

U.S. Agency Drops Guggenheim For Venice Art Show Selections

By GRACE GLUECK

The National Collection of Fine Arts, sponsor of the United States exhibition at the Venice Biennale, the most important of the international art exhibitions, has canceled its agreement with the Guggenheim Museum to put on the show this June.

"What they have finally submitted," said Lois Bingham, curator of the international art program for the sponsoring agency, "would involve expense of such magnitude that we could not undertake at this late date to raise the funds for it. We are going to try to find someone else for the show."

The National Collection, a bureau of the Smithsonian Institution, took over official sponsorship of government art shows abroad from the United States Information Agency last fall. Its 1966 fiscal budget, which had already been set up, does not provide for the estimated \$50,000 to \$100,000 said to be necessary for mounting a Biennale display.

"I regret the National Collection's decision," Thomas M. Messer, the museum's director, said yesterday. "We were eager and willing to do the show. But the final say must of course be theirs."

The root of the trouble, according to rumors in the art world, is a dispute between Mr. Messer and the Guggenheim's trend-spotting curator, Lawrence Alloway (who coined the phrase "pop art"), over the proposed choices.

When the National Collection tapped the Guggenheim to do the show last December, it was generally assumed that the choice had been made specifically with Mr. Alloway in mind. His influence, it was felt, would uphold the vanguard trend of the shows that was established in recent years.

Mr. Alloway submitted a preliminary list to the National Collection, after discussion with H. Harvard Arnason, vice president in charge of art administration for the museum, while Mr. Messer was on a European trip.

Its five proposals, it has been learned, were: Work of the painter Jackson Pollock, chosen from the representative year 1950 or 1951; a retrospective show of boxes by the constructionist Joseph Cornell; a token work of David Smith, the late sculptor, chosen as homage; recent work of the pop artist Roy Lichtenstein, and the sculpture of Ernest Trova, an artist fairly new on the New York scene, who has generated some avant-garde excitement.

On Mr. Messer's return, how-

ever, he made several substitutions in Mr. Alloway's list. He eliminated both the Roy Lichtenstein and Jackson Pollock choices, and substituted the "Thrid dimensional" work of Larry Rivers sculpture and constructions) and that of the sculptor Isamu Noguchi.

"I scrutinized the list and found I could only identify with three-fifths of it," he said. "My final selection was approved by the museum's trustees."

The substitutions in effect made the proposed exhibit an all-sculpture show. National Collection officials are known to feel that aside from the formidable packing costs such a show would represent, the space and lighting arrangements in the present United States Biennale pavilion, put up in the 1930's, are inadequate for the display of sculpture.

"We try never to interfere with a museum's selection," Miss Bingham said. "We had asked for a show that was appropriate for a building we are stuck with. But if we'd had even this proposal earlier, we'd have gone out and tried to raise the money for it."

Neither Mr. Alloway's list nor Mr. Messer's substitute one have ever been officially released. But word of the two lists has leaked out in art circles. The Messer revision has created a small furor in New York and on the West Coast.

"I was angry and shocked," said André Emmerich, a prominent 57th Street dealer who represents some artists who were shown in the 1964 Biennale. "The choices do not represent the current American scene."

"It strikes me as being a rather conservative approach," said Sidney Janis, considered the dean of vanguard art dealers in New York. "I have nothing against the artists mentioned. But the proposed show was hardly a reason for Europeans to visit the United States Biennale exhibit."

On the West Coast, Philip Lieder, editor of the influential art magazine *Arforum*, yesterday that he was preparing an editorial for the magazine on the subject. "The list is absurd from a standpoint of U.S. representation," he said yesterday. "It is not a genuine reflection of the current state of U.S. art. Bureaucracy has taken over."

The National Collection has given no indication of what museum it would ask to replace the Guggenheim. One report currently circulating suggests the possibility of Brandeis University's Rose Art Museum, whose director is William Seitz.