

JURE KASTELIC

CATHEDRAL AND BAZAAR

LONDON

02.05 – 14.06.2025

Carl Kostyál is delighted to present the second solo exhibition of Jure Kastelic (b. 1982, Slovenia, lives and works in Venice) with the gallery, 'Cathedral and Bazaar'. The exhibition marks the artist's debut in London.

"With his body turned away from us, a poised traveller dressed all in white stands in a graceful contrapposto stance. Perilously alone, he is encased in what looks to be a cube of ornately framed glass, replete with golden baroque adornments, and so the scene looks as though the Palace of Versailles had dropped from the sky, and penned him in on all sides, while he was merely out for a stroll. This is Jure Kastelic's 'After C.D.F' (all works 2025), from the artist's visually arresting new body of work. With the figure's feet perched on a small island of rock and wearing such an implausibly louche hiking outfit (smart shirt and trousers, both rolled up, both darkened by shadow) the artist references Caspar David Friedrich's Romantic masterpiece 'Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog' (c. 1818). But if Friedrich's figure apprehends the sublime Elbe Sandstone Mountains in Saxony and Bohemia which stretch out before him, Kastelic's 'Dipping Toes' is locked in a gilded mise-en-abyme where there is no way out. Similar effects are realised in 'Thrower'. In this disorientating composition, we encounter a reflection and not the actuality of a human figure, albeit one rendered in white marble statuary, while great paintings from the history of art—works which populate the walls of the room in which we find ourselves looking—are reflected upon the surface of the mirrors. These are pictures of a world where, despite all one's fervent efforts toward action, purpose, and adventure, nothing changes. It is a bloody-minded world.

This predicament of being unable to find one's 'way out' is everywhere in this series. They are pictures of containment and futility, resilience and fortitude, that reach back to the myths and fables of old. Kastelic's extensive representation of threads, for instance, in which his figures might hold a thread taut to examine its length or use one to spin a gigantic wheel on the lonely sand floor of an amphitheatre, gestures to the Ancient Greek story of Ariadne and Theseus. Ariadne, a Cretan princess, bequeathed to her beloved Theseus a sword (to slay the minotaur) and a ball of string (to lay out his path, and so retrace his steps to escape from the monster's perilous labyrinth). Theseus succeeded on both counts and Ariadne's gift now stands as a metaphor for the ways we might solve a complex problem or find a solution in a difficult situation. But in Kastelic's sun-drenched scenes, this meaning of the thread is inverted: we know we are lost in the minotaur's labyrinth, and we have all the tools to lead us out of it, but we cannot find the exit. The boy in the amphitheatre, with his grand and overbearing hoop, suggests the child's future of conformity—the requirement to jump through hoops—in which the world turns but barely changes or, to take a more optimistic view, a sense that he is following his own thread against the whirring power

that world. Similarly, in 'Loophole', a third boy in the series is depicted with a mirror, or perhaps even a portal, which suggests a progression of self-awareness and maturity.

Elsewhere, a faceless cast of knights, princes, and kings adorn themselves with all the finery of royalty but are themselves lifeless and limp. Like Tolkien's Nazgul, their spectral forms, neither alive nor dead, reflect upon the nature of human greed: how much of our soul would we sell to wear the crown? Such moral, religious, and political questions motivate these paintings. They ask us to see more clearly our present through the make believe of the past. The title of the exhibition, 'Cathedral and Bazaar', is a reference to software developer Eric S. Raymond's essay, and later book, on the dialectical tension between two architectural ideas: the cathedral is top-down, rule-following, secretive, certain of its gatekeepers; the bazaar, by contrast, is bottom-up, anarchic, open, and refuses authority. They represent two distinct ways of seeing the world's structures. Do we live in a world of fundamental order, or of underlying chaos? Of course, the cathedral (San Marco) and the bazaar (Mercato di Rialto) are also symbols of Venice, the city on the edge of east and west where Kastelic lives and works, representing both the divine and the secular. Many of Kastelic's paintings are themselves caught at this juncture. They feel imbued with the symbols and the imagery of the past, but the narrative that underpins them could not feel more contemporary. In his pictures, we find ourselves in the minotaur's labyrinth – and we cannot find our way out."

– Matthew James Holman

Dr. Matthew James Holman is a lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art, writer and curator based in London.

In October 2024 Kastelic had his debut solo exhibition 'Musical Chairs' with Carl Kostyál in Milan. Kastelic's works have been exhibited internationally including at Cankar Center, Slovenia (2024); Mare Karina, Venice (2024); Pareidolia Foundation, Venice (2024); French Place, London (2023); UGM, Slovenia (2023); Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts (2021); Showroom Fabio Gatto and Salotto Studio, Milan (2021); White Crypt, London (2020); and others. Works by Kastelic are included in the collections of the Musée National d'Histoire et d'Art, Luxembourg; Arendt Medernach, Luxembourg; Herbert Smith Freehills, London; and private collections worldwide.