

## **Paradise Lost** The First Roma Pavilion

52. International Art Exhibition  
La Biennale di Venezia



### **Background information**

As there is no infrastructure for Roma representation in Europe, the first Roma Pavilion alongside the Biennale's national pavilions will be the first significant step toward giving Roma contemporary culture the audience it deserves. In addition to allowing contemporary Roma artists to present their work and ideas on a world stage, a pavilion at the premier international art forum will send a message of inclusion that has so far eluded the Roma community: Roma have a vital role to play in the political and cultural landscape of Europe.

Young, innovative and creative Roma artists are represented at the most prestigious art festival in Europe and challenge the prevailing negative attitudes towards Roma in Europe and of Roma artists simply as folkloristic street musicians.

For centuries, Roma people have been the subjects, and the victims, of representations created exclusively by the non-Roma. They have been romanticized as subject matter for artists, and to this day an imaginary "world of Gypsy romance" conjures up images of barefoot dancers happily banging on tambourines.

A new generation of Roma intellectuals and artists is emerging, however, along with a new Roma consciousness. Successful and well-educated Roma proudly acknowledge their origin, rather than opt for assimilation and relinquish their cultural heritage. Roma contemporary artists, directly and indirectly, explore the position held by the Roma in contemporary societies. By creating images of the Roma that oppose those of the mainstream culture, Roma artists are fighting to reverse long-held stereotypes.

A Roma presence at the Venice Biennale - the marking of cultural as well as physical space - will show that Roma artists speak in a visual language that can be understood worldwide. It will be a historic move toward banishing the stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding an entire culture.