

SECT 2, p. 21,
coll

Art Notes

Home Improv

No Rush for Reservations

By GRACE GLUECK

ALL is not quiet on the summer art front. Brazil's big international São Paulo Biennial, scheduled for September opening, is the subject of mounting protests and withdrawals by artists who object to "repressive tactics" on the part of the Brazilian military regime.

So far, six American artists have opted out of the highly-technological U.S. representation, organized as a "team" environment by Prof. Gyorgy Kepes of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at M.I.T. Two entire French delegations, the second chosen to replace the protesting first, have also said "non" to the Biennial. Eduard de Wilde, director of Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum, has reportedly withdrawn his selection of Dutch artists, as has Pontus Hulten, director of Stockholm's Moderna Museet, his Swedish ones. A number of expatriate Brazilian artists have refused to exhibit and so have a group of Spanish selectees. The Belgian sculptor, Pol Bury, has declined, and French art critic Pierre Restany has resigned as organizer of an international "Art and Technology" show. What's more, after a debate in Paris on June 16, 321 "artists and intellectuals" signed a Biennial boycott petition.

An anonymous "dossier," printed in French and circulated here last week, details these withdrawals and some of the reasons behind them. The latter include: (1) The burning of three erotic works and the seizure of 18 others at a recent exhibition in Bahia, plus imprisonment of the show's organizers and some artist participants; (2) A ban on attendance by a Brazilian delegation at the



Lloyd Hekzieh
In tune with
what goes on

conditions, what possible honor is there for an artist to participate in the Sao Paulo Biennial?

In his letter to Kepes, Antonakos notes, "I cannot in good conscience allow my work to be shown at Sao Paulo, as though nothing was wrong. To keep my work out is really the only way I have of objecting to the conditions there."

Last week after conferring with M.I.T. officials Kepes, Hungarian-born, and a fighter for many liberal causes, let it be known that despite his

director of the Brooklyn Academy of Music to become director of the Brooklyn Children's Museum. The city's teeming borough, he notes, "is definitely in resurgence as an important part of New York's cultural life. For instance, the Academy of Music, its membership, mostly middle-aged and retired people, is no longer paramount. In the last two years dynamic programming, with attractions like the Living Theater and Merce Cunningham, have brought a whole new audience to Brooklyn—young, intense, in tune with what's going on."

The Brooklyn renaissance, Hekzieh holds, is also reflected in evolving Bedford-Stuyvesant, the mostly black community that surrounds the Children's Museum (known in the nabe as MUSE). "They participate. The parents do heavy volunteer work, and they have an active voice in programs and policy. They bring the kids in because they feel art is part of day-to-day life."

Now 39, Hekzieh came late to Brooklyn boosterhood. Born in Trinidad to a middle-class family ("We never faced the problems of blacks in America, so there's not the same bitterness"), he aspired to both drama and journalism, studied acting for four years in London and Manhattan. Gravitating across the river, he got a B.A. in speech and theater from Brooklyn College. Is now working on an M.A. (He also dabbles in playwrighting — a Hekzieh play, "The Breast of Heaven," was produced a year ago off-off Broadway.) And for a year, he ran a theater program for Bed-Stuy's "Youth in Action" project. "That was a tremendous education. I'd never been exposed to poverty before. It's been a

handsome wing designed by Mies van der Rohe, is "one of these characteristically encyclopedic American museums," points out de Montebello, a specialist in 18th and 19th-century paintings. "It has a distinguished collection of Renaissance art, particularly Italian paintings and a group of fine bronzes. But it's completely unknown. Rather than bring in a lot of flashy shows right now, I want to work with the permanent collection—rearrange it; catalogue it, strengthen the staff and accessions. My aim is to fill gaps with objects of superb quality."

In his 64-year stint at the Met (after a distinguished run through Harvard and N.Y.U.'s Institute of Fine Arts) de Montebello wrote catalogues for many exhibitions, staged the last two Metropolitan summer shows of loans from private collections, and produced a book on Rubens, recently published by McGraw-Hill. Not what you'd call a contempo-ophile, the strapping, 32-year-old curator regards a museum as essentially "a place where one keeps and displays a collection. It's a temple, where one looks at beautiful things in peace and quiet."

Houston's acquisitions, he notes, will be "oriented toward the more traditional arts." But he pooh-poohs cries from some Houston quarters that he is too "tradition-minded." "I'm interested in shows of all eras," he says, "from early Egyptian to, say, Barnett Newman. I believe that Houston should be exposed to the best of what's being done on the contemporary scene — though I don't necessarily have to like what I'll bring in."

COLLAGE



KIT—Precut parts, above, wall of closet as shown, varied to make efficient use

VERY few homeowners and apartment dwellers make full use of the closet space available in their homes—usually because most closets are poorly designed. As constructed by the builder, the average clothes closet has a single shelf across the upper part, with a single pole or rod suspended a few inches below this for hanging full length garments.

Since many garments are much shorter than the space allowed under the pole or rod, a great deal of space is wasted along the bottom. The single shelf above this also wastes a great deal of potential storage space at the top. In addition, floors are often cluttered with an accumulation of shoes, boots, sporting equipment, boxes and other items that are jumbled to-

ban on attendance at a Brazilian delegation at the Paris Biennale this year; (3) Circulation by Biefal officials of a letter to foreign commissioners, asking them not to send "immoral" or "subversive" works; (4) The regime's recent severe crackdown on civil liberties, kicked off by a decree last Dec. 13 in which Congress was suspended and more than 200 artists, intellectuals and political suspects were arrested.

The six withdrawing American artists (about 15 are left, at this writing) include three working as Fellows at the Center—Jack Burnham, Takis, and Harold Tovish—plus three "outsiders"—Hans Haacke, Tom Lloyd and Stephen Antonakos. Four have declared themselves in letters or statements. "The American Government pursues an immoral war in Vietnam," reads Haacke's (in part) "and vigorously supports fascist regimes in Brazil and in other areas of the world . . . All expositions of the American Government are made to promote the image and the politics of this government . . . The energy of artists is channeled to serve a politics that these same artists scorn with good reason."

In their separate statements, both Tovish and Burnham allude to U.S. Governmental support of the Brazilian "dictatorship." Burnham, author of a recent book, "Beyond Sculpture," writes that his statement for the exhibition catalogue, "expressing the situation in blunt political terms," had been rejected, "since the American entry is officially sponsored by the U.S. Government." And Tovish wonders, "Under these

conditions, that despite his deep "respect and acceptance" of the artists' positions, he believed in keeping lines of communication open. In a statement circulated for signature to the show's remaining participants he said that he had decided against withdrawal "because in the long run our chances to communicate deeply-held ideas without compromise can have a far greater positive impact on Brazilian life than can be accomplished by a boycott. . . . We recognize the justification of confrontation with all inhuman political power systems, but we deeply feel that this must be complemented by constructive life-building efforts. There is an old Chinese saying that it is better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness."

The Center, Kepes noted, was arranging a symposium with Brazilian artists and intellectuals, where each "could say what we think." But he pointed out "that there is a great probability that the number of our fellow-artists who find their participation intolerable will increase. If this is the case, our presentation, that due to the withdrawal of some of the artists is now greatly weakened, will only turn into a parody of our original intention to create a community statement. This would inevitably disqualify us from participating in the Biefal."

As of last week, there was no rush on hotel reservations in São Paulo.

APPOINTMENT—I

Does Brooklyn have a cultural future? You bet, reports Lloyd Hekziah, who last week left his post as assistant

I'd never been exposed to poverty before. It's been a revelation, working with so-called unlettered people, to see their growth."

At the 70-year old Children's Museum, occupying temporary quarters since its old home was condemned two years ago, Hekziah will help plan a new building, to be erected on the former site. (Once resettled, the museum hopes to leave MUSE behind as a neighborhood branch.) He also would like to expand the scope of MUSE's action-oriented program: "see-and-touch exhibits that include live animals; take-home objects, a mini-planetaryarium, clubs and workshops in art, creative writing, theater, science, photography. "It's not a museum where art hangs on the walls."

APPOINTMENT—II

Does Houston have a cultural future? Yes indeed, says Guy Philippe de Montebello, who's about to become part of it. Last week, de Montebello left his post as associate curator of European paintings at New York's Metropolitan Museum for the directorship of Houston's Museum of Fine Arts, a rudderless ship since the 1967 departure of its lively, contemporary-minded director, James Johnson Sweeney.

The idea of Houston, not exactly a bustling cultural capital was—well, difficult, concedes de Montebello, Paris-born and New York-conditioned. "But it's a challenge, to take on a museum that hasn't functioned on the professional level it should. My immediate aim is to establish an identity for it."

Houston, noted for its

COLLAGE

The Spanish Government has reserved a wall in a new museum of contemporary art for a mural by Picasso, a self-exile from Spain since 1937. The museum will be finished by 1970 and if Picasso doesn't come through, reports the London Times, the wall will be left vacant. . . . Woodstock, N. Y., once a seat of violent controversy between "radical" and "conservative" schools of painting, is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Woodstock Artists Association, with three special exhibits at the Woodstock Art Gallery, this weekend through Aug 13. . . . What may be the world's biggest collection of antique baby rattles and teethers, 71 items in all, now belongs to the Detroit Institute of Arts. It's the gift of Dr. Irving Burton, a Detroit pediatrician.



Guy de Montebello
No flashy shows

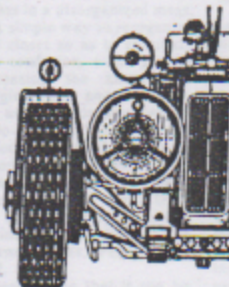
equipment, boxes and other items that are jumbled together in a disorganized mess.

A simple way to reorganize any closet so as to eliminate this confusion, while greatly increasing the amount of hanging space and shelf storage available, is provided by a do-it-yourself kit recently introduced. Called the Closet Organizer, it is available from department stores in many communities, or direct from the manufacturer, American Cabinet Corporation, 6925 Sherman Lane, Pennsauken, N. J. 08110.

Designed so that it can be installed in less than an hour with only simple hand tools, each kit consists of an assortment of vertical standards,

DALLEG

With
on view



ART

WADDELL