

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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local general

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PAINTINGS BY DE KOONING AND SHAHN TO BE SHOWN AT 27th VENICE BIENNALE WITH SCULPTURE BY LASSAW, LACHAISE AND SMITH

Approximately twenty-seven paintings and drawings by Willem de Kooning and approximately thirty-five paintings, drawings and posters by Ben Shahn will be shown in the United States Pavilion at the 27th Venice Biennale International Art exhibition opening in Italy on June 19. A recent sculpture by Ibram Lassaw, a sculpture by Gaston Lachaise and one by David Smith will also be exhibited in the Pavilion which was just purchased by the Museum of Modern Art as part of its International Exhibitions Program. The artists were selected by a Museum staff Committee. Andrew Carnduff Ritchie, Director of the Museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture, is organizing the retrospective of de Kooning and has chosen the sculpture; James Thrall Soby, Museum trustee and art authority, has selected the works of art by Ben Shahn for the exhibition.

The paintings and drawings by Willem de Kooning date from 1944 to the present. He is a recognized leader of the abstract expressionist school, one of the most vital postwar movements in this country, and was represented in the exhibition "Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America" at the Museum of Modern Art in 1951 which was organized by Mr. Ritchie.

The retrospective exhibition of works by Ben Shahn, well-known social realist, being assembled by Mr. Soby, covers the period from the early '30s to the present. Mr. Soby is the author of "Ben Shahn," published by Penguin Books Limited and also organized an exhibition of his work at the Museum of Modern Art in 1947.

The sculpture by Ibram Lassaw to be shown at the Pavilion is a recently completed piece commissioned for the Temple Beth El in Providence, Rhode Island. It is a welded bronze pillar, 8 feet 6 inches high. David Smith's "Hudson River Landscape," made of steel and owned by the Whitney Museum, will be shown and Gaston Lachaise's "Standing Woman" from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art.

The famous Venice Biennale art exhibition, which has been held since 1892 except for the war period, is sponsored by the Italian government in order "to bring together some of the most noteworthy and significant examples of contemporary Italian and foreign art" according to the official prospectus.

In announcing the selection of the 27th Biennale, Rene d'Harnoncourt, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, said:

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"While the Museum, having just purchased the American Pavilion, has made itself responsible for the selection of this first exhibition under these new auspices, we want to emphasize that there is no intention of monopolizing the selection for future years. As our announcement of the purchase of the building stated, we will offer the choice of exhibitions from time to time to other museums in different parts of the country. In this way, each American showing will have a distinct character and flavor of its own."

The selection of artists to be presented in the American Pavilion of the 27th Venice Biennale was determined by a staff committee of the Museum of Modern Art, composed of Rene d'Harnoncourt, Director, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of Museum Collections, James Thrall Soby, trustee, Andrew C. Ritchie, Director of the Museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture, and Porter McCray, Director of the International Exhibitions Program.

Commenting on the selections, Mr. Ritchie said:

"All the painters and sculptors chosen are leaders in their respective styles of work. De Kooning is one of the most respected older artists of the so-called Abstract Expressionist group which has made such a vital contribution to American painting over the past decade. Ben Shahn is the leading social realist painter in America. The Committee felt that the contrast of two such different styles of painting as these men represent would provide a strong impact. The choice of sculptors was also made with this idea of contrast in mind: the great figurative tradition to be carried by Gaston Lachaise - an artist who, while dead, is very little known in Europe; the dramatic draughtsmanship in space which has so characterized work of our younger experimental sculptors is splendidly represented by David Smith's "Hudson River Landscape" and Lassaw's column for the Temple Beth El in Providence, Rhode Island. The Temple is to be dedicated on April 23, just in time to permit the sculpture to be lent to the exhibition at the Biennale. The architect of the Temple is Percival Goodman."