

For Immediate Release

Dean Monogenis

Mount Fiction

11 May – 29 June 2024

Opening Reception: Saturday, May 11th, 5:00 – 8:00pm

Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present the exhibition, *Mount Fiction* by Dean Monogenis marking his seventh solo show with our gallery. Continuing with themes of landscape, Monogenis's new work depicts mountains as serene subjects in their natural form and their relationship to architecture and temporal structures. The paintings were created using his hard-edge painterly style with acrylic paints on wood panels.

In the early start of the pandemic when the stay-at-home orders were first implemented and travel restrictions were put into effect, Monogenis turned inward and began reading voraciously, stringing together incipient ideas that were deeply personal and introspective. Upon returning to his studio, he began painting landscapes with bodies of water depicted as lines or stripes to create a symbolic passageway for travel from one painted landscape to the next. *Mount Fiction* is the fourth iteration of this theme of creating fictitious spaces for escape during the time of isolation and restrictions. In comparison to previous work, Monogenis shifted his focus to distinct aspects of the rural environment and in particular various depictions of mountains. Previous bodies of work included hilly landscapes and mountains but simply as background elements in nature with a direct relationship to architecture or built structures. In the new work, mountains become the focus, presented as monuments for appreciation by those who have traveled from afar to engage with and admire them.

Mountains have inspired countless tales both real and imagined. They are beautiful and powerful in their presence within the landscape but also intimidating and sometimes dangerous as vehicles of exploration. There is a litany of symbolism associated with mountains stemming primarily from their proximity to the heavens. From Mount Olympus to the Himalayas, mountains are the subjects of stories of humans challenging their physical capacities while feeling a closeness to the sky and the outer world. The promise of a personal pondering intercedes with our desire for adventure, beauty and apotheosis. This observance was not Monogenis's initial intention for these paintings but as the series developed the mountains became the subjects, documenting a quest to connect with them within the context of a fabricated space.

The largest painting in our show is entitled *Don't Mistake My Finger for the Moon* and features a rugged mountain shown behind a stream of water with its peak set within a ring created by the warm glow of the sunset. At one point, Monogenis realized he was trying to say something specific about the creative process with this image and it prompted him to revisit René Daumal's book, *Mount Analog*, a touchstone of surrealism. As Daumal's story goes, a group of amateur explorers motivated by a literary fantasy embark on a journey to find a mountain that they know does not exist. Much like this narrative, Monogenis approaches his painting under a similar delusion. His process allows him to create plausible fictions beginning with photographs capturing distinct landscapes that are manipulated in Photoshop to create digital collages used as source materials for his paintings. The resulting imagery produces an effect that is not quite real but not entirely fake either. He knows these imagined landscapes do not exist in the real world but he creates them with the conviction that they do. Like the explorers in *Mount Analog* who knowingly agree to embark on an imagined location, he allows himself and his audience to be convinced of his renderings of fictitious beauty.

In conjunction with his solo show, Monogenis curated a group exhibition entitled *A Cadence to Wandering* that includes artworks by artists in our gallery program. The show includes works by Lezley Saar, Cynthia Ona Innis, John Bankston, Dana Weiser, Rachael Neubauer, Brendan Lott, Carolyn Castaño, Pepa Prieto, Katherine Sherwood, Timothy Paul Myers, Nike Schröder, Vojislav Radovanović and Andy Kolar.

Monogenis attended Skidmore College prior to receiving a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has had reoccurring solo shows with Galerie Xippas in Geneva, Paris, Athens and Uruguay and has had solo shows at Baronian Gallery in Brussels, the most recent in 2022 was entitled *Whatever Seems Solid*. Monogenis has had solo or two person shows at Bryce Wolkowitz Gallery, Morgan Lehman Gallery and Stux Gallery in New York and has participated in group exhibitions at the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio, TX; Santa Monica Museum in Santa Monica, CA; Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Saint Etienne, France; CAC Meymac, Meymac, France; Pavillion de l'arsenal, Paris France; Bronx Museum of Art/Wave Hill, Bronx, NY; Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY; Herter Art Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA and Schneider Museum of Art in Ashland, OR among others. Monogenis's work has been featured in various publications including Angeleno Magazine, Huffington Post, Artillery, Artnet News, Wired, Timeout NY, Brooklyn Rail, Electra, Metro Pop, Georgia Review, The New Yorker and New American Paintings.