

# ARTFORUM

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## Hammer Museum and LAXART Plan 2010 Biennial

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Jori Finkel reports for the *Los Angeles Times* that the Hammer Museum has teamed with the nonprofit gallery LAXART to plan a large-scale biennial, starting in 2012, featuring artists from the LA area. The exhibition will take place at both spaces as well as public sites in the area.

"Whether people love or hate them, biennials are very much anticipated, desired, and needed by the artistic community. They are our versions of the Oscars or Emmys," says Ann Philbin, director of the Hammer Museum.

As for the decision to partner with LAXART, Philbin says it grew out of a yearlong conversation with Lauri Firstenberg, the founder of LAXART, because the organizations are so "simpatico."

Firstenberg expands on that thought. "Annie's mission of supporting artists working on the ground in Los Angeles really rubs up against the ethos of our own organization," she says.

Logistically, organizing a biennial is a large undertaking, but this is not exactly new territory for the Hammer Museum curator Ali Subotnick has co-organized one edition of the Berlin Biennial. Deputy director Douglas Fogle previously organized the Carnegie International. And since 2001, Philbin has overseen for the Hammer a series of thematic group exhibitions that happened to take place every two years.

This is also familiar ground for Firstenberg, who curated one edition of the California Biennial, which has taken place at the Orange County Museum of Art since 1984, though not always every two years. Her gallery also works to introduce new artists regularly, but she says her nonprofit has been "bursting at the seams" in terms of exhibition space.

That's one reason, she says, why the collaboration between LAXART and the Hammer will extend beyond the biennial. The two plan to work together on other projects, such as upcoming shows of Shannon Ebner to take place at both venues.

So what does the new biennial mean for the California Biennial, which opens its 2010 edition at Orange County Museum of Art on October 24? Museum director Dennis Szakacs, who calls his biennial "a cornerstone" of the museum's program, is not making any snap decisions. Whether they would rethink their own plans, he says, "remains to be seen until we have more details on the new project."