Dean Monogenis

**Memento Mori**

**INTRODUCTION**

DEAN MONOGENIS’ acrylics on wood panels present buildings, under construction or in decay, and often encroaching on natural settings. “I don’t think of myself as a painter of architecture,” he writes in the February/March 2009 issue of *New American Paintings*, where his work has twice appeared. “I prefer the notion that I am a collector of it, rescuing it from its ordinary context.” In paintings that are at once hard-edged and mysterious, the artist reminds us of impermanence—our own and that of our dwellings.

By capturing familiar images of construction, Monogenis offers a fresh way to see the contemporary built environment. These images conceal the architect’s final vision and suggest that the lives of buildings are transitional, from their conception to their ultimate and natural ruin.

In *Memento Mori*, for example, a simple bungalow on a secluded bay temporarily defies gravity while two enormous high-rises being built on the opposite shoreline threaten its isolation. *Drop City* comprises a mad clutter of scaffolding, netting, and unfinished work perched impossibly atop a wild butte, where a small frame cottage has already been overtaken by an urban structure. Neither of the projects is finished; both are doomed.

Ancient ruins, temporary digs such as tents and trailers, and superstructures in process all scar the wildness of mountains that will outlast them. These fantasy environments pay homage to the architectural avant-garde, from Will Alsop to Buckminster Fuller to Archigram, all the while insisting on the transience of ideas and of human culture itself. A difficult lesson, but one made easier because Monogenis has discovered unexpected beauty amid the assault of progress and the truth of impermanence.

Dean Monogenis, a New York City native, earned a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1996. He has had solo exhibitions in the Stefan...
Stux and Riva galleries in New York, the Farrell Pollock Fine Arts/Bingo Hall Gallery in Brooklyn, and the Walter Maciel Gallery in Los Angeles. His paintings have also appeared in group exhibitions across the United States and at the Antonia Battaglia Arte Contemporanea, Milan, Italy. An artist-in-residence at the Pace University–Dyson College of Arts and Sciences in summer 2008, Monogenis currently resides and works in Brooklyn.

D.C.

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