

# The Paris Biennale -- Young Protesting Artists

By Susan Heller Anderson

Paris

FOR THE past eight years, the Biennale de Paris has inaugurated the Paris art season each September. But tradition stops here, for this is one of the most free-wheeling, non-directed, exasperating, amusing and boring exhibitions one could hope for.

To further complicate matters, this year's Biennale is being held, cheek-by-jowl, under the same roofs as two enormous shows devoted to the futurist and cubist movements.

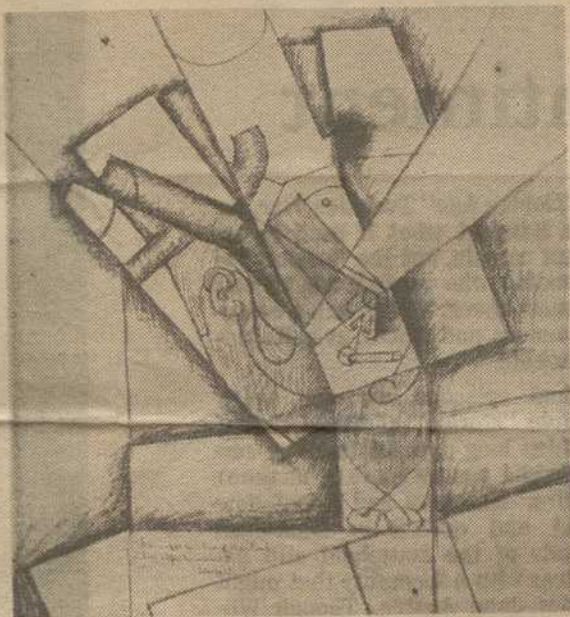
Formerly, the Biennale was held in a park on the Left Bank. Now, with this show sprawling throughout both the municipal and national museums of modern art here (they adjoin each other on the Avenue de President Wilson), the Biennale has been consecrated by the Paris art establishment. Such recognition of the avant-garde has not made it staid, however. The art of today, in gestation, is represented from all parts of the world.

## Theme of Protest

Of the 89 participating artists, 16 are American — mostly from California, comprising the second largest national group, after the French. The American pre-occupation with violence, emptiness and death, depicted by electric chairs, mangled bodies and macabre graveyards litters the floors of the museums.

The predominant theme underlying this show is protest, both political and social. An anonymous work, a typewritten blowup pasted on canvas, exhorts Franco to free Spain's artists. The German paintings depict depravity in bizarre scenes of everyday life. But, lacking the cruelty of a Georg Grosz, these graphic commentaries have a hollow ring.

The primary criterion for admission of artists to the Biennale is that they be under 35 years old. It also helps if they have received



JUAN GRIS: 'THE SMOKER'

**'Mangled bodies and macabre graveyards litter the floors of the museums'**

some measure of recognition in their home countries. But, in the case of Wolfgang Weber, a flattering letter to Mme. Pompidou resulted in the inclusion of his "Wonderful Fantastic Tarzan Plastic."

This chef-d'oeuvre is a tented environment, complete with winking Christmas lights and taped grunts. A large table inside is covered with little people, crepe paper trees, mirror lakes and papier-mache mountains, resembling a fifth-grade social studies project gone mad. Dominating this work is a myriad of tiny Tarzans. The whole is festooned with bananas and plastic palm fronds.

SIXTY years ago the futurists set forth in the art world to free themselves from the restrictions of politics and society, but in a more organized way than the young artists of the Biennale.

First, they issued manifestos, stating their goals. They put down museums as "use-

less admiration of the past." Ironically, they are now regarded as the old establishment, displayed on the walls they scorned in 1909.

Nearly one-quarter of this 250-work show in the Municipal Museum of Modern Art is devoted to Picasso and Braque.

Before long, the two innovators were surrounded by a host of colleagues and imitators. This exhibition begins with Cezanne, runs through famous artists like Gris and Leger to an obscure but aptly named Czech, Bohumil Kubista.

In the Biennale and futurists' exhibitions, there is the element of a put-on, of humor, and of knowing the transitory relationship of art to the time in which it is created. The futurists and young artists of the Biennale reflect a concern with something beyond painting. In many ways, this art is much more provocative, rejecting cults of the past, and openly inviting controversy and criticism.