

Art Societies Say Moses Vetoed Plan for Major Exhibit at Fair

Fear of a Controversy Over Contemporary Works Seen by Backers of Idea

By JOSEPH LELYVELD

A group of leading artists and art societies said yesterday that Robert Moses had arbitrarily killed plans for a major exhibition of contemporary American art at the World's Fair.

The group, called the Committee of Artists Societies, said it had arranged for space, money and museum sponsorship — everything it needed, that is, but the approval of Mr. Moses, who is president of the fair corporation.

"He did not wish to have it at the fair ground, that's the long and short of it," said Hugo Gellert, chairman of the committee, at a press conference.

Lloyd Goodrich, director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, said: "There couldn't have been better sponsorship for an exhibition of American art." The Whitney Museum — along with nine other museums across the country and the 14 societies — was prepared to lend its name to the exhibition.

According to one source, Mr. Moses had expressed the fear that an exhibition of contemporary painting and sculpture might damage the fair by in-



The New York Times
Lloyd Goodrich, head of the Whitney Museum of American Art, at news conference.

volving it in controversy. A spokesman for Mr. Moses declined immediate comment.

The committee, composed of

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MOSES IS ACCUSED OF BARRING ART

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delegates from 14 societies, had worked for two years to win support for the exhibition. At its press conference yesterday at the Art Students League at 215 West 57th Street it admitted defeat, in effect, although some of the artists clung to the hope that the exhibition might materialize in the fair's second year.

Philip Evergood, the painter, said that all he wanted was a chance "to participate in culture along with Disney." Louise Nevelson, the sculptor, called the failure of the committee's efforts "a death blow to creation."

Both the money and the space had been offered by the Travel and Transportation Pavilion, Inc.

\$1.5 Million Promised

Reached by phone, Robert O. Thatcher, president of this concern, said he first made the offer of space—36,000 square feet—in November after reading an article about the committee's failure to win support. He later backed the offer with a promise of \$1.5 million to cover all the expenses involved in assembling the exhibition.

Mr. Thatcher emphasized that he had been acting as a businessman and not as a patron of the arts. The space on the sec-

ond floor of his pavilion was then unrented and he believed that he could earn back his investment on admissions to the exhibit and sales of its catalogue.

Mr. Moses, he said, disagreed. "I wanted to help if I could be helpful," Mr. Thatcher remarked. "But I took no exception to his decision or judgment."

He declined to elaborate on Mr. Moses' reasons for refusing approval. He added that he had tried unsuccessfully to interest American Airlines and the Chase Manhattan Bank in the exhibition when Mr. Moses indicated that they might be acceptable as sponsors.

Last July, Mr. Gellert said, he was told by a high official of the fair that there would be no space available "unless you come with money in your hand."

Mr. Moses finally offered the committee rent-free land, but only, the artists complained, when it was too late to start building. It was at this point that Mr. Thatcher stepped in with his offer, which, for a time, seemed to meet all of Mr. Moses' objections.

"It seems to be a completely commercial enterprise," said Giorgi Cavaglieri, president of the Municipal Art Society of New York.

Mr. Evergood, whose works were displayed at the fair in 1939 and 1940, said he was looking forward to the next New York fair—25 years from now. He said he hoped to see his work hanging there.