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Katarzyna Kozyra: 'Looking for Jesus' *by Ken Johnson, February 2015*

below
Katarzyna Kozyra,
courtesy of Zacheta National Gallery

In "Looking for Jesus," an entertaining, philosophically intriguing, 70-minute video by the Polish artist Katarzyna Kozyra, the camera follows Ms. Kozyra in Jerusalem, where she finds and interviews men who believe they are Jesus. She's looking for people with a condition known as Jerusalem syndrome, characterized in part by delusional over-identification with characters from the Bible.

They are a fascinating bunch of eccentrics. One with long hair and a beard wearing a white robe and a gold-trimmed red tunic looks as if he's stepped out of a Northern Renaissance painting of Jesus. There's an African-American jazz musician and a French Jew who became a Muslim and claims to be a surgeon. The most interesting and engaging is a bearish, genial man of about 50 in a white T-shirt

and blue bathing suit who knowledgeably explains mystical ideas from the kabbalah. Ms. Kozyra tells him at the end of the film, "You're the nicest messiah I have met."

Much of the fun is in the gentle, nonthreatening way Ms. Kozyra introduces herself to her subjects, overcomes their suspicions and gets them to hold forth on how they suppose themselves to be imbued with the Holy Spirit. As a character herself in the movie, she has a subtly comical, deadpan presence. She seems earnestly interested in each man even if sometimes she's obviously skeptical and other times apparently bored by his monomaniacal, grandiose or evasive discourse. A strident atheist could take the film as further evidence that religious faith is irrational, but Ms. Kozyra leaves it all open to interpretation.