



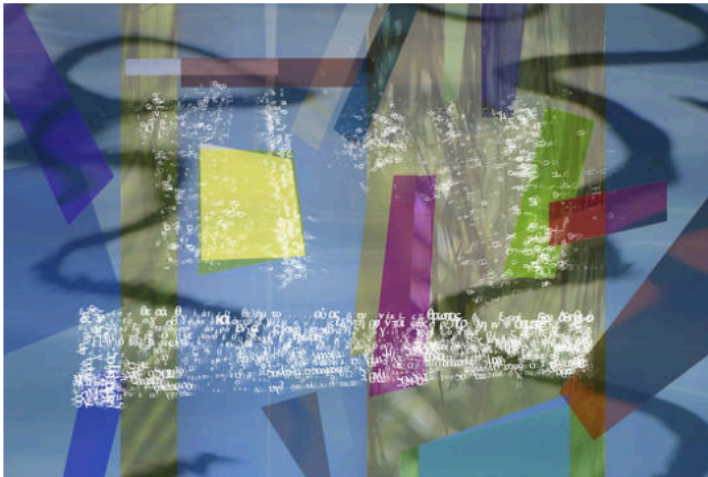
SPEAKEASY

Vatican to Take Part in Venice Biennale Art Exhibition

By FRANCIS X. ROCCA

0 COMMENTS

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Part of Monika Bravo's multimedia installation ARCHE-TYPES. MONIKA BRAVO, COURTESY THE ARTIST

The **Venice Biennale** has served as a premier showcase of contemporary art since 1895, but this year will be only second time it features the participation of the **Vatican**.

The **Holy See** will sponsor one of 90 national “pavilions” at this year’s exhibition, which will run May 9 – Nov. 22.

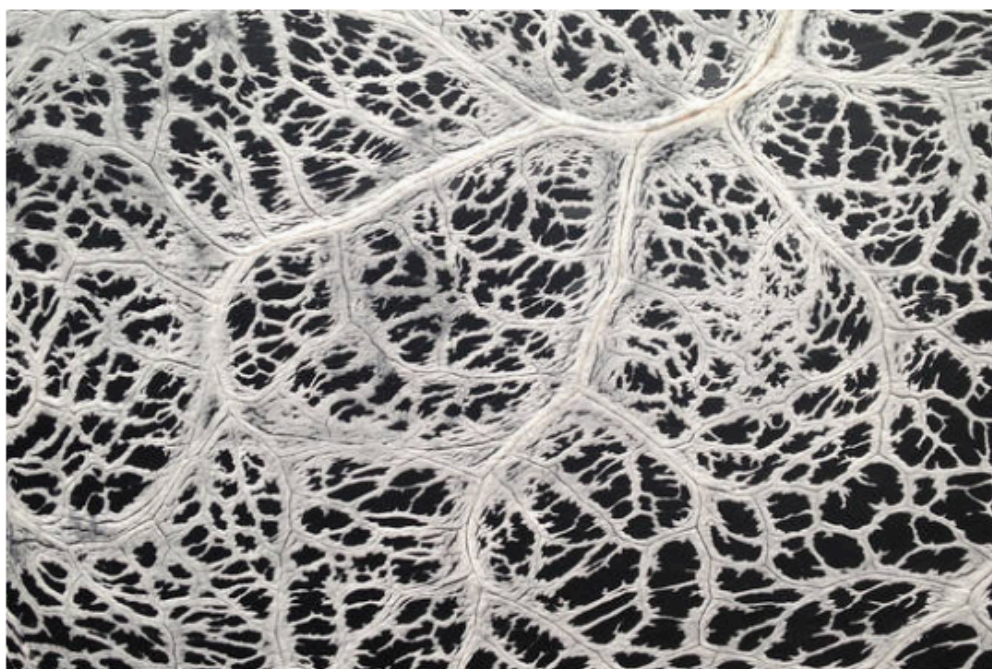
Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, the Vatican’s equivalent of a culture minister, said at a news conference Thursday the Vatican’s participation in the Biennale is part of an effort to resume a historic “dialogue between art and faith.” That relationship began in the earliest stages of artistic creation and brought forth glorious monuments of Christian culture, the cardinal said, but was effectively “shattered” in the 20th century.

As in 2013, when Vatican-commissioned works at the Biennale were inspired by the first 11 chapters of the Book of Genesis, this year’s contributions will also have a biblical theme. Three artists have been asked to respond to words from the first chapter of the Gospel of St.

John, “In the beginning ... the Word was made flesh,” which refer to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation.

The results, as described by curator Micol Forti, will be as varied as the nationalities of the artists, who hail from three continents.

Monika Bravo’s multimedia installation will feature Greek words from St. John’s Gospel projected on panels of glass, combined with images of leaves, water and sky and geometric shapes reminiscent of traditional fabrics made by indigenous people in the artist’s native Colombia.



Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva, *Haruspex* (detail), 2015, organic materials. *ELPIDA HADZI-VASILEVA, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST*

Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva, of Macedonia, who works with organic waste materials such as animal intestines and hides, will contribute an architectural installation covered with a skin-like covering that recalls the Venetian tradition of fine embroidery and also suggests how a single identity can include a variety of interwoven cultures.

Nine photographs by 30-year-old Mário Macilau of Mozambique document the lives of street children in his country’s capital city of Maputo.

The costs of the Holy See’s pavilion have been assumed by 11 corporate sponsors, principally Intesa San Paolo bank. The Vatican has not yet released the cost of this year’s pavilion, but last time, the cost came to 750,000 euro.