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An Upsetting Triumph

By JOHN L. HESS

Special to The New York Times.

PARIS, Nov. 8—As an artist, Glenn Robles is pleased to have won an honorable mention at the Paris Biennale. As an American, he is upset that he had to win it in the section for "French art-

ists and foreigners living in France."

Hit by a budget cutback last spring, the United States Information Service was not able to accept the French invitation, although 54 other countries took part in the show.

Mr. Robles, a 27-year-old Californian who has lived in Paris for five years, said the reaction in French art circles had been "disastrous." Nobody believed that the United States could not afford the cost, he reported.

"The French were hurt and insulted," he said. "It seemed as if we were too full of our own importance."

Persons close to the U.S.I.S. art program agreed that the cutback had been a hard blow. They pointed out that American art was continuing to make an impact in France. But they conceded that the program was operating on a shoestring.

Shipping Paid

An exhibition of paintings by 27 contemporary American artists has begun a tour of the provinces with an enthusiastic reception in Marseilles. An examination of the catalogue reveals that 18 of the works were lent by Paris galleries or collectors and four by American artists living in Paris. The remaining five were shipped here by the artists. All the U.S.I.S. could afford, apparently, was to pay for shipping the pictures to the provincial museums.

Under the circumstances, as Mr. Robles pointed out, chance played a major role in the selection of the works shown, and other American artists might have grounds to complain about being excluded.

Another American, Stephen Hendrickson of New Haven, won a first prize for theater decor at the biennale, for a mockup of a setting for Archibald MacLeish's "J. B." that he presumably sent at his own expense. He could not be reached for comment.