

**Title**

**Talking**

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**Artist**

Mikolaj Kasprzyk

**Dates**

Mar. 8 - Mar. 30, 2024

**Opening**

Mar. 8, 6-8 pm

**Location**

136 Baxter Street New York, NY 10013

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In 1977, Mikolaj Kasprzyk graduated from his apprenticeship in the atelier of renowned abstractionist Jacek Sienicki, commencing a practice of his own that has continued uninterrupted for nearly half a century into the present day. Kasprzyk is a painter of few compromises, completely dedicated and confident in his own vernacular. His work often raises more questions than are answered; there is a sense of austerity and ambiguity to his paintings. A compulsion for figural narrative drives his work, with conversations and relationships set into strange, sparse settings.

Like his mentor, Sienicki, Kasprzyk was born, lives and works in the city of Warsaw, Poland. An ancient city, Warsaw is brimming with art and architecture of the medieval era, a theme ever-present in his oeuvre. Against their heavenly backgrounds, the characters of these paintings are reminiscent of Giotto's seraphim, their delicate features completely serene. The spaces themselves mimic the ambiguity of the landscapes found in early Renaissance illustration – in Kasprzyk's world, checkerboard flooring fades into pure monochromatic firmament. Shades of ultramarine and scarlet recall illuminated Books of Hours and the court portraiture of Hans Holbein the Younger.

Decoration is nearly entirely ignored: There is space and then there are subjects at their center. The constant unadorned settings of his world draws the viewer towards the importance of the core narrative he constructs and its variables. Small gestures become immense in the face of the unwaveringly quiet world in which they exist.

There is an unwavering stillness to these scenes, his figures are frozen in place even in moments of action. In one work, a man readies himself to jump off the side of the composition, a moment of reckless abandon completely petrified and motionless. Even in their calmest states, the central figures seem deep in conversation, as if the viewer found them at a brief pause in an ongoing dialogue. There is a sense of confrontation to these works, that the viewer is peering into a private world.

Kasprzyk notes that all of his depictions of people in these works are self portraits. In some instances, the resemblance is clear, and his likeness – a thin man with tightly cropped hair and hollowed cheeks – is clear. In others, the artist presents himself with classical blonde ringlets and as the female counterpart to the male subject. These couples appear twinlike in their features, presenting not only a duality the artist sees within relationships, but within his own spirit.

Central to this body of work is a series of three panels, each entitled “Adam and Eve”. A budding tree, like a child, grows and blossoms between the couple, deep in conversation. Richly rendered tendrils begin to envelop the tonal background that was so ubiquitous in earlier panels. In states of dress and undress, the couple stand across from each other as the Garden comes to life in front of them. As in Genesis, their nudity only becomes shameful when they are expunged from their earthly paradise.

- Eli Harper, Art Critic & Historian

The exhibition is accompanied by an additional text from Dorota Kruczalak.

## **About the artist:**

**Mikolaj Kasprzyk** (b.1952) Born in Warsaw, Lives in Warsaw

Graduated from Professor Jacek Sienicki's atelier in 1977. Kasprzyk worked as an assistant and lecturer at the Department of Painting, Fine Arts Academy in Warsaw 1977-1989. Kasprzyk has shown extensively in museums and regional galleries; Studio Sienko Gallery, Promocyjna Gallery, and group exhibitions at Okregowe Museum, Museum of Kinematografii, and Polish Institute of Poland.