

travelista

Wander woman Maria Shollenbarger fast-tracks international intelligence on where to be and what to see.

→ March is the art world's glittering, global high season. **The European Fine Art Fair** (www.tefaf.com) in **MAASTRICHT** kicks off next Friday, while the **Armory Show** (www.thearmoryshow.com) is in full swing in **NEW YORK** this weekend (Manhattanites should make haste to Piers 92 and 94), and in **DUBAI** the fourth annual **Contemporary Art Fair** (www.artdubai.ae) opens on the 17th. Having proven itself as a legitimate stop on the international circuit over the past three years, Dubai's fair – despite the recent downward turn in the Emirate's fortunes – will once again host prominent dealers from as far afield as Vienna, San Francisco and Seoul. Among them there's likely to be some buzz about the **Armani Hotel Dubai** (www.armanihotels.com; doubles from about £684), opening the same week on 11 floors of the Burj Dubai tower. What to expect from the fashion designer's

maiden hotel venture? The 160 rooms and suites are joined by the first Armani Spa, a nightclub (Armani Privé), a bespoke florist specialising in rare blooms (ArmaniFiori), not to mention Japanese, Indian and Mediterranean restaurants. All will be awash in the rigorous neutrals and conspicuously hushed Zen calm on which Mr Armani is purportedly rigorously and endlessly insistent.

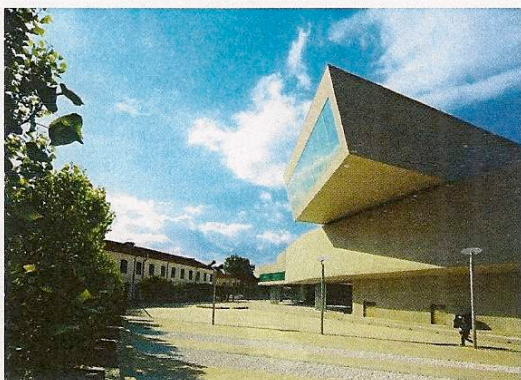
→ From Dubai it's on to **ROME**, an eternal art city, where the impressive form of the Zaha Hadid-designed Museum for the Art of the XXI Century – better known by its curious-spurious acronym,

Maxxi (www.maxxi.beniculturali.it) – can now be admired. After a year-long prelude and several private vernissages, it will inaugurate its public exhibitions this May, commencing with a retrospective of Gino de Dominicis (Italy's own 20th-century provocateur, who died in 1998). From here, a stroll along the Via Flaminia leads you back to the *centro storico* and a new, very stylish little inn called **Babuino 181** (www.chicretreats.com; doubles from €245). The charms of the 19th-century palazzo's meandering layout are fully exploited by a handful of large, airy suites filled with art deco reproductions and original photography – all on one of Rome's loveliest streets.

→ A holiday far from the world's art capitals doesn't equate to artless surroundings; proof lies at **Jicaro Island Ecolodge**



Above: Jicaro Island Ecolodge on Lake Nicaragua. Below: a glass vase circa 1952 by Flavio Poli, part of Rita Fancsaly's exhibit at TEFAF Maastricht.



Above: the Zaha Hadid-designed Maxxi art museum in Rome.

