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## Europe's Largest Show Of U.S. Sculpture Opens

By John Ashbery

PARIS, June 21. — The largest exhibition of American sculpture ever shown in Europe opens officially today at the Musée Rodin and will be open to the public starting Wednesday. It will be on in Paris until October 10, after which it travels to Berlin and Baden-Baden.

Chosen by René d'Harnoncourt, director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and by associate curator Frank O'Hara, the show is

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being sponsored by the museum's International Council. It is the biggest manifestation of American art in Paris since the same museum's show of "Jackson Pollock and 15 Americans," which toured Europe in 1958-59 and had long-lasting repercussions on contemporary European art.

This event comes at a time when cultural relations between France and America are threatening to follow the example of their diplomatic relations. French antiforeign (anti-American) feeling rose to new heights last June when the first prize at the Venice Biennale went to an American. It was confirmed officially several weeks ago when curator Jean Cassou of the Paris Musée d'Art Moderne refused, with the assent of Fine Arts Minister André Malraux, to allow the Italian Marzotto Prize competition to be shown in the musée on the ground that no French artist had won a prize.

This silly state of affairs has been compounded by the Americans themselves. American artists and art dealers are ferocious these days in their denunciations of the School of Paris. And the American government has so far refused to authorize American participation in the international Paris Biennale next fall, ostensibly for financial reasons, even though a number of so-called underdeveloped countries will be exhibiting.

### Relations Seen Improving

But according to René d'Harnoncourt (who, despite his name, is of Austrian origin and has lived in the United States for 35 years), Franco-American relations on the semi-official level are a good deal better. Pitching in himself today with the last-minute installation of the show, together with museum officials Waldo Rasmussen and Alicia Legg, he had nothing but praise for the cooperative attitude of the French.

The Rodin Museum is in fact not owned by the French government but by the Académie Française, and it is this body which has paid entirely for the show's installation. Other help has come from the United States Lines, which provided free transportation for the 72 pieces of sculpture, many of gigantic proportions.

The Museum of Modern Art paid for crating the show, which may not seem like much, but each piece required a special custom-built case whose inner contours were tailored to fit it exactly—a kind of mold around each sculpture.

Installation of the show posed new kinds of problems which were solved thanks to French resourcefulness, according to d'Harnoncourt. For instance, a gigantic Calder stabile was too big to get through the gate of the museum. It was finally lifted over the wall by a derrick, which first had to lift two parked cars out of the way.

The bizarre beauty of many of the works shown may well astonish Parisians as much as did the Pollock paintings in 1959. Even people who know photographs of the work of David Smith, who died tragically in a car crash a few weeks ago, will be unprepared for the monumental beauty of the five major works by him.

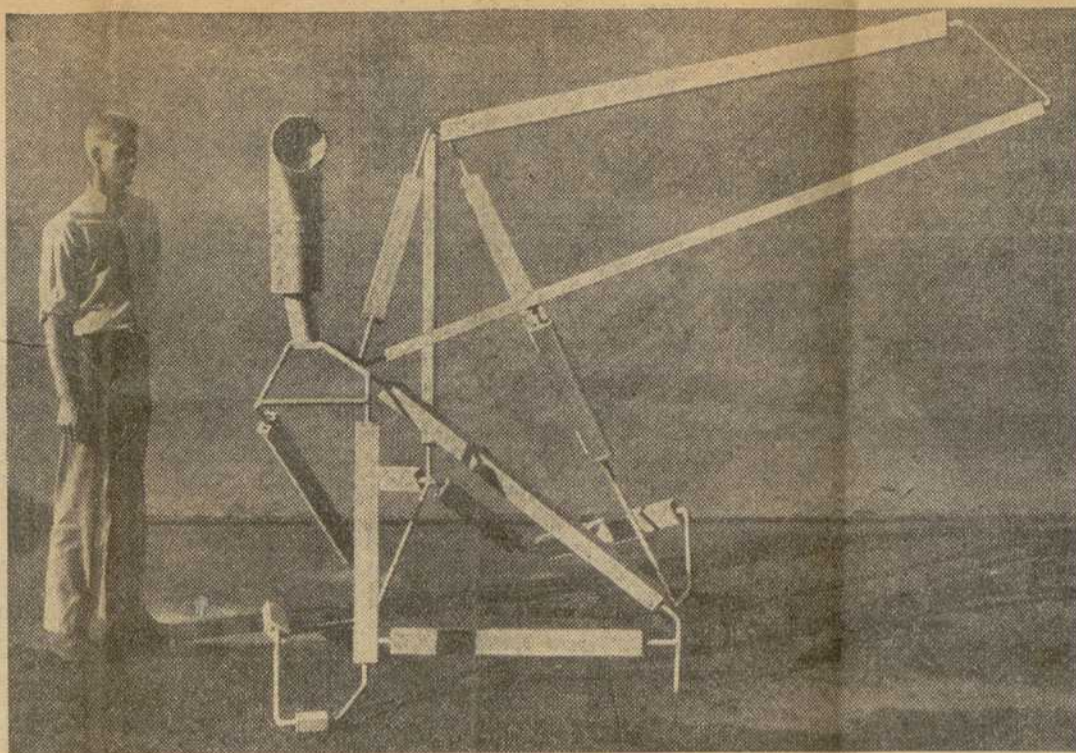
### 21-Foot Tower

One, a "Tower" of stainless steel scaffolding, soars 21 feet high to dominate the museum garden like a modern Colossus of Rhodes. Scarcely less grandiose is "Zig III," an assemblage of painted steel plaques.

Other sensational outsize works are George Rickey's "Two Lines—Eighteen Feet," a mobile made of two slender steel antennae pivoting around a low pedestal, and Frederick Kiesler's "The Last Judgment," which has been set up as a kind of altar in the former church on the museum grounds. A complex work in bronze, aluminum, pewter, lucite, gold leaf, and stainless steel, it consists of a kind of overhanging canopy from which bronze rays dart downward at a lucite table pierced by a bronze rod.

These works are abstract, but many tendencies are represented in the show. Figurative work by pioneer modern sculptors like William Zorach, Elie Nadelman and Gaston Lachaise (with a magnificently mammiferous "Floating Woman" from the Museum of Modern Art's sculpture garden) are represented. Neo-Dada and Pop are present in George Segal's literal plaster cast of a "Woman in a Restaurant Booth," installed with great effect in a dark side-chapel of the church; in Marisol's painted wood and plaster group called "The Mothers," in Lee Bontecou's untitled assemblage and Claes Oldenburg's "Soft Telephone."

Other distinguished sculptors with work in the show are Reuben Nakian, Wilfred Zogbaum, Ibram Lassaw, John Chamberlain, Raoul Hague, George Spaventa, Barnett Newman, Mark di Suvero, and Richard Stankiewicz. Especially beautiful is a group of seven constructions by Joseph Cornell which, tiny as they are, dominate much of the larger and more public sculpture. These glass-lidded boxes containing "metaphysical" objects like a toy parrot, wooden cubes, repeated reproductions of a Florentine portrait, or an advertisement for Menier chocolate make up a deeply moving statement by this most enigmatic of modern American artists.



"Bird in 25 Parts," by Wilfred M. Zogbaum, at the Musée Rodin.