

170  
THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N.Y. TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

Int. Prog. foreign release  
(no pub. mailing)

June 1, 1958

U. S. REPRESENTATION AT THE XXIX BIENNALE INCLUDES  
PAINTINGS BY TOBEY AND ROTHKO AND SCULPTURE BY SMITH AND LIPTON

Four one-man shows -- of the painters Mark Tobey and Mark Rothko, and the sculptors David Smith and Seymour Lipton -- represent American art this year in the U. S. Pavilion at the XXIX Venice Biennale which opens June 14 and continues through October 19. Twelve museums, three galleries and eighteen private collectors throughout the United States, and in Canada, Italy and France, have lent works of art to the present exhibition, which is under the auspices of the International Council at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and has been organized by the Museum's International Program. Present for the opening ceremonies of the XXIX Biennale will be Mrs. Bliss Parkinson, President of the International Council, and Porter A. McCray, United States Commissioner and Director of the International Program.

Sufficient examples by each of the four artists have been included to display his individual style, while taken together the exhibition serves as an indication of the variety and range of contemporary American art. In his foreword, to the catalog,\* Mr. McCray states, "Each of these artists has been a pioneer, concerned with finding his own personal means of expression. Though all use some idiom of ~~abstraction~~ abstraction, their new techniques and formal innovations have been evolved in order to clothe timeless, universal symbols in a language appropriate to our day." Selection of the 10 paintings by Rothko and 14 sculptures by Smith, was made by Sam Hunter, formerly Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art; the 36 paintings by Tobey and 12 sculptures by Lipton were selected by Frank O'Hara, of the International Program.

The thirty-six paintings in this exhibition by Tobey (b.1890) encompass the more important examples of his production during the last fifteen years, as well as a few earlier paintings, among them Broadway Norm (1935), his first work in the now famous "white writing" technique. Ten

more .....

\*An illustrated catalog of the present exhibition in Italian and English contains a foreword by Mr. McCray, critical essays on the artists by Mr. Hunter and Mr. O'Hara, biographies of each artist, and a complete chronological listing of the works shown.

of the canvases were completed during the last two years, and those executed in 1958 have come directly from the artist's studio in Seattle, Washington, to be exhibited for the first time in Venice. In his essay on Tobey, Mr. O'Hara writes: "His work...shows a consistent reliance on the dictates of his own sensibility....The delicacy and integrity of his expression has led to an art both adventurous and reticent, modest and explicit....Though meaningful symbols occur (and for Tobey, the line itself acquires more than descriptive force), the effect is not of a meditative analysis but of a pantheistic celebration."

The ten paintings by Mark Rothko (b. 1903) were all painted in the past two years and show in several instances a shift to a darker palette and more simplified forms. His work seems at first sight directly in opposition to that of calligraphic line, as he paints simple pairs and triads of color areas with no clear demarcations, although Rothko, like Tobey, is preoccupied with light. "Rothko's art," Sam Hunter writes, "conveys a sense of grave ethical purpose....His paintings may be plausibly characterized as a cycle of monumental modern 'illuminations'...consecrated wholly to the life of art alone."

The two sculptors included in this exhibition have also broken new ground in their field. David Smith (b. 1906) is the recognized American pioneer in heavy iron constructions. "Today he stands apart," writes Mr. Hunter, "for the stubborn integrity and individuality of his idiom. A persisting loyalty to the refractory materials, iron and steel...distinguish his work from prevailing tendencies which favor more fluid and malleable metal alloys....Whether he elaborates an open linear tracery in space...silhouetted planes, an organic imagery of light...or explores aggressive fantasies on machine forms, his work is marked by a fundamental economy and clarity of means." The fourteen works included were executed since 1950 and show a tendency toward greater monumentality than his earlier work. Within the examples chosen, three main types can be distinguished: the standing, fetish-like forms such as Tank Totem V; open linear tracery as in Australia; and the most recent assemblages of "found" objects and parts of machinery incorporated into relatively simplified constructions like Sentinel III and Five Spring.

more.....

122

Seymour Lipton (b. 1903), completely self-taught in the techniques of sculpture, has turned from initial experiments with wood to metal casting. Then his search for a "controlled organic dynamism" led him, in 1949, to the invention of a brazing method that covered steel surfaces with deposits of various alloys. "The juxtaposition of biological metaphors," writes Mr. O'Hara, "with those of human anatomy... points toward... the conflict between the psychological optimism of man in his quest for order and certainty and the fatal cycles of nature forcing on man the classical recognition of mutability." The twelve sculptures presented here, all belonging to the '50s, show a tendency toward an epic vein exemplified in such works as the incisive Viking, the Pioneer, and the monumental Ancestor -- a major achievement which is exhibited here for the first time.

The International Council at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, under whose auspices this exhibition is presented, consists of art patrons and community leaders from all parts of the United States. Mr. August Heckscher is Chairman of the Council and Mrs. Bliss Parkinson is President. The Council was incorporated in 1956 to encourage international exchange of the arts since the United States has no Ministry of Fine Arts nor any government agency that might function as such. In July 1957 the International Council assumed sponsorship of the Museum of Modern Art International Program of Exhibitions, initiated in 1952 by a five-year grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund which continues as a major contributor to the Program. Among the more than twenty shows currently touring outside the United States under the Council's auspices are two large exhibitions of paintings by American artists:

The New American Painting, on view from June 1 to June 29 at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Milan, and a one-man show of the late Jackson Pollock which had its inaugural showing in Rome at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna.

The U. S. Pavilion is the only one privately owned in Venice, as all others belong to the governments of the participating countries. Erected in 1930 by a New York gallery, it was purchased in 1953 by The Museum of Modern Art in order to insure continuous representation of art from the United States at the oldest and most famous international exhibition in Europe.

At the XXVII Biennale in 1954, The Museum of Modern Art presented one-man shows of the painters Willem de Kooning and Ben Shahn, while the sculptors Gaston Lachaise, Ibram Lassaw and David Smith were each represented by one major work. At the XXVIII Biennale of 1956, the U. S. exhibition "American Artists Paint the City" was organized by the Art Institute of Chicago, at the invitation of The Museum of Modern Art.

The American representation at the present Biennale has been made possible through the generosity of the following lenders: Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Art Gallery of Toronto, Canada; Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois; Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York; City Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York; Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York; San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco, California; Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, California; <sup>Seattle Art Museum, Seattle Wash.</sup> Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York; Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, New York; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, New York; Willard Gallery, New York, New York; Hans Arnhold, New York, New York; Hollis S. Baker, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Dr. and Mrs. Edgar F. Berman, Baltimore, Maryland; Barone Giorgio Franchetti, Rome, Italy; Mrs. Carol Ely Harper, Seattle, Washington; Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Heinz II, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller, New York, New York; Joseph H. Hirshhorn, New York, New York; Mr. and Mrs. D. Rhodes Johnson, New York, New York; Seymour Lipton, New York, New York; Mr. and Mrs. Arnold H. Maremont, Chicago, Illinois; Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger, New York, New York; Mrs. Albert H. Newman, Chicago, Illinois; Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York, New York; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph R. Shapiro, Oak Park, Illinois; David Smith, Bolton Landing, New York; Miss Darthea Speyer, Paris, France; Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine, Meriden, Connecticut.

Biographies of the artists included in the U. S. Pavilion

SEYMOUR LIPTON was born in New York in 1903, and in 1923 was graduated from Columbia University. Entirely self-taught in the techniques of sculpture, he initiated his artistic career in 1932, working at first with wood and stone. A decade later he turned to abstractions in bronze and lead and, after a succession of experiments with various combinations of metals, began in 1950 to use thin-gauged metal sheets brazed with melted nickel-silver alloys by means of the oxyacetylene torch. Since 1939 he has been on the faculty

more.....



124  
The International Council at  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
U. S. Representation: XXIX BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

June 1, 1958  
Page 5

of the New School for Social Research in New York. His commissions include sculptures for synagogues in Oklahoma and Indiana, and for the Inland Steel Company Building in Chicago. At present he has two works in progress for the U. S. Embassy in Oslo. Since World War II the artist has held one-man shows in New York almost every two years, and has been widely exhibited in Europe, the Orient, and Australia. At the IV Bienal of São Paulo, in 1957, he was awarded the First Acquisition Prize. Examples of his sculpture can also currently be seen both in the U.S. and International Pavilions at the Brussels' World Fair. In addition to being included in many U. S. museums and private collections, his work has been purchased by the Carstairs Museum in the Bahamas, B.W.I., the Tel Aviv Museum, in Israel, and the Art Gallery of Toronto, Canada. The artist lives in New York.

MARK ROTHKO was born in Dvinsk, Russia, in 1903, immigrated to the United States in 1913, and grew up in Portland, Oregon. He attended Yale University from 1921 to 1923 and began painting in 1926, studying with Max Weber at the Art Students League in New York. Here he founded in 1935, together with the painter Adolph Gottlieb, the group of "The Ten," and, for the next two years worked for the WPA Federal Art Project. In 1948, with the painters William Baziot, Robert Motherwell and Barnett Newman, he became the founder of the school "Subjects of the Artist" (on East 8th Street in New York), out of which has grown "The Club" where avant-garde artists hold weekly meetings. He has taught at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco, and at Brooklyn College in New York. His work has been widely exhibited throughout the United States as well as in several countries in Europe and in South America and in India. He is represented in the permanent collections of many U. S. museums and also in the Museu de Arte Moderna in São Paulo, Brazil. The artist lives in New York.

DAVID SMITH was born in Decatur, Indiana, in 1906. After attending Ohio University for one year, he worked as a riveter in the Studebaker plant at South Bend, Indiana. Then, in 1927, he took up painting full time and studied at the Art Student's League in New York, principally with Richard Lahey, John Sloan and Jan Matulka. In 1931 he began to experiment with free-standing constructions, first in painted wood, then, during a trip to the Virgin Islands, also in coral and lead. His first welded iron sculpture dates from 1933. Since World War II he has taught at Sarah Lawrence College, the University of Arkansas and the University of Mississippi. In 1951 he

more.....

125  
received a Guggenheim Fellowship, renewed the following year and, in 1954, was American delegate to the UNESCO's First International Congress of Plastic Arts in Venice. Since his first one-man show in 1938, he has exhibited widely throughout the United States. In addition to being included in many important group shows in Europe, he has participated in the I Bienal at São Paulo. His work is in the permanent collections of leading U. S. museums. The artist has lived, since 1940, in Bolton Landing, New York.

MARK TOBEY, born in Centerville, Wisconsin, in 1890, began his career at the age of 21 as a fashion artist and portraitist in New York, where he held his first one-man show, in 1917. In 1922 he moved to Seattle, Washington, and there taught art at the Cornish School on and off for a decade interspersed with travels to France, the Mediterranean and the Near East. From 1931 to 1938, while he was resident artist at Dartington Hall, Totnes, Devonshire, in England, he again travelled extensively, also in the Orient. In 1934 he was in Shanghai and there studied Chinese calligraphy. After his return to Seattle, in 1938, he worked for a year for the WPA Federal Art Project. In 1954-55 he was again in England and France. His paintings have been exhibited in one-man shows throughout the United States and in England and France as well. He has been represented in many group exhibitions also in the Far East and South America, including the III Bienal of São Paulo. His work is in the collections of many important U. S. Museums and has been purchased by the Museum of Fine Arts in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. The artist continues to make his home in Seattle.

-----

In addition to organizing the exhibition for the American Pavilion, the International Program has accepted on behalf of the United States an invitation from the XXIX Biennale to send works by three young American artists to the Italian-owned Central Pavilion, where they will be shown with young artists from France, Germany, Great Britain, Spain and Italy. The artists selected by the Museum are the painters Jasper Johns and Joan Mitchell and the sculptor Richard Stankiewicz. The works were selected by Frank O'Hara and include three recent paintings in encaustic by Mr. Johns,

more.....

26  
The International Council at  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
U. S. Representation: XXIX BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

June 1, 1958  
Page 7

two large abstractions by Miss Mitchell and three welded steel sculptures  
by Mr. Stankiewicz. Lenders to this international exhibition are: Hansa  
Gallery, New York, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller, New York, Mr. Philip C. Johnson,  
New Canaan, Connecticut, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Stable Gallery  
New York.