

## **For Immediate Release**

**Vojislav Radovanović**

***Playground at the Abandoned Chapel***

**7 January – 25 February 2023**

**Opening Reception: Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 – 7:00pm**

Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present *Playground at the Abandoned Chapel* by Serbian born/Southern California based artist, Vojislav Radovanović. This exhibition will be our first solo presentation of Radovanović's work following his inclusion in the summer group show, *Future Patchwork*. The show will include new mixed media paintings and a site-specific intervention with a video projection.

The new work is inspired by Radovanović's recent year-long residency at the Museum of Art & History in Lancaster located in the high desert of Antelope Valley as well as the general scenery of neighboring Palmdale where he now lives and works. Radovanović became enamored with the barren landscape with many abandoned buildings and burnt-out architectural dwellings covered in rubbish and lying-in ruins. In particular, he became inspired by an old brick gymnasium left behind as remnants of a burn-out school which quickly became associated with a sacred space much like a chapel with its grand arched window frames still in place. Littered with evidence of human interaction with dense graffiti, destroyed furniture and other discarded items, the site exists as an appropriated stage that Radovanović sought to create an imaginative setting for his revisionist play. For him the space functions as an open-air art gallery where he curated and hung his new paintings only to be experienced through video documentation included in the back gallery of the show. The space draws associations from Radovanović's general art practice of collecting debris from numerous dump sites throughout the desert as well as his personal collection of toys for the inspirational starting points of his musings. The process of developing the works becomes a therapeutic practice for him while inviting viewers to examine their own approach toward personal reconstruction and reconciliation.

The acrylic paintings explore symbolic fantasy and the construction of new identity in places and objects that have been displaced from their original meaning. Radovanović fills the vacancy of meaning left behind from the issues of politics, religion, war, mass consumerism, and the climate crisis by inviting viewers into an unusual world of toys brought to life among the wreckage. Combining aspects of his enjoyment in the contemporary art arena of Los Angeles with his war-torn childhood and background as an immigrant from Serbia (formerly Yugoslavia), Radovanović creates works that are simultaneously whimsical and disturbing as he reassembles layers of significance from the rubble of history. For example, a depiction of the abandoned chapel is shown in the background of the landscape within a cloud of smoke in the painting, *Big Battle at 90<sup>th</sup> Street*. An animated pink helicopter with a grimacing smile on its face flies over at a low altitude with ladder extended. In the foreground stands an enlarged Godzilla figurine with arms extended, claws drawn and evil smirk as if to imply he is the culprit of the catastrophe. The helicopter may be rescuing those left behind by the attack as a savior to the wreckage. The imagery draws reference to the vulnerable landscape of Southern California with the ever-impending threat of wildfires, earthquakes and climate change and evidence of a helicopter, a common mode of rescue, law enforcement and travel in the Los Angeles area.

Born in 1982 Radovanović is a Serbian multi-media artist, art director, documentarian and independent curator based in Palmdale, CA. He received a degree in Fine Arts at the University of Belgrade in 2005 and studied at the Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Arts in Austria after receiving the Kultur Kontakt grant in 2004. Radovanović had a solo exhibition at age 15 in the National Museum of Valjevo in Serbia and he has presented his works internationally in numerous group and solo exhibitions. Important cultural institutions where he showed his works are the Museum of Art and History (MOAH) in Lancaster, CA; Angels Gate Cultural Center in San Pedro, CA; The Swedish Institute in Paris; Centre of Contemporary Art in Torun, Poland; The Círculo de Bellas Artes de Madrid - CBA in Madrid; and Belgrade City Museum, Museum of Yugoslavia, National Library of Serbia. Radovanović recently finished a year-long residency as a community engaged artist at MOAH Lancaster as part of *Artists At Work* program supported by Mellon Foundation.