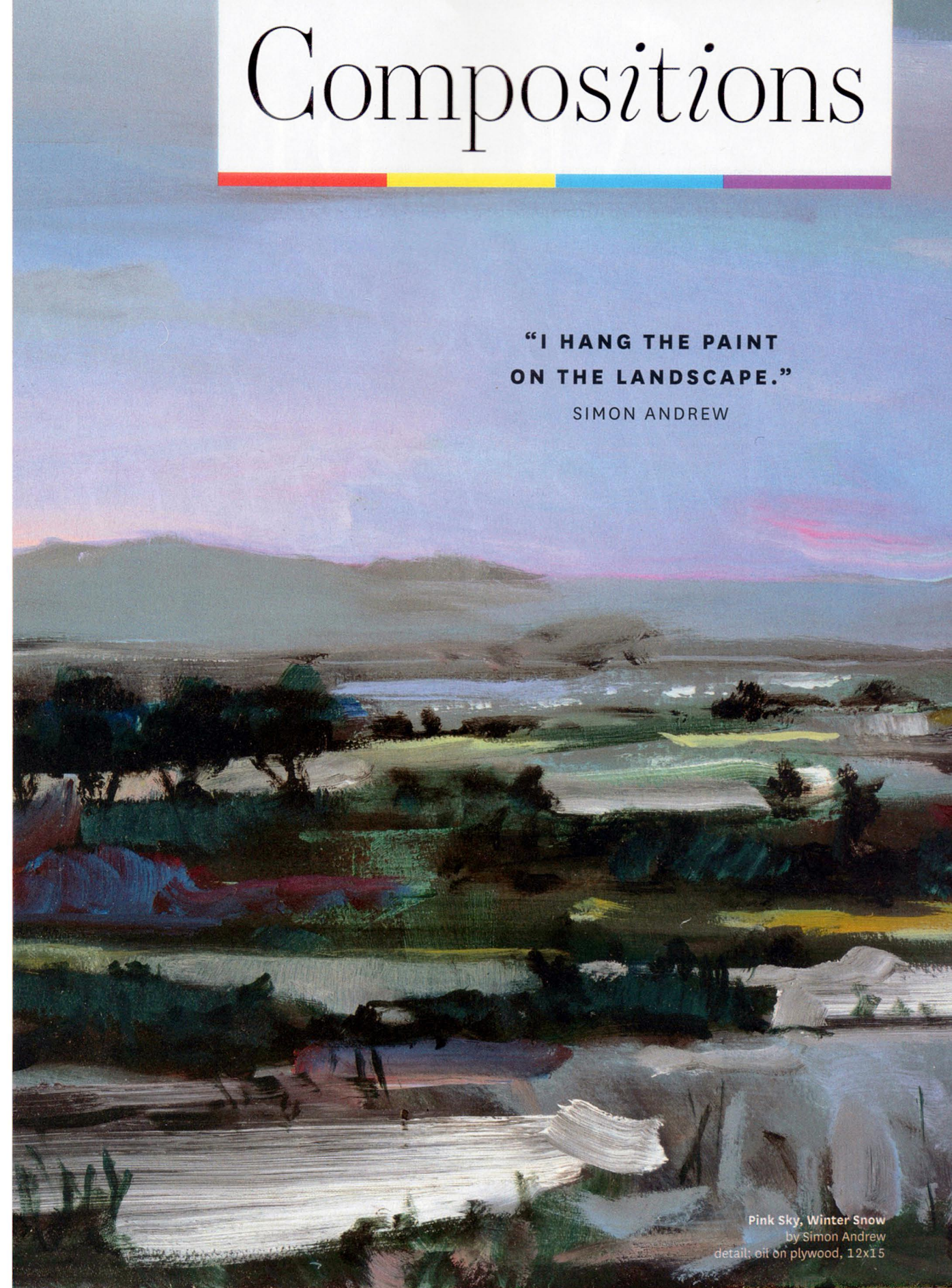


Compositions

**"I HANG THE PAINT
ON THE LANDSCAPE."**

SIMON ANDREW



Pink Sky, Winter Snow
by Simon Andrew
detail; oil on plywood, 12x15

ART OF *Memory & Meaning*

Canadian painter **Simon Andrew**'s winterscapes reveal the creative process and unique vision of this master artist. By Robert K. Carsten

Originally from the county of Cornwall in southwestern England, oil painter Simon Andrew was raised in a family of artists. "Both my father and stepfather attended Slade School of Fine Art of University College London," he says. "My stepfather was taken under the wing of noted Cornish abstract landscape painter Peter Lanyon, and my father, by the great abstract, landscape and still life painter Ben Nicholson," recalls Andrew, who began his own studies at Queen's University, in Canada, to study science.

Soon though, Andrew decided to explore fine art, following in his familial footsteps. "One of the things that was difficult was finding my own way," he admits. "I didn't want my work to just be a clone of what I grew up with. I was very lucky, though, and had seven years of study at Queen's University and at Newcastle University, in England, which I particularly enjoyed. I found the different mindsets of the students and their different ways of approaching art fascinating. It was liberating for me, and I was able to work in ways that interested me. I'd always been intrigued, in particular, by the landscape as subject matter and how it can be worked in different ways."

Nocturnal Snow-Covered Landscape

oil on board, 18x25





A CHANGE OF SCENERY

Andrew has visited Canada since he was 10 years old and now lives in Kingston, Ontario. Five years ago, he and his partner, artist Erika Olson, along with their architect, designed the couple's 2,500-square-foot studio. Illuminated predominantly by warm halogen light, it's where Andrew creates many of his landscapes, both large and small, often working on several paintings simultaneously. "Sometimes I'll do a quick sketch, and it happens very fast and that's fun, but it doesn't happen very often," Andrew says. "Other paintings can take a considerable amount of time and are a struggle, but when I finally get them to work—to mean something—that's a very different feeling of accomplishment, not an immediate one. It's more like when you run a marathon and you feel like you've really done something."

"When I first came to Canada, I was doing a lot of Canadian landscapes that looked pretty English to a lot of people," Andrew recalls. "I think where you grow up is very formative as an artist, and I found that when you move to a different place, it takes a long time for a new landscape to sink into your bones, so to speak ... to filter through you and become part of your visual experience so as to come out organically in your paintings."

ABOVE
**Pink Sky Reflected
on Frozen Lake**
oil on plywood, 12x15

DISTILLING BEAUTY

Although Andrew does paint landscapes en plein air in Canada and during his visits in England, he also creates extraordinary landscapes in the studio by using what he refers to as his "distilling process." He explains, "When I go to a place and come back to the studio and am painting from my memory of that scene, I remember only what was really important to me and forget all the small, insignificant details. My focus is only on what's important to me. This process of relying on memory—of recent or long ago—serves to distill the painting experience into solely what I found interesting. Superfluous bits and pieces are forgotten, yielding to what was especially relevant to me when I looked at the scene."

"Something else that's always very important to me," Andrew continues, "is the paint itself and all of the things it can 'say' and do. As far as I'm concerned, everything considered, it's really all about paint. I often say that 'I hang the paint on the landscape.' What I mean is that paint is hung on an idea of the landscape and, in the process, creates a

OPPOSITE
All Seasons
oil on canvas, 48x48



**"WHEN YOU MOVE TO A DIFFERENT PLACE,
IT TAKES A LONG TIME FOR A NEW LANDSCAPE
TO SINK INTO YOUR BONES, SO TO SPEAK ...
TO FILTER THROUGH YOU AND BECOME PART
OF YOUR VISUAL EXPERIENCE."**

—SIMON ANDREW



Night Fall
oil on board, 16x20

landscape. I've always loved being able to see how a painting was done. When I was young, my family visited museums all around the world, and what always fascinated me was how some artists could make their brushstrokes say so much. What might seem like a flippant little brushstroke instead becomes something that conveys so much information and is truly relevant to the rest of the painting." Andrew names Corot, Turner and Rembrandt as artists whose paintings exemplify these traits. "So often of primary concern to me is the physicality of the paint—what it does and how it works to create some sort of reality," he says. "Other times, though, my painting becomes more about a process of recording direct observations. Sometimes when I'm painting outside, the landscape suggests interesting color relationships. Nature is so intriguing to observe because it's so random. When I'm indoors and not working from nature, I'm always attempting to make things varied enough to seem real. Regardless of which way I'm working, I always have a profoundly interesting conversation with paint."

THE SPLENDOR OF SNOW

Not unlike the Group of Seven painters who found Canadian snow-clad fields, woodlands and ice-covered lakes to be significant sources of inspiration, Andrew finds the icy waterways and blanketing snows of northern winters a powerfully inspirational motif. Of *Pink Sky Reflected on Frozen Lake* (page 48), the artist says, "It's very much like the type of landscape I see when looking across a small waterway of Lake Ontario." He created the painting on Baltic birch plywood, first prepping the board with a coat of Liquin, and then proceeding to paint quite thickly to obscure the grain of the plywood.

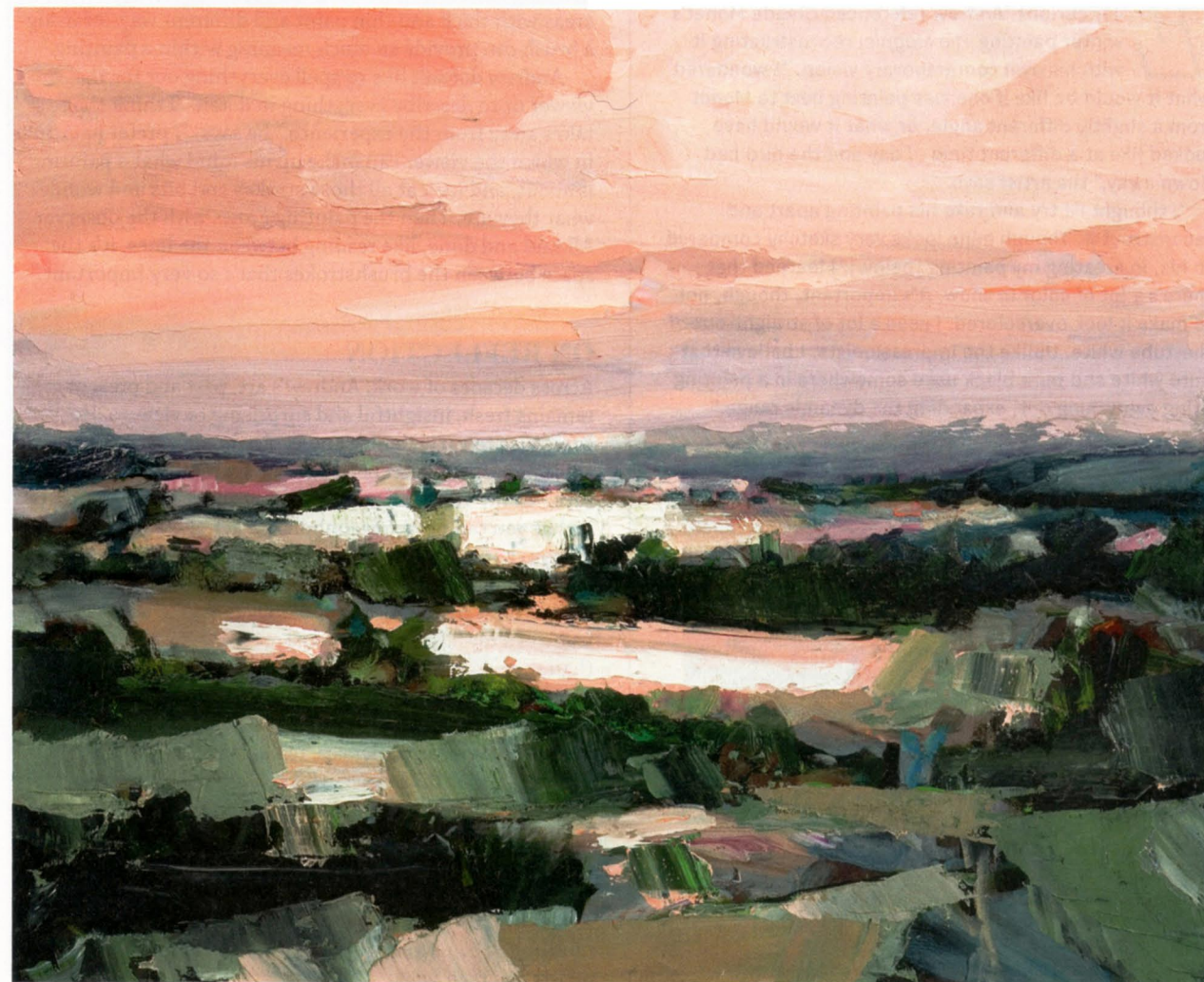
While Andrew primarily uses large brushes, he sometimes applies paint using a palette knife or his fingers for texture variations. He also scrapes paint away to make the surface more interesting. "As a painter, I have a short attention span," Andrew says. "I want art that excites me, so I'll do whatever a painting needs. In *Pink Sky Reflected on Frozen Lake*, I was particularly interested in the recession of color and space, and how I could make that warm pink sky at the horizon sit back in space from those cooler greens in the foreground."

Meanwhile, in *Hedges and Fields With Orange Sky* (opposite), foreground blacks advance adjacent mixtures of



ABOVE
Snow-Covered Flat Land
oil on board, 16x16

BELOW
Hedges and Fields With Orange Sky
oil on board, 16x20



Materials

Paints: a modern-day equivalent of a "Matisse" palette of oil colors, including cadmium reds dark and light, alizarin crimson, quinacridone red, cadmium yellow, cadmium lemon yellow, phthalo green, phthalo blue, cerulean blue, cobalt blue, ultramarine blue, dioxazine violet, lamp black, titanium white

Brushes: assorted fine art and inexpensive craft brushes, house-painting brushes, Luco round brushes

Mediums: Liquin, stand oil, alkyd medium, linseed oil, cold wax (occasionally mixed with color to produce a matte appearance)

Surfaces: hardboard panel, birch plywood, stretched canvas

A Winter Scene, Reconstructed



The Magpie
by Claude Monet
1868–1869; oil on canvas, 35x51

Ever curious, Andrew referenced Claude Monet's winter painting *The Magpie*, reconstructing it with his own contemporary vision. "I wondered what it would be like if one was painting next to Monet from a slightly different angle, or what it would have looked like at a different time of day and the bird had flown away," the artist says.

"I thought I'd try and take his painting apart and reconstruct it. Though mine looks very sketchy compared to his, in creating my painting [below], I learned that there's a lot of color in snow. It's important, though, not to make it look overcolored. I used a lot of straight-out-of-the-tube white. Unlike the Impressionists, I believe that pure white and pure black used somewhere in a painting bring everything out, expanding the dynamic range."



Monet Reconstruction—The Crow Has Flown
by Simon Andrew
oil on board, 12x15

grayish-greens, anchor them to the foreground and thrust their forms forward from the relatively saturated orange in the sky. Whites in the middle ground add important emphasis to certain planes in the landscape.

Strong use of black and white also appear in Andrew's visually powerful *Nocturnal Snow-Covered Landscape* (pages 46–47). He describes how he achieves the gorgeous viscosity of paint in the snow-laden fields. "I often squeeze lots of paint from the tube directly onto the canvas and then move it around with a brush or knife," he says. "I proceed by painting into the white with a 'dirty' brush to achieve variations of color."

Some of the artist's landscapes, such as *Night Fall* (page 50), edge closer to abstraction. Here, Andrew applies paint with both intuitive control and admirable freedom. With its riveting expressive force, the painting evokes the beauty and drama of an evening storm.

Another work of expressive impact is *Late Snowfall* (opposite), its quickly denoted forms painted with vigorous brushwork. "Nature isn't perfect, with everything in place," explains Andrew. "It's untidy and messy, so if I do that in paint, sometimes it makes a painting seem more real. Accordingly, I find it important to keep mark-making in a painting interesting. It's fascinating how creating variety in areas with thick and thin paint and different ways of using a brush can provide so much meaning within a painting."

Andrew doesn't like to spell everything out for the viewer or to describe everything in detail. "I think that takes away from the experience," he says. "I prefer paintings in which the viewer can make up his mind what a painting is about, and look at all those strokes and bits and wonder what they are. Then the painting grows with the observer. All said and done, like reading between the lines, it's the space between the brushstrokes that's so very important."

ON REFLECTION

Across decades of work, Andrew's art, past and present, remains fresh, insightful and surprising to viewers. He continues to vary, change and evolve in approach, style and subject matter. Of his need to keep art interesting, Andrew says, "In my view, the amazing thing about being an artist is that you can never pigeonhole the act of creating art. It's always changing. You can say something through painting about a subject and work that way for years. Later, you might think and paint in completely opposite ways. Perhaps paintings reveal more and make greater sense in retrospect than they do at their time of creation.

"Like a feedback system or gazing into a mirror, painting helps me explain who I am to myself," Andrew continues. "By recalling my experiences, feelings and thoughts, and by making images that reflect this reality, the act of painting helps me realize more fully what it is to be human. Painting, for me, isn't about consistency. It's about truth and being honest with who I am and how I feel in the moment."

Artist, instructor and writer Robert K. Carsten (robertcarsten.com) enjoys painting in various media and writing about artists and their work.



LEFT
Late Snowfall
oil on canvas, 36x48

BELOW
Landscape With Orange and Brown Sky
oil on board, 16x20



MONET: MUSÉE D'ORSAY/GETTY IMAGES