

On the occasion of the 56. Biennale Arte Venezia
Caterina Tognon opens her new gallery showing

Katarzyna Kozyra **Looking for Jesus**

Opening May 6th, 2015 h 7.00 / 12.00 pm
May 7th / November 22th, 2015
Tuesday / Saturday h 3.00 / 7.30 pm

collaboration with Zak Branicka
thanks to Katarzyna Kozyra Foundation



Katarzyna Kozyra's starting point for this project was information about the so-called Jerusalem Syndrome, an acute delusional disorder which had been reported by medical professionals only in the 2nd half of the 20th century. After visiting the Holy Land, people afflicted with the syndrome start to identify with Biblical characters – mostly and usually with the Messiah. To date the artist has visited Jerusalem four times in order to find those, who in the early 21st century believe themselves to be Jesus. The result is over 100 hours of video footage from interviews, and the city which serves as the background for religious rituals, and a scene for people of various faiths, denominations and colours, subsequent Messiahs who try to convince the artist they are miraculous and genuine, and a colorful crowd of pilgrims and locals. This time Kozyra witnesses an ongoing performance in which she is not the protagonist, but merely an audience attempting to find and record at least a fraction of what goes on in this sacred city. Kozyra encounters incredible personalities. Each of her heroes hides a fascinating story, and all of them combined constitute a project presenting ways and means of carrying out one's faith, its place and role in today's world, and values on which we build our reality.

The editing process is yet another stage of the contemplation of this "performance", and at the same time it is the moment for the verification of certain facts. It is also when the artist ask herself – and us – many questions: what are the mechanisms of faith and shaping our beliefs? How do we perceive reality and how do we build our perception of it? Isn't the critical approach and never-ending fact-checking just another expression of the instinctive desire to believe in the power of reason?

According to the Polish historian and essayist Andrzej Wajs, the video "*Looking for Jesus*" is not a documentary in the classic sense of the word. It is a diagnosis and, at one and the same time, a journal of the artist's own journey and she, at one moment, notices that she is also telling her own story, a story of lack, of non-presence and of longing. The Jerusalem episode affords her a better understand of the phenomenon of self-identification, for now she can observe it from outside, as it were. Her characters, meanwhile, are utterly convinced that otherness – including cultural alienation – is a stain which they have to wipe away and that only in discovering themselves will they find the road to Jesus, as a guarantor and guard of their subjectivity. If they feel like its lessees, it is only by way of His consent. Like apostles. This is what the film treats of.

Katarzyna Kozyra was born in Warsaw in 1963, a sculptor, photographer, performance artist, filmmaker, author of video installations and artistic actions. She is one of the most renowned Polish contemporary artist, both in Poland and abroad. In 1993 Katarzyna Kozyra graduated from the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts, Faculty of Sculpture. Helmut Mark. Kozyra received, among others, the Paszport Polityki award in 1997 and the Award of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage in 2011. In 1999, she received an honorable mention at the 48th Venice Biennale for the video installation Men's Bathhouse in the Polish Pavilion. In her works she touches upon the most important issues: identity and transience, life and death or religion and sex. She manoeuvres in spheres of cultural taboos as well as the stereotypes of behaviour ingrained in society. In 2012 she established the Katarzyna Kozyra Foundation. After her solo shows presenting *Looking for Jesus* in Warsaw, Berlin and New York, many media including the New York Times wrote about this project, emphasizing its entertaining and philosophically intriguing aspects.

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