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Italian Pavilion at the 55<sup>th</sup> International Art Exposition of the Venice Biennale

**vice versa**

Venice (Tese delle Vergini, Arsenale), June 1<sup>st</sup> – November 24<sup>th</sup> 2013

Curator Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, Commissioner Maddalena Ragni

**NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT**

February, 6, 2013  
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**THE ART NEWSPAPER** 

Italian Pavilion turns to “crowdfunding” to raise cash

Money donated will help fund Bartolomeo Pietromarchi's presentation on the theme of "duality" at the Venice Biennale

By Gareth Harris.



Bartolomeo Pietromarchi

The Italian government today announced the exhibition plan for the Italian pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale (1 June-24 November), which will feature 14 artists selected by the curator Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, the director of the Macro (Museo d’Arte Contemporanea Roma). Working under the title “Vice Versa”, Pietromarchi said on Wednesday (6 February) at a press conference in Rome that he aims to explore the idea of “duality” by presenting pairings of artists across seven rooms in the Tese delle Vergini

area of the Arsenale. By showing contrasting pieces together, the curator hopes to capture the contradictory nature of Italian culture.

Among the artists included, Marcello Maloberti and Flavio Favelli will “chip away at the boundaries between autobiography and collective imagination through references to culture and pop-folk traditions”, according to a press statement. Meanwhile, Massimo Bartolini and Francesca Grilli will focus on freedom of speech and censorship. Other artist duos include Fabio Mauri and Francesco Arena; Piero Golia and Sislej Xhafa; Giulio Paolini and Marco Tirelli; Elisabetta Benassi and Gianfranco Baruchello.

Pietromarchi’s structured proposal, which appeared to find favour with some Italian critics at the press launch, contrasts with the sprawling, headline-hitting presentation overseen by the art historian and polemicist Vittorio Sgarbi at the 2011 Venice Biennale. Sgarbi, an outspoken critic of contemporary art, was a surprise choice to organise Italy’s contribution to the most prestigious contemporary art show in the world.

Sgarbi said he received around €1.5m in state funding for his Venice show but this year, the government will contribute only €600,000 (€400,000 is allocated to exhibition costs such as the production of works, 90% of which are site-specific; €200,000 goes towards operational expenses). In a radical move, the pavilion management has subsequently launched an appeal for private support based on the “crowdfunding” model used by institutions such as the Louvre, which continues to raise money for acquisitions through its “Tous mécènes” campaigns (a public appeal by the Paris museum recently raised €800,000 for two medieval ivory sculptures).

A 90-day fundraising period will be launched with events in Rome, Milan, London and New York. “The money donated will go to a dedicated bank account. The funds will be spent by the curator, in collaboration with MiBAC [Italy’s ministry of culture],” says a project spokeswoman.