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**Venice Biennale**  
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## Women curators appointed for the first time ever, to be followed by an American in 2007

Less circus, more focus at the Venice Biennale

**Jason Edward Kaufman and  
Anna Somers Cocks**

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Venice. The Venice Biennale Foundation announced on 12 August that Spaniards Maria Corral and Rosa Martinez will co-direct the 2005 international art exhibition that opens next June, and Robert Storr will organise the 2007 edition. This is the first time women will direct the exhibition, and the first time also for an American.

The President of the Biennale Foundation, Davide Croff, says the appointments are part of a three-year initiative to renew the visual arts part of Biennale (which also runs the Film Festival, the Architecture Biennale and has a performing arts component).

This Biennale will be the first to take place under the more flexible administration of a governing body that is no longer wholly State-run, but a private/public foundation. It is this

new status, for example, that has permitted the appointment of two curators. It is also unprecedented for a curator to be appointed almost three years ahead of time, as in the case of Robert Storr. In the past, the Biennale has been famous for bureaucratic delays that, for example, gave the Swiss curator Harald Szeemann only five months to organise his 1991 Biennale.

Speaking to *The Art Newspaper*, Rosa Martinez said that the decision to have two curators for 2005 may be due to the fact that they have only nine months to put together the show. “We must choose all the artists by the end of March because here in Venice, transport and the Customs are so slow”. They will be working with 10-12 staff, and separate companies for the installation and for technological aspects such as video. The budget is still uncertain as the Foundation is hoping to find sponsorship, but it is unlikely to be less than in 2003, €6 million (\$7.4 million), of which about half is for the works of art themselves: “Not a lot”, comments Ms Martinez.

Works of art will be commissioned, and, according to a principle applied at the Manifesta events, if they are later sold, the Biennale Foundation will get its money back. Davide Croff has also said that the Foundation will begin buying works of art from the exhibition again, a practice it abandoned in 1935.

Besides the national pavilions, whose displays are chosen by the nations themselves, the two main exhibitions of the Venice Biennale are in the Padiglione Italia, for which Ms Corral will organise a retrospective show, and the Arsenale, which Ms Martinez will fill with new work.

Ms Corral says her exhibition will include artists from the 1960s and 70s whose work has influenced the contemporary scene, but that the show will include all media and will be “absolutely contemporary”. She will create a group show rather than a series of one-artist installations, though each artist will be represented by more than one work. She told *The Art Newspaper* that the Padiglione Italia was a building that strongly affected how you put together any exhibition: “With its different floors, the fire doors and air conditioning ducts, it is difficult to find a decent wall on which to show anything”.

Ms Martinez says her show will be “super-international” and include “voices outside the Western logocentric tradition. The challenge is to show artists going beyond established languages, not only formally, but also ideologically”. Asked whether she or Maria Corral had chosen themes yet for their exhibitions, she said that it was still early days.

“The Biennale board seems to be concerned that the exhibition has become too sprawling and, in the process, has lost its shape”, she says: “The mandate is to provide clarity and rigour. Davide Croff wants a stronger statement with less of a circus around it”. One expression of this will be a shorter, but more informative catalogue.

The Venice Biennale has traditionally been very crowded in its opening days, and then neglected for the following five months. In an attempt to keep interest alive and to market the exhibition, an educational department is being developed that will also work with tour operators to bring visitors to the Biennale.

For autumn 2005, Mr Storr is organising an international symposium on contemporary art—a kind of summit conference at which prominent artists, theoreticians, critics, and other experts will discuss the field’s “codes, languages, new and old paradigms”.

Mr Storr told *The Art Newspaper* that he would like this to be addressed to a broad public, not only a specialist public”.

The conference will convene in more than one city, like the migrating panel discussions organised by curator Okwei Enwezor in connection with the 2002 Documenta.

Mr Storr’s symposium will set the stage for the 2007 exhibition that he will direct. Asked what he has in mind for his show, Mr Storr speaks of “a composite of known and emerging figures” from around the world.

“The purpose of such shows is not only to present art that is distinctive and important in its own right, but to bring these correspondences and connections to the fore. No cyclical exhibitions of this kind can try to be definitive”, says Mr Storr. “Lofty, vague themes and catch-all lists do not produce the effect that these shows can and should have. They should be lightning rods that help clarify the confusion around us, not catalogues of that confusion that merely compound it”.

The new, incisive Biennale aims also to make better use of its famous brand, to remind the world that this is THE original. Davide Croff believes that to rebuild its identity the Biennale needs a building where it can organise exhibitions on a regular basis and interact with the public all year round. He has his eye on the famous Fondaco dei Tedeschi, where Dürer stayed and which Giorgione helped fresco. Negotiations with the Italian Post Office, its current owners, are going well, he says. As Rosa Martinez comments, “Compared to other biennials, the

Venice Biennale has another dimension simply by virtue of the city itself. It is always a miracle”.

## Picture Caption

### Maria Corral

Lives and works in Madrid. Director of La Caixa Foundation, Barcelona (1981-91) and of the Reina Sofia in Madrid (1991-94). In her 25-year career she has organised more than 50 exhibitions in Spain and throughout Europe, Japan, and Mexico, including shows of Giorgio Morandi, Francesco Clemente, and Julian Schnabel. Curator of the 1986 Spanish Pavilion at Venice

### Rosa Martinez

Independent curator based in Barcelona. Worked with Ms Corral at La Caixa as director of art education (1978-88). Organiser of the Barcelona Biennale (1988-92). Organised or co-organised: 1996 Manifesta, Rotterdam; 1997 Istanbul Biennale; 1999 Site Santa Fe; 2002 Busan Biennale, Korea. Curator of the 2003 Spanish pavilion at Venice, and curator of the Moscow Biennale, January 2005

### Robert Storr

A New York-based critic and painter. Professor of modern art history at the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University. (He will take a research leave in spring 2007 to organise the Biennale.) Curator at the Museum of Modern Art (1990-2002), where he organised exhibitions of Chuck Close, Tony Smith, Robert Ryman, and Gerhard Richter, among others. Organiser of 2004 Site Santa Fe, 2004

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## COOKIE SETTINGS