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MODERN PIECE OF SCULPTURE BY UNITED STATES ARTIST
TO BE PRESENTED AT CEREMONY MONDAY AT UN HEADQUARTERS

A project initiated at the request of the late Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjold, will be completed on Monday, 30 October, when a modern piece of sculpture by a United States artist, Ezio Martinelli, is formally presented to the United Nations at a ceremony to be held at noon in the rose garden at UN Headquarters.

The Martinelli work - a 30 ft. x 17 ft. abstract in gold-and-bronze-colored anodized aluminum - is already in place on the outside of the east wall of the General Assembly building, overlooking the rose garden. It is the third of three contemporary sculptures presented to the United Nations by the National Council for United States Art, and approved by Mr. Hammarskjold and the United Nations architectural consultant, Wallace K. Harrison.

The other two pieces are a bronze work by Robert Cronbach, which stands opposite the entrance to the Meditation Room, in the public lobby of the Assembly building, and a polished bronze bas-relief by José de Rivera, which was placed in Mr. Hammarskjold's office on the 38th floor of the Secretariat skyscraper. Both were presented in March 1960.

The National Council is an association of private citizens, formed in 1953 for the purpose of securing the representation of the fine arts of the United States at the Headquarters of the United Nations. To date, all other works of art in the United Nations have been official gifts by member nations, whereas the three pieces of sculpture presented by the Council have been given by private individuals interested in contemporary art in this country.

The presentation of the Martinelli will be made by Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., Vice President of the National Council, acting in the absence of the President, Roland L. Redmond, who is abroad. Mr. Houghton is President of the Steuben Glass Company, and a trustee of many cultural and educational institutions.

The work will be accepted for the United Nations by the President of the General Assembly, Mongi Slim of Tunisia. Adlai E. Stevenson, Permanent Representative of the United States to the UN, will also speak on this occasion.

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Mr. Martinelli, who is of Italian ancestry, was born in New Jersey in 1913. He studied both in the United States and in Italy, and teaches at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, N.Y., and at the Parsons School of Design in New York City. He won a Guggenheim fellowship in 1958, and his work is on view at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and at numerous university art galleries. For many years he has held one-man exhibitions at the Willard Gallery, on West 56th Street.

The artist describes his work for the United Nations as "an aspirational piece of sculpture"; an abstract design conceived in close relation to its architectural setting. He dislikes the idea of "conscious symbolism" and feels that any symbolic meaning should be left to evolve by itself, in the eye of the beholder.

By chance, Mr. Martinelli says, the sculpture contains "five large amorphous shapes" which might be taken to represent the five major continents. Also by chance, there were at one stage 101 separate pieces of metal in the work, the same number as the present membership of the United Nations. But both these coincidences, he stresses, were "purely fortuitous," and now the total number of pieces has risen to about 113. He is not sure of the exact figure.

In choosing the sites for the three sculptures, Mr. Hammarskjold acted in conjunction with Mr. Harrison, chief architect for the UN Headquarters buildings. In 1958, the Secretary-General suggested to the National Council that a piece of sculpture might be placed opposite the door of the Meditation Room. A set of about 12 photographs of works of art were assembled, and Mr. Hammarskjold and Mr. Harrison chose the three which are now at the UN.

Of the three, Mr. Hammarskjold first selected the Cronbach for the Meditation Room site, and then suggested that the de Rivera be put in his own office. He also proposed that the Martinelli be placed on the outside of the General Assembly building, facing the East River.

Mr. Hammarskjold was present when an on-the-spot experiment was undertaken one evening last autumn to determine the full-scale size of the piece, and the exact place on the wall which would display it to best advantage. In the experiment, a novel technique was used in which a transparency, made from a model of the piece, was projected onto the wall from a moving scaffold. The spot which was finally chosen is 45 feet above the terrace surmounting the rose garden.

The National Council's aim of assuring a place for contemporary United States art at the UN was touched on by the Secretary-General when he accepted the works by Mr. Cronbach and Mr. de Rivera in March last year. After expressing his "warmest gratitude" to all concerned, he said: "We are happy to see in this way a new tie

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created between this building -- our operations -- and the country we have the privilege to regard as our host country."

Noting that the Cronbach piece was being placed near the Meditation Room, Mr. Hammarskjold said: "This part of the building is a peculiar one. It is devoted to the most personal aspects of United Nations life, to private meditation and prayer and to the memory of those who have served the United Nations and died in its service. For that reason, I think it is quite proper that this part of the building has not been decorated by this or that government, but has been decorated on the basis of private generosity and private initiative. It is the gift of men to men. It is the gift of private persons to private persons, within the side framework of the United Nations."

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(Photographs are available at the UN Photo Library, Room 989.)