

Gagosian to open gallery in Rome

New director comes from Guggenheim

JASON EDWARD KAUFMAN

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Larry Gagosian, who runs galleries in New York, London and Los Angeles, expects to open a fourth gallery in Rome by the end of the year and has recently appointed Pepi Marchetti Franchi as director. She left her job as an executive associate in the office of Guggenheim Foundation chief executive Thomas Krens to take the job.

“Larry thinks Rome is a sleeping giant that can function as a magnet for Italy and southern Europe,” says Ms Marchetti Franchi, 35, an Italian-born art historian with a masters in arts administration from New York University. She came to Mr Gagosian’s attention in connection with the monumental Richard Serra installation that opened last summer at the Guggenheim Bilbao because Serra is represented by the Gagosian Gallery.

She has started looking for a suitable space to rent in Rome’s city centre. “We want a space with classical character in a historic building,” she says. “We are not trying to find Chelsea in Rome, but to put contemporary art together with the heritage of the city.” Mr Gagosian already rents a second-floor office in Palazzo Borghese where his employees are compiling the drawings catalogue raisonné of Cy Twombly, who lives in the Italian capital. Last June Mr Gagosian used the space for a small show of work by Ed Ruscha. It was a critical and commercial success, and now he wants larger quarters for an expanded Gagosian Gallery Rome.

Ms Marchetti Franchi says the new gallery will present solo shows of contemporary artists in the Gagosian stable, many of whom are not well

known in Italy. It may also include exhibitions featuring loans from other sources, and “will not be limited to artists Larry already represents”, she says. She expects to collaborate with the city’s two contemporary art museums: Macro, a former industrial structure to which the French architect Odile Decq is adding a modern extension, and MAXXI. This is a E80m (\$96.2m) modern art museum in north Rome designed by the London-based Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid, which is scheduled to open at the end of next year.

“All of a sudden there is a lot happening in Rome,” says Ms Marchetti Franchi, and “although it may not be evident to outsiders, there are beautiful and important collections all around the country.”

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