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THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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For the first time since 1895, an American painter has been awarded the top International prize at the world-famous Biennale art exhibition in Venice. Mark Tobey, 67-year old West Coast artist, represented by 36 paintings in an exhibition organized by the Museum of Modern Art's International Program and shown under the auspices of the International Council at the Museum, won out over artists from 37 countries. His 19th century predecessor was James Whistler.

Another first for this country at the 29th Biennale, in which 446 painters, sculptors and printmakers participated, was the award of the David E. Bright Foundation of Los Angeles to three artists under 45. Although numerous prizes are presented at the Biennale, the Bright award marks the first occasion in the history of the Venice Biennale that an American organization has presented awards to which contributing artists of any country are eligible. This year it was won by Antonio Tapies, painter from Spain, Kenneth Armitage, sculptor from Great Britain, and Vincent Hložník, printmaker from Czechoslovakia. It is to be given for the next 10 years.

The Biennale opened on June 14 and will be on view until October.

The U.S. Pavilion also contains painting by Mark Rothko and sculpture by Seymour Lipton and David Smith. The United States is the only country whose pavilion is privately owned. Erected in 1930 by a New York art gallery, it was purchased by the Museum of Modern Art in 1953 in order to ensure continuous representation of art from this country at the oldest and most famous international exhibition in Europe.

The International Council at the Museum of Modern Art, under whose auspices the exhibition is being presented, consists of art patrons and community leaders from various parts of the country. Mr. August Heckscher is Chairman and Mrs. Bliss Parkinson, President.

Sam Hunter, formerly Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum, selected the works by Rothko and Smith; Frank O'Hara, of the staff of the International Program, selected the paintings by Tobey and sculptures by Lipton.

At the request of the 29th Biennale the International Program also sent eight works by three young American artists to the Italian-owned Central Pavilion, where they are being shown with work by 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.

Porter A. McCray, Director of the International Program, is U.S. Commissioner at this year's biennale, the largest since the series was inaugurated in 1895.

For additional information please contact Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York City. CI 5-8900.