



Jean Charlot
A Retrospective

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The University of Hawai'i Art Gallery
Honolulu, Hawai'i

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Organized by the University of Hawai'i Art Gallery

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Acknowledgements

Celebrating the life and work of Jean Charlot has special significance for the Department of Art at the University of Hawai'i. Charlot, the artist, was also a dedicated teacher. As professor of art for seventeen years, he was an inspiration to the students at the University. This retrospective exhibition, while large, constitutes only a fraction of the life work of a very prodigious artist. While it surveys his entire oeuvre, emphasis is given to Charlot's early years, prior to his arrival in Hawai'i.

First and foremost, I wish to thank the Charlot family for their gracious advice and assistance throughout this project, especially the artist's wife Zohmah who, with cheerful enthusiasm, greatly facilitated the selection of works for the exhibit. Sons John and Martin were helpful in securing their father's

work. I extend my gratitude to John Charlot for his contributions to many aspects of the project. His presentation at the Charlot symposium provided an understanding of the artist's development and an insightful exploration of the creative process. Subsequently it was developed into one of the essays for the catalogue. Likewise, I appreciate John's and Zohmah's review of the catalogue essays and their clarification and suggestions.

Each of the essayists is thanked for contributing to this publication. Karen Thompson, Associate Director of the Art Gallery, is not only acknowledged for her research and writing of the biographical essay on Charlot, but for her assistance on the many phases of the exhibit and catalogue development. Nancy Morris, Curator of the Charlot Collection at Hamilton Library, who wrote about Charlot's illustrations for books, is likewise thanked for her help in locating pertinent research materials and for assembling works in the Collection for the exhibition. She and Mike Weaver, Professor of American Literature at Oxford University, also participated in the symposium. My appreciation is extended to the Honolulu Academy of Arts and to James Jensen, Curator of Western Art, for allowing the reprint of essays he wrote for previous exhibits of the works of Jean Charlot at the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

I extend my thank you to Laura Ruby, who organized the symposium on Charlot, and Stephen Murin, both members of the Executive Board of the Charlot Foundation, for coordinating and publicizing this aspect of the exhibition. Joseph Martin is thanked for his lecture on Charlot and his contemporaries in Mexico during the 1920s.

Without the help of very dedicated student assistants University of Hawai'i Art Gallery exhibitions and publications would be more difficult to achieve. To Sharon Tasaka, Exhibition Management Assistant and student secretaries, Divina Corpuz and Debby Sakita, I extend my sincere appreciation. Gallery assistants Christine Albus, Adriene Harrison, Gabriel Kama, Jill Shiroma, Darrell Takaoka, Malia Van Heukelem, and Pearl Yamaguchi, the students in Art 360 Exhibition Design and Gallery Management, the Gallery attendants and the many other students and volunteers, especially Stacy Hoshino and Velma Yamashita, who worked in the preparation of this exhibit are thanked for their help and concern.

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Tom Klobe, Director
The University of Hawai'i Art Gallery

Jean Charlot: Artist and Scholar

by Karen Thompson

Born in Paris, Louis

Henri Jean Charlot (1898-1979) was descended from those he would later refer to as “sundry exotic ancestors” (Charlot 1954:99). His father, Henri, was a French businessman, free-thinker and Bolshevik sympathizer born and reared in Russia. Anna, his mother, an artist and a devout Catholic, was the daughter of Louis Goupil, a native of Mexico City. Charlot admiringly describes his maternal grandfather in his earlier years as “...a fine rider, a *coleador* who could hold a running bull by passing its tail between his knee and the saddle of his galloping horse” (Charlot [1963] 1967:178). Goupil, of French and Mexican Indian stock, married Sara Louise (Luisita) Melendez, a Jewish woman of Spanish descent

Catalogue of the Exhibition

Works in the Charlot Collection are housed in Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

Circus

1904

pencil on notebook paper

8 5/8" x 6 1/2"

Charlot Family Collection

Bon Papa jouant aux échecs

1912

pencil on graph paper

5 1/2" x 3 1/4"

Charlot Family Collection

Four Sketches of Man

c. 1912

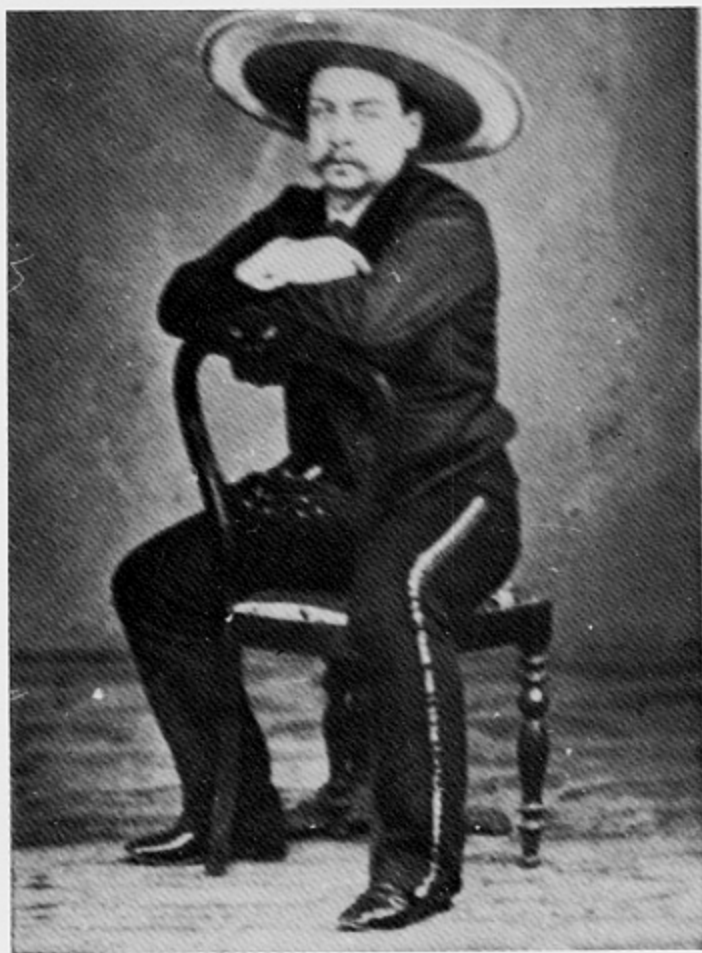
pencil on paper

6 1/4" x 7 3/8"

Charlot Family Collection

and subsequently moved from Mexico to Paris in the late 1860s.

Also living in Paris was Jean Charlot's great-uncle, Eugène Goupil, a collector of Mexican works of art. Jean, who began to draw around age two, grew up surrounded by pre-Hispanic antiquities. Years later (1926-28) he would be commissioned as staff artist for the Carnegie Institution expedition to Chichén



Louis Goupil, Charlot's Grandfather
Mexico, early 1860s

Itzá, Yucatán, and would publish books and articles on Mexican art and produce paintings, graphics and murals with Mexican themes.

Charlot was educated at the Lycée Condorcet (where he won the French national scholastic boxing championship in the medium weight division in 1912) and studied informally at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Soon after the onset of World War I



Sara Louise Melendez Goupil, Charlot's Grandmother
Mexico, early 1860s

Henri Charlot on His Deathbed

September 15, 1915
pencil and chalk on paper
3 1/2" x 5 1/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Father

September 22, 1915
pencil and chalk on paper
3 1/2" x 5 1/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Father

1915
pencil and chalk on paper
5 3/8" x 3 5/8"
Charlot Family Collection

**Hall of Casts,
École des Beaux-Arts**

Noël 1915
conté crayon and watercolor
6 3/16" x 9 7/8"
Charlot Collection

My Studio (St. Mandé)

c. 1916
oil on paper
8 1/2" x 5 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Brittany, Trees (Sunny sous-bois)

c. 1916
oil on paper
5 5/8" x 8 1/2"
Charlot Collection

**Notre-Dame-de-la-Clarté,
Brittany, Procession**

c. 1916
oil on paper
8 3/4" x 5 5/8"
Charlot Family Collection

and the failure of Henri Charlot's import-export firm, which did business primarily with Germany, the family, in much reduced financial circumstances, moved to the village of St. Mandé. Henri died shortly thereafter.

In the French countryside near his home and during travels in Brittany, the teenage Charlot painted small landscapes in oil on paper (Illus. p. 100) and pursued what was to become a lifelong interest in folk imagery. Drafted into the army near the end of the war, he became an artillery lieutenant. An officer in the Senegalese Troops, Charlot was given the command when his predecessors had been killed in battle. He was young and considered expendable. While encamped at Sézanne, he began drawings for the fifteen print woodcut series *Chemin de Croix*, Way of the Cross (Illus. p. 103). Charlot entered Germany with the French army on Christmas Day 1918. During the French occupation of the Rhineland Charlot, bivouacked between Mannheim and Cologne, had the opportunity to view paintings by 16th century German masters, especially Stephan Lochner and Mathias Grünewald which "...were a big influence, but," he remarked, "I always go back to folk art" (In Morse 1976:viii).

The *Chemin de Croix* was cut in Landau, Bavaria, in 1920. "The stations were large woodcuts on pearwood, cut in part with hammer and chisel, and closer in technique to carving than to engraving" (Charlot 1972, vol. I:228). The portfolio was printed in an edition of fifteen at Chaumontel, France, after Charlot was discharged from the army. In 1920 *Chemin de Croix* was shown at an exhibition of liturgical arts held at the Louvre, along with three designs for liturgical

textiles and two friezes in watercolor (1/10th scale) for decoration of a new church in a Paris suburb that Charlot claimed was his "first serious attempt at mural painting" ([1963] 1967:178).

In his teens, Charlot had become one of a Catholic group that called itself Gilde Notre-Dame ("Parisian adolescents (who) used to gather



Lieutenant Jean Charlot
c. 1920

**Notre-Dame-de-la-Clarté,
Brittany, Cemetery in Foreground**

c. 1916
oil on paper
9" x 5 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Our House, St. Mandé

c. 1916
oil on paper
8 1/2" x 5 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Snow Scene, St. Mandé

c. 1916
oil on paper
5 1/2" x 8 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Red Rocks and Sea

c. 1916
oil on paper
5 5/8" x 8 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

**Louis Goupil (the artist's
grandfather)**

c. 1916
watercolor and pencil on paper
14 3/4" x 10 1/8"
Charlot Collection

Chemin de Croix (Via Crucis)

1918-20
woodcut (wood blocks and 15 plates)
17 1/2" x 12"
Charlot Collection

Lotta Kuhn

January 12, 1919
pencil on paper
14 5/8" x 10 1/8"
Charlot Collection

in a crypt”) made up of sculptors, stained glass makers, embroiderers and decorators (1972, vol. I:285). The resumption after the war of what Charlot calls his “career as a French liturgical artist” was cut short by the cancellation of the commission for the church mural just after he had completed the scale drawings. This “first heartbreak at the realization that a born mural painter is helpless without a wall...” ([1963] 1967:178) was one of the factors that precipitated a journey to Mexico in 1920.

Charlot comments, “On this first trip to Mexico I did nothing at all. I was stuck aesthetically in 18th century France.” Later he wrote: “My life in France was on the whole rational, national, obeying this often heard dictum that a Frenchman is a man who ignores geography. There were though, simultaneously,



Federico Marín, Jean Charlot and Tina Modotti on the Azateca Mexico, 1924

Photograph by Edward Weston

© 1981 Arizona Board of Regents, Center for Creative Photography

un-French elements at work. Russian, *sephardim*, Aztec ancestors, warmed my blood to adventure. In art, I accepted as part of my patrimony, the monstrous chubby forms of Indian idols, the squatty masked heroes of Mexican cosmogony, without letting go a whit of those other models, Poussin's *Eliezer and Rebecca*, and Ingres' *Apotheosis of Homer*" (Charlot, 1954:103). After a brief return to Paris where he exhibited paintings, including *L'Amitié* (Illus. p. 104), in the 1921 Salon d'Automne, Charlot was again off to Mexico, "for good," this time with his mother.

In the article, "Mexico of the Poor," written in 1922 in French and translated by Diego Rivera into Spanish (published in a slightly different version in English in *Mexican Life*, March 1926), Charlot records some of his early impressions of Mexico: "At six o'clock in the morning, I was in the streets. Automobiles and ladies were still asleep, and the true features of the town emerged. Beautiful beings people the street like Ladies of Guadalupe innumerable. They move noiselessly, feet flat to the ground, antique beauty come to life. The wealthier quarters are as empty and soiled as a music hall at noon, but everywhere else, among those low-lying houses, cubic and freshly daubed, processions are staged. At first glance the crowd is the color of dust. Flesh and cloth, both worn out with use, melt into this grey which is the very livery of humbleness. Eye and mind soon learn to focus, and this race, its confidence won, attests to its beauty through fabrics, its straw, its flesh" (Charlot 1972, vol. II:99).

In the Mexico City suburb, Coyoacán, Charlot sometimes painted at the open-air

Self-portrait

January 21, 1919
pen line and wash
12" x 8 1/2"
Charlot Collection

Soldier With Monocle

March 12, 1919
watercolor
14 5/8" x 10 1/8"
Charlot Collection

Hildegard

April 28, 1919
pencil on paper
14 5/8" x 10 1/4"
Charlot Collection

Travez

November 13, 1919
pencil on paper
14 5/8" x 10 1/4"
Charlot Collection

Annweiler

November 20, 1919
gouache
14 3/4" x 10"
Charlot Collection

Landau

December 1, 1919
gouache
14 5/8" x 10 1/8"
Charlot Collection

Park with Chair

c. 1919
watercolor
12 3/4" x 9 3/4"
Charlot Collection

school, an annex of the Academy of San Carlos. He shared a studio with Fernando Leal, one of the founders (with Rivera, Siqueiros and Guerrero) of the Syndicate of Revolutionary Painters, Sculptors and Engravers of Mexico, dedicated, according to their *Resolutions*, to “do work useful to Mexico’s popular classes in their struggle, meanwhile producing an art aesthetically and technically great” ([1963]1967:243).

Charlot produced a series of small woodcuts and oils, primarily portraits. Many of his contemporaries in Mexico—David Alfaro Siqueiros, Manuel Martínez Pintao, José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, Xavier Guerrero, Nacho Asúnsolo,



At the Preparatoria

Mexico City, c. 1922

Charlot is in the first row, fifth from left and his mother, first row, extreme right. Among the artists pictured are: José Clemente Orozco (Back row, behind Charlot, wearing glasses), Nacho Asúnsolo (second row, center, wearing glasses), Amado de la Cueva (second row center, to Asúnsolo's right), Carlos Mérida (right of de la Cueva) and Alfaro Siqueiros (right of Mérida, wearing dark glasses). Diego Rivera is portrayed on the left in the mural visible through the arch in the center.

Henrietta Shore, Sergei Eisenstein, Anita Brenner, Edward Weston and Tina Modotti—are represented in portraits by Charlot.

For two years Charlot concentrated on mural paintings in fresco. He had become an assistant to Diego Rivera, the leading figure of the Mexican socio-political school of painting, who in 1922 was working at the Escuela Preparatoria (the National Preparatory School in Mexico City) on an encaustic titled *Creation*. A month after beginning at the Preparatoria Charlot started work on a mural of his own. In *The Mexican Mural Renaissance*, Charlot wrote that in Paris he had fallen in love with the texture, transparency, and lack of “cuisine” (lack of clichés or technical trickery) of the portable frescoes of Marcel Lenoir and had decided from the first to do his Mexican mural in true fresco. “I borrowed from Diego the French treatise of Paul Baudoin, founder of the Fontainebleau fresco school, and at the same time cultivated and probed the ways of Mexican masons and Mexican mortars, an easy feat in the Preparatoria building where a wing was still in the process of construction” ([1963] 1967:181). Charlot’s *The Massacre in the Main Temple*, 14’ x 26’ (Illus. pp. 118-121), is the first work of the twentieth century Mexican mural movement completed in true fresco.¹

Diego Rivera and his assistants, nicknamed “Dieguitos” (little Diegos), were next commissioned to paint the walls of the Ministry of Education in Mexico City, an enormous building with two courts. Charlot trained masons in the preparation of walls for fresco and instructed the other artists in

Pots and Street

c. 1919
gouache
10 1/8" x 14 5/8"
Charlot Collection

Sleeping Soldier

January 28, 1920
watercolor
10 1/4" x 14 3/4"
Charlot Collection

Street Scene

March 25, 1920
gouache
14 5/8" x 10 1/8"
Charlot Collection

Louis Goupil

April 26, 1920
watercolor
20 3/8" x 29"
Charlot Family Collection

Soldier (profile)

September 13, 1920
gouache
14 5/8" x 10 1/4"
Charlot Collection

Soldier (front)

1920
gouache
14 3/4" x 10 1/8"
Charlot Collection

Hands

1920
watercolor
20 1/4" x 29"
Charlot Family Collection

technique. Rivera began in the ground floor "Court of Labor," and the second floor "Court of the Fiestas" was consigned to Xavier Guerrero, Amado de la Cueva and Charlot to decorate; in Charlot's words "...a first try at communal painting" (1972, vol. I:391). Rivera eventually took over this court too, and all but three frescoes are his. Charlot painted nine decorative shields and three murals (each 16 1/3' x 7 2/3') of Mexican folk scenes: *Cargadores* (Burden Bearers), *Lavanderas* (Washerwomen), and *Danza de los Listones* (Dance of the Ribbons). The latter was destroyed by Rivera in 1924 to make space for his triple panel composition *Market Place*.

The following year Charlot completed a mural, *Shield of the National University of Mexico, with Eagle and Condor*, at the Pan American Library. In 1923 he published his first article on Mexican art, on the work of the sculptor Manuel Martínez Pintao (*El Democrata*, August 5, 1923), and participated in an independent group exhibition in New York, his first in the United States.

In what is sometimes called his "dark period," Charlot produced more than four dozen small easel paintings (c. 10" x 14") in oil on canvas of Mexican subjects. Several of these subdued works were studies of a Mexican Indian woman, Luciana (Luz) Jiménez (Illus. p. 129), a friend and favorite model. Luz instructed him in the Aztec language, Náhuatl, and furthered his interest and knowledge of Mexican folk culture. He created woodcuts for publication in periodicals such as *Irradiador* (Enlightener), and to illustrate the poems of German-born Mexican List Arzubide, *Esquina: Poemas* (Mexico City: D. F. Libreria, 1923), and Manuel Maples Arce, *Urbe: Super-*

poema bolchevique en 5 cantos (Mexico City: Andres Botas & Hijo, 1924). The latter author was a good friend and leader of the *Estridentismo* (lit. "strident") group of avant-garde writers and poets. Charlot became secretary of this organization. He also introduced some symbolist French poetry into Mexico. From 1924-26 Charlot was art editor of the influential periodical, *Mexican Folkways*, publishing such articles as "Aesthetics of Indian Dance."

In 1925, Charlot in the company of Frances Toor, Anita Brenner and Luz Jiménez' family, made the pilgrimage to Chalma, a Catholic shrine at a pre-Hispanic cave-site sacred to the Indian God of the Caves, "...a very long trek—three days more or less from Milpa Alta, with two nights on the way" (In Morse 1976:157). Charlot drew profound personal and artistic inspiration from the folk-religious activities he observed on this pilgrimage. Works from the mid-1920s include several paintings and graphics on Chalma and other Indian themes (Illus. pp. 133, 134). He illustrated several books by Anita Brenner, a native of Mexico and the author of socio-cultural histories of the country. Charlot "discovered" the popular artist José Guadalupe Posada (1852-1913), and produced the study, "A Precursor of the Modern Art Movement, the Printmaker Posada," which was published in *Revista de Revistas*, August 30, 1925. Also in 1925 Charlot exhibited in the Mexican section at the Pan American Union in Los Angeles. The following year, there was an exhibition of his paintings at the Art Center in New York.

An opportunity to broaden his knowledge of Mayan history, culture and customs

Noé

c. 1920
ink tracing
20 1/2" x 26 1/2"
Charlot Collection

Two Maquettes for Murals

c. 1920
gouache
10" x 8 1/2" (each)
Charlot Collection

Man's Head

c. 1920
pencil on paper
20 1/2" x 14 5/8"
Charlot Collection

Standing Woman (cubist)

August 27, 1921
pencil on paper
12 5/8" x 9 3/4"
Charlot Collection

Standing Woman

August 1921
pencil on paper
14" x 7"
Charlot Collection

Woman's Head

October 8, 1921
pencil on paper
9 5/8" x 6 1/2"
Charlot Collection

Standing Nude

November 1921
pencil on paper
12 3/8" x 9 1/4"
Charlot Family Collection

came about when Charlot served as staff artist of the Carnegie Institution expedition to the archeological site Chichén Itzá in Yucatán (Illus. p. 132). From January to June 1926-28 he copied, in oils, watercolors and line drawings, such monuments as the bas-reliefs in the Temple of the Warriors and frescoes in the Temple of the Tiger and the "Nunnery." Contemporary Yucatán themes and ethnic types were incorporated into Charlot's paintings and graphics produced in Mexico after each archaeological season. The report of the Yucatán expedition, *The Temple of the Warriors at Chichén Itzá, Yucatán*, by Earl Morris, Jean Charlot and Anne Axtell Morris (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution Publication 406) was published May 21, 1931. Charlot later noted it was "perhaps the last such archaeological publication to be illustrated mainly with drawings instead of photographs" (In Morse 1976:46). Two years later, he completed a series of lithographs with the printer George Miller, the most ambitious of which, *Great Builders I* and *Great*



At the Palacio de Cortés

Cuernavaca, Mexico, 1931

Posed before a mural by Diego Rivera are (left to right): Eric Faure, Jean Charlot, unidentified man, Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Frances Paine

Builders II, are an imaginative reconstruction of the building of the temples at Chichén Itzá. Charlot's archaeological renderings and descriptions were also included in *A Preliminary Study of the Ruins of Coba, Quintana Roo, Mexico*, by J. Eric Thompson, Harry E.D. Pollock and Jean Charlot (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution, Publication no. 242, March 1932).

After the completion of the Yucatán project in 1928 Charlot and his mother moved to New York where he rented a small apartment on the top floor of 42 Union Square from the artist Morris Kantor. The apartment was unheated, which probably contributed to the death of his mother from pneumonia in January, 1929. In New York Charlot's work was shown in the Mexican government-sponsored group exhibition at the Art Center in 1928, and in a retrospective at the Art Students League in 1930. He also participated in Mexican group exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the Fogg Museum, and illustrated *The Book of Christopher Columbus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930) by the poet Paul Claudel, whom Charlot first knew in Washington while Claudel was French ambassador to the United States from 1927-33.

On a brief trip to Mexico in 1931, Charlot met his future wife, Dorothy Zohmah Day, who was visiting Ione Robinson, a fellow art student on a Guggenheim scholarship in Mexico. Returning to New York, Charlot taught at the Art Students League in 1931-32 and painted portraits and Mexican and religious scenes. Illustrations of his work in various media from 1924-31 appeared in *Jean Charlot, Peintres Nouveaux*, August, 1932, with an introduction by Paul Claudel.

La Théologie

December 1921
pencil on paper
9" x 17"
Charlot Collection

L'Amitié

1921
gouache
58 5/8" x 55 5/8"
Charlot Family Collection

Abstract (Figure)

1921
gouache
14" x 6 5/8"
Charlot Collection

Abstract

c. 1921
gouache
9 1/4" x 6 7/8"
Charlot Collection

Abstract (with musical notes)

c. 1921
gouache
9 1/2" x 6 7/8"
Charlot Collection

Self-portrait

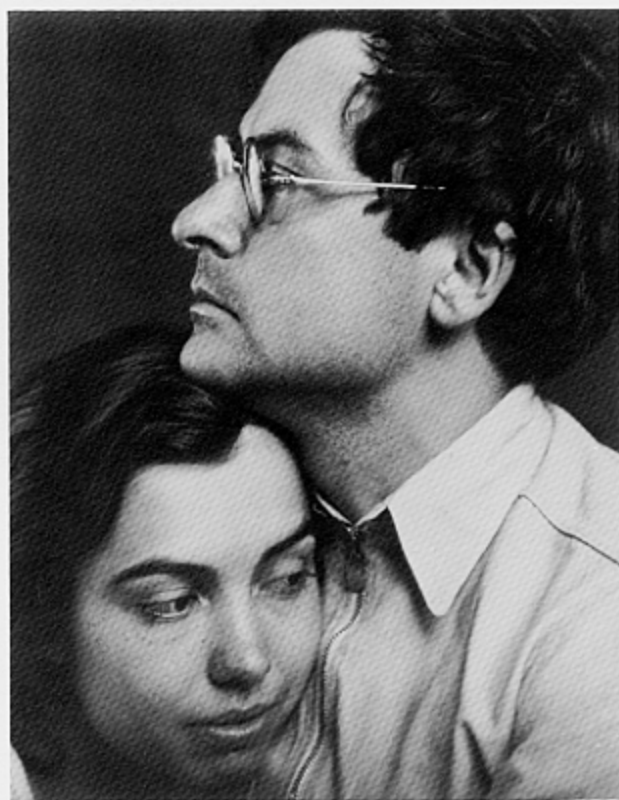
1921
gouache
13 3/8" x 10 1/8"
Charlot Family Collection

Standing Woman

c. 1921
pencil on paper
14" x 7"
Charlot Collection

Edward Weston, by Merle Armitage and Jean Charlot (New York: E. Weyhe) was published in 1932.

During a visit to Zohmah Day in Los Angeles in 1933, Charlot met the printer Lynton R. Kistler and, after completing a color lithograph with Kistler, proposed the production of *Picture Book*, "a repertory of motifs I had used up to then," done on offset lithograph presses. *Picture Book*, devoted almost entirely to Mexican themes and containing thirty-two color lithographs (each c. 6" x 8") in an edition of five hundred, was published



Jean Charlot and Zohmah Day

Carmel, 1933

Photograph by Edward Weston

© 1981 Arizona Board of Regents, Center for Creative Photography

by the Will A. Kistler Co. in 1933. At the same time, Charlot produced several other lithographs on stone and taught at Chouinard School of Art. He had an opportunity to visit with his close friend, photographer Edward Weston, whom he had known earlier in Mexico, before returning to New York in April, 1934. In New York he completed a WPA/FAP-commissioned wall painting in fresco (since destroyed) titled *Head Crowned with Laurels* (16" x 20"), symbolizing education, in a niche at the entrance hall of Strauben-Muller Textile High School. In 1935, he began teaching at the small, progressive Florence Cane School of Art at Rockefeller Center, where he conducted classes in fresco and lithography.

In the following two years, 1936-37, Charlot continued to teach at Cane School while producing a variety of works. Among these are the series *Tortilleras* and *Lavanderas* and other paintings on Mexican themes, and twenty-three portrait illustrations, in original lithographs, for Hilaire Belloc's *Characters of the Reformation* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1936). Charlot also compiled a catalogue raisonné of his graphic productions to date. In these years, fourteen large easel paintings of the *Way of the Cross* were completed, which were later installed at St. Cyprian Catholic Church in River Grove, Illinois. In the summer of 1937 he lectured at Columbia University and taught at the Art Students League. In October, 1937, he arrived for another stay in Los Angeles.

Teaching and lecturing occupied much of Charlot's time in 1938: at Chouinard Art School, Stendahl Galleries, Disney Studios ("Pictures

Male Nude

May 1922
pencil on paper
11 1/2" x 8 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Nacho Asúnsolo

July 1922
pencil on paper
12" x 9"
Charlot Family Collection

Diego Rivera

August 1922
pencil on paper
11 3/4" x 8 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Xavier Guerrero

1922
pencil on paper
11 7/8" x 8 7/8"
Charlot Collection

Man with Cigarette (Trinidad)

1922
oil on canvas
34" x 24"
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hamane

After Metamorphosis d'Ovide

1922
drypoint
4 1/4" x 5 1/2"
Charlot Collection

Luz

1922
pencil and watercolor on paper
9" x 9"
Charlot Family Collection

and Picture Making”) and, in New York, at the Art Students League, Columbia University and the Brooklyn Museum. A Nativity painting was commissioned for the cover of *TIME* magazine (December 26, 1938), and Charlot did magazine illustration work for *Commonweal*. For thirty years, from 1938-68, Charlot was an artist for the New York publishing company Sheed and Ward, producing many book covers and illustrations.

In May 1939, Jean Charlot and Zohmah Day were married in San Francisco. “It was a long courtship,” commented Charlot. “Eight years. We were always in different places” (In Morse 1976:76). In the summer he taught at the University of Iowa and while working on lithographs there became friendly with Grant Wood. Two murals were completed in 1939: *St. Christopher* (fresco, 10' x 2') at the University of Iowa and *Life of St. Bridget*, in oil on canvas (two panels, each 6 3/4' x 16 1/2'), for the Church of St. Bridget in Peapack, New Jersey. A series of lithographs, developed after pencil, watercolor, and oil studies, illustrated Prosper Mérimée's *Carmen* (New York: Limited Editions Club, 1940). Process prints in three colors after pen and ink drawings illustrated the Limited Editions Club's *Henry the Sixth, Part III*, by William Shakespeare (New York: 1940). Charlot also did illustrations for *Harpers Magazine* and Hearst Publications. Teaching included classes at the Art Students League, the College of Notre Dame and the University of Iowa summer session, where he demonstrated the fresco technique in a mural *Mother with Cradle* in the Fine Arts Building. Separate exhibitions, “Recent Paintings,” primarily of Mexican subject matter, and “Religious Paintings,” were presented at the Bonestell Gallery in New York.

A collection of various articles by Charlot, *Art from the Mayans to Disney* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1939), was published. The Charlot's first child, Ann Maria, was born in 1940 followed a year later by a son, John Pierre. Also in 1940, Charlot applied for and was accorded American citizenship. A dual citizen of the United States and France, he retained passports from both countries. Charlot contributed to the (World War II) French war effort by working in a New York liaison office taking orders for military equipment. When France fell to the Germans, he received an official letter of discharge.

The years from 1941-44 were spent as artist-in-residence at the University of Georgia, Athens, at the invitation of Lamar Dodd, who had been Charlot's student at the Art Students League. Funded by the Carnegie Institution, Charlot was required only to give informal art instruction to students and was primarily involved in local mural projects. These included *Cotton Gin* (oil on canvas, 4 1/2' x 11') at the McDonough, Georgia Post Office, and *Visual Arts, Drama, Music* (fresco, 9' x 46' overall) in the Fine Arts Building, University of Georgia (Illus. pp. 150-151). Several months of preparatory work was necessary for the latter project though the actual painting took Charlot and his assistants only eleven days. Three fresco murals, *Time Discloseth All Things, Cortez Lands in Mexico*, and *Paratroopers Land in Sicily* (11' x 66' overall) were painted in the corridor of the Journalism Building, University of Georgia. *Inspiration and Study*, (fresco panels, each 5' x 5'), were painted at the New Studies Building, Black Mountain College, North Carolina, where Charlot taught a summer session. In 1945 a book, *Charlot*

Lupe Marín

1922
pencil on paper
11 3/4" x 8 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Don Pancho, Coyoacán

1922
colored woodcut
8" x 6"
Charlot Collection

Man with Mustache

1922
woodcut
8" x 6"
Charlot Collection

Diego Rivera

1922
pencil on paper
11 3/4" x 8 3/4"
Charlot Collection

Diego á la Preparatoria

1922
pencil on paper
11 3/4" x 8 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Saint John, after El Greco

1922
woodcut
15 1/2" x 11 1/2"
Charlot Collection

Diagram for the mural *Massacre in the Main Temple, Preparatoria, Mexico City*

1922
pencil and ink on paper
19 1/2" x 33"
Charlot Collection

Murals in Georgia, with introduction by Lamar Dodd, photographs by Eugene Payor and commentaries by Jean Charlot, was published by the University of Georgia Press. A third child, Martin Day, was born to the Charlots in Georgia in 1944.

In summer 1942, Charlot was an instructor in art history at the University of California, Berkeley. He participated in the Corcoran Biennial and exhibitions at The Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., the University of Louisiana, the Stendhal Gallery, Los Angeles, and the Weyhe Gallery in New York. Among various periodical and book illustrations were twelve color lithographs for Margaret Wise Brown's *A Child's Good Night Book* (New York: William R. Scott, Inc., first edition, 1943). In the spring semester 1944 Charlot was artist-in-residence at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts.

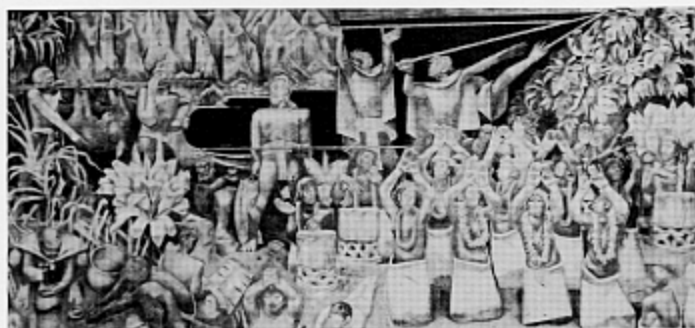
A Guggenheim Fellowship award for the book *The Mexican Mural Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, first edition 1963), required Charlot to return to Mexico in 1945 to research the topic. He remained there for two years renewing friendships with Mexican artists—especially Carlos Mérida, Alfredo Zalce, and Pablo O'Higgins. A third son, Peter Francis, was born in 1946. The theme of mother and child in a Mexican folk environment is a favorite of Charlot's (Illus. p. 130). This motif was depicted in a 1946 series of lithographs titled *Mexihkanantli* (Mexican Mother). Charlot was further instructed in the Náhuatl language at the Museum of Anthropology and wrote a puppet play in Náhuatl, *Mowentihke Chalman*

(Pilgrims of Chalma), for use by the Mexican government in educating non-Spanish speaking village people.

(Published in *Mele*, Honolulu: 1969, in Náhuatl, Spanish and English).

Upon his return to the United States, Charlot taught at Chouinard in the summer of 1947, following which he assumed the directorship of the School of Art at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, remaining in this position until 1949. He served as guest curator for the anniversary exhibition of the American Institute of Graphic Arts, "American Printmaking, 1913-1947: A Retrospective Exhibition," at the Brooklyn Museum and also wrote the introductory essay to the catalogue.

An invitation to create a fresco at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa, brought Charlot to Honolulu in 1949 where he painted *Relation of Man and Nature in Old Hawai'i* (10' x 29') on the first



Relation of Man and Nature in Old Hawai'i
Detail from mural at Bachman Hall, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 1949
fresco
10' x 29'

Drawing for *Massacre in the Main Temple*

1922
watercolor and pencil on paper
17 5/16" x 32"
Charlot Collection

Drawing of Head, full scale, for *Massacre in the Main Temple*

1922
pencil on paper
31 1/2" x 24 3/4"
Charlot Collection

Drawing of Head, full scale, for *Massacre in the Main Temple*

1922
pencil on paper
17 1/2" x 21 3/4"
Charlot Collection

Drawing of Horse's Head, full scale, for the mural *Massacre in the Main Temple*

1922
pencil on paper
27 1/2" x 39"
Charlot Collection

Drawing of Dog, full scale, for *Massacre in the Main Temple*

1922
pencil on paper
26" x 32"
Charlot Collection

Drawing of Hand, full scale, for *Massacre in the Main Temple*

1922
pencil on paper
21" x 12 3/4"
Charlot Collection

floor of the administration building, Bachman Hall. He accepted a position as professor of art at the University, and Hawai'i became the Charlot family's permanent home. Charlot found himself greatly attracted to the culture of the native Hawaiian, just as he had been interested in the folk aspects of the residents of rural France and the indigenous peoples of Mexico. He studied Hawaiian history, customs, and religion and learned the Hawaiian language, writing plays in Hawaiian: *Na Lono Elua* (Two Lonos), 1965, a three-act bilingual play about Captain Cook, also published as a one-act play in English, and *Laukiamanuikahiki*, (Snare That Lures a Farflung Bird), a short bilingual play in Hawaiian and English in 1964. (The latter was published with *Two Lonos* by the University of Hawai'i Press in 1976 with the title *Two Hawaiian Plays*.) *Three Plays of Ancient Hawai'i*, in English, are *Na'auao* (The Light Within), *U'i A U'i* (Beauty Meets Beauty), and *Moa A Mo'i* (Chicken into King), also with illustrations by Charlot (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1963).

From 1949 to 1979 Charlot created almost six hundred easel paintings, several hundred prints, and thirty-six works of art in public places in fresco, ceramic tile and sculpture. He taught summer sessions at several schools, among them San Diego State College (1950), Arizona State University (1951) and the University of Notre Dame (1955 and 1956). In 1950 he was made faculty advisor to the Newman Club, the Catholic student organization of the University of Hawai'i.

Selected exhibitions include the Charlot retrospective, "Fifty Years, 1916-66,"

at the Honolulu Academy of Arts (1966); a retrospective in his honor, "Obras Pictóricas de Jean Charlot," at the Museo del Arte Moderno in Mexico City (1968), which was part of the cultural program of the XIX Olympiad; "Paintings, Drawings and Lithographs by Jean Charlot," at the Georgia Museum of Arts, University of Georgia (1976); and the "Jean Charlot Retrospective," (1976), sponsored by the Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts to honor the artist on his 78th birthday and to mark the publication of the catalogue raisonné, *Jean Charlot's Prints*, by Peter Morse (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1976).

The Honolulu Advertiser

and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* published approximately 160 articles of art criticism written by Charlot from 1952-71. Other publications by Charlot include *Choris and Kamehameha* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1958); *Mexican Art and the Academy of San Carlos, 1785-1915* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962); *José Clemente Orozco, El Artista en Nueva York: Cartas a Jean Charlot y Textos Ineditos* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1971, and the English version, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974); and an anthology of Charlot's journal publications, *An Artist on Art: Collected Essays of Jean Charlot* (2 vols., Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1972). He created weekly cartoons for the Catholic paper *The Sun-Herald* in 1950-51 and, from 1957-79, weekly syndicated Catholic cartoons. An anthology of Charlot's newspaper cartoons for the Catholic press, *Cartoons Catholic: Mirth and Meditation from the Brush and Brain of Jean Charlot*, appeared in 1978.

Nude

c. 1922
red and black ink on paper
7 3/4" x 10 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Nude

1922
red and black ink on paper
7 3/4" x 10 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Male Nude

c. 1922
pencil on paper
11 1/2" x 8 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Vargas Rea

April 28, 1923
pencil on paper
13 1/4" x 8 1/2"
Charlot Collection

Orozco Working

August 1923
pencil on paper
15" x 10"
Charlot Collection

Study for *Lavenderas* mural

September 1923
pencil on paper
22" x 77"
Charlot Collection

Nahui Olin

1923
charcoal on paper
18 3/4" x 37 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Via Crucis, a lithographic series intended for display in smaller churches, was printed by Lynton Kistler in 1956. Fifteen color lithographs were created by Charlot to illustrate Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (New York: Limited Editions Club, 1962). *Picture Book II*, published by Kistler in 1972, is a print portfolio with thirty-two lithographs (6" x 8") in nine colors of Mexican, Hawaiian, Fijian and religious motifs. Also printed in 1972 was a series of etchings made of images Charlot had created in sculpture for the Moanalua Intermediate School in Honolulu, and the following year he completed a hotel commission of eight serigraphs with Fijian themes. In 1978, Kistler printed the five-color lithographs, *Kei Viti: Melanesian Images* and a new edition of *Chemin de Croix* from the original 1920 woodblocks.

Charlot's talents were also realized in the medium of sculpture. Among the works in public collections is a statue of Father Damien (45") cast in 1967 in bronze and installed at St. Anthony's Church, Wailuku, Maui, in 1980. With Evelyn Giddings, he created an 8' copper plate champlevé enamel sculpture for Moanalua Intermediate School in Honolulu titled *In Praise of Petroglyphs* (1972-73). Charlot sculptures in ceramic are *Madonna and Child* (5') at St. Francis Hospital, Honolulu (1959); *Sacred Heart* (7'5"), St. William's Church, Hanalei, Kaua'i (1969); *Ali'i Nui*, or High Chief (9'), Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu (1971) and *Madonna and Child* (15') for Maryknoll School, Honolulu (1978-79).

Charlot also employed ceramic for murals: fourteen ceramic tile panels, each

2' x 4', were used in *Way of the Cross* for St. Sylvester's Church, Kilauea, Kaua'i (1956) and another *Way of the Cross*, 3' x 2' in ceramic tile, for St. Catherine's Church in Kapa'a, Kaua'i in 1958. Ceramic tile panels were used both indoors and outdoors at St. Francis Hospital to illustrate various religious topics (1959). *St. Gabriel*, a 3' x 2' ceramic tile panel, was made in 1959 to be placed over the entrance of St. Gabriel's Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Other ceramic tile murals are *Night Hula* (9' x 15') at the Tradewind Apartments, Honolulu, in 1961, and seven exterior panels (four 11' x 13' and three 8' x 13'), depicting workers on the job and various union activities on the School Street façade of the United Public Workers Building, Honolulu (1970-75).

A mosaic mural, *Pietà*

(6 1/4' x 10 3/4'), for the Parish Center of St. John the Evangelist Church, Morristown, New York, was unveiled in 1962. *Way of the Cross*, a Styrofoam reverse sculpture consisting of fourteen panels, each 20' x 16', was cast in situ with the cement wall of the Church of St. John Apostle and Evangelist, Mililani, O'ahu, in 1971. *Episodes from the Life of Christ*, thirty-two copper repoussé panels, each 18" x 19", were executed in collaboration with Evelyn Giddings for the doors of Thurston Chapel, Punahou School, in 1967-75.

Charlot employed yet

another medium, acrylic on Masonite, for a series of nine panels, *Mayan Warriors*, for the 1970 Flora Pacifica Exhibition in Honolulu. A mural in acrylic on Masonite, *Musicians of Old Hawai'i* (two panels, 16' x 8'), was painted for the Harbor Square Apartments in Honolulu in 1971.

Woman, Child on Back

1923
woodcut
6 1/4" x 4 1/2"
Charlot Collection

Pollero (Chicken Vendor)

1923
woodcut
6" x 4"
Charlot Collection

Hombre con Sarape, Mexico

1923
woodcut
5 1/2" x 3 3/4"
Charlot Collection

Man with Gun

1923
watercolor
11 5/8" x 7 1/4"
Charlot Family Collection

El Cargador (Burden Bearer)

January 1924
oil on canvas
14 1/2" x 12"
Charlot Collection

Gossip at Tlalpam

January 1924
oil on canvas
15" x 12 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Pilgrims with Curtains

January 1924
oil on canvas
12 1/2" x 15"
Charlot Family Collection

Charlot's greatest legacy may be his murals in fresco. Among these are: *Hopi Snake Dance* and *Preparing Anti-Venom Serum* (25' x 25'), Administration Building, Arizona State University, Tempe (1951); *Fresco Class in Action* (11' x 25'), and *Mestrovic's Studio* (9' x 25') in the Student Lounge, O'Shaughnessy Building, University of Notre Dame (1955 and 1956). Also, at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Charlot executed fourteen panels symbolizing the Fine Arts (each 3' x 3') for O'Laughlin Auditorium (1955) and *The Fire of Creation* (5' x 6') in Moreau Hall (1956). *Psalm of the Good Shepherd* (c. 16' x 24'), was painted for the Church of the Good Shepherd, Lincoln Park, Michigan (1955); *Inspiration of the Artist* (14' x 16'), for the Des Moines, Iowa, Art Center (1956) and *Calvary* (34' x 32') for St. Leonard Center, Centerville, Ohio (1958). Fresco murals for St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kansas (1959), are: *Trinity* and *Episodes of Benedictine Life* (21' x 29'), Monastic Chapel; *St. Joseph's Workshop* (4 1/2' x 6 1/2'), Brothers' Chapel; and *Our Lady of Guadalupe* and the *Four Apparitions* (9 3/4' x 12') for the Abbey Crypt. Also in 1959 *Christ as the Vine, with Saints* (11' x 15') was painted for the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, Rock Hill, South Carolina. *Village Fiesta* (9' x 45'), for the Shaw Dormitory at Syracuse University was accompanied by a related film (1960). On the ceiling and apsidal wall of the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows, Farmington, Michigan, Charlot painted the frescoes *Our Lady of Sorrows* and *The Ascension of Our Lord* (c. 1300 sq. ft.) in 1961. In 1963 Charlot made a trip to Fiji and painted *Black Christ and Worshipers* (10' x 30') over the main altar of St. Francis Xavier Church at Naiserelagi, and the side panels *St. Joseph's Workshop* and *The Annunciation* (each 10' x 12').

Residents of Hawai'i

enjoy viewing many of Charlot's fresco murals in locations throughout the State. *Early Contacts of Hawai'i with the Outer World* (11' x 67') was painted in 1951-52 at the Waikiki branch of Bishop Bank. (This later became First National and then First Hawaiian Bank.) In 1966, when the building was destroyed, this mural was divided into smaller panels (Illus. p. 157). Charlot executed



Charlot Painting *Early Contacts of Hawai'i with the Outer World*
Bishop Bank, Waikiki, 1952
Photograph by Joseph Martin

Luz

January 1924
pencil on paper
11 3/4" x 8 7/8"
Charlot Family Collection

Luz at Table

February 1924
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Marchanta Selling Corn on the Cob

February 1924
oil on canvas
14" x 11"
Charlot Family Collection

Portrait of Siqueiros

February 1924
ink on tissue
16 7/8" x 13 7/8"
Charlot Collection

Nahui Olin

February 1924
watercolor
12" x 9"
Charlot Family Collection

Luz with Basket

February 1924
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Luz

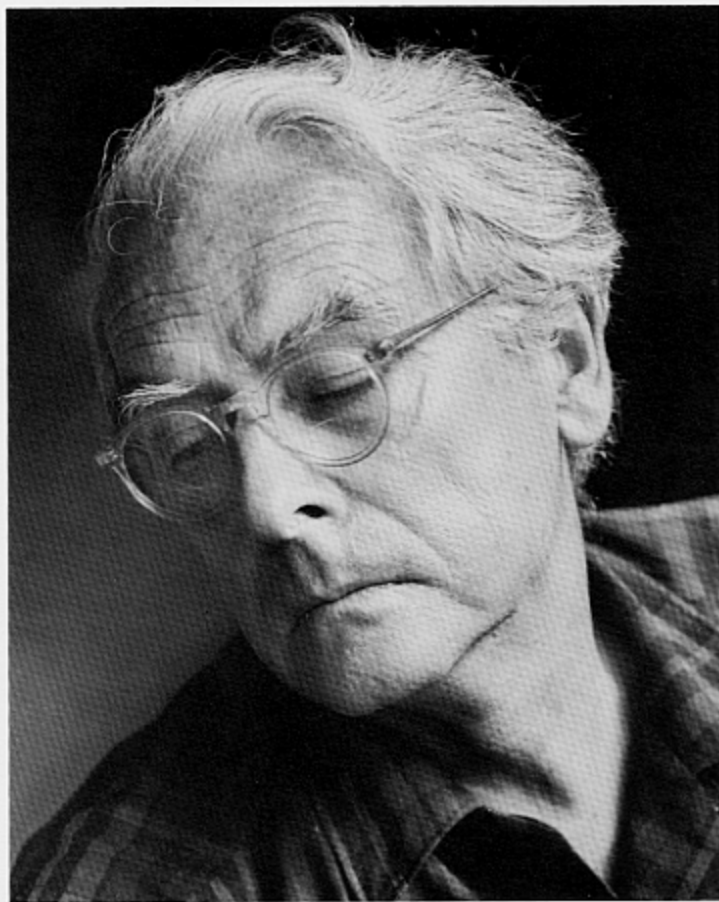
April 1924
black and red conté crayon on paper
15" x 11"
Charlot Family Collection

Commencement (10' x 36'), on the second floor of Bachman Hall, University of Hawai'i (1953); *Chief's Canoe* (8' x 20'), Catamaran Cafe, Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel, Honolulu (painted in 1956; since removed from the wall); *Compassionate Christ* (10' x 7'), St. Catherine's Church, Kapa'a, Kaua'i (1958); *Inspiration, Study, Creation* (15' x 16'), Jefferson Hall, East-West Center, Honolulu (1967); *Battle of the Malinches* (4' x 8'), Maryknoll Elementary School, Honolulu (1967); *Angels in Adoration* (10' x 19'), Grace Episcopal Church, Ho'olehua, Moloka'i (1967). In 1974, Charlot painted the fresco mural *The Relation of Man and Nature in Old Hawai'i* (23' x 104') at Leeward Community College, O'ahu and, in 1978 another fresco for Maryknoll Elementary School, *Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well* (5' x 4').

Charlot retired from the University of Hawai'i as Senior Professor Emeritus in 1966. Two years later, he traveled to France for the first time since 1921 and, at Malzéville and Paris, created a series of lithographs. In 1968 the Jean Charlot Foundation was established in Honolulu to collect source materials relating to the life, work, art, philosophy, and values of Jean Charlot and promote publication of Charlot material. The Foundation, which also has as its stated purpose the "development of interest in the arts, encouragement of artists, and study of art," has sponsored art exhibitions and other art events, and presented various scholarships and prizes for excellence in art to Hawai'i artists.

Among the honors bestowed on Charlot was the election by the Royal Society of Art, London, as a Benjamin Franklin Fellow in 1972. In 1976, the Hawai'i State Legislature presented

Charlot with the Order of Distinction for Cultural Leadership. In June of that year, Charlot was among a distinguished group of persons recognized by the Living Treasure Committee, sponsored by Honpa Hongwanji Mission, for "contributions to Hawai'i's culture and the preservation of Hawaiiana." Charlot, known as "Palani" among his Hawaiian friends, was named a "Living Treasure" for his paintings and murals showing Hawai'i's culture.



Jean Charlot
Honolulu, 1977
Photograph by Francis Haar

Luz

May 1924
black and red conté crayon on paper
15" x 11"
Charlot Family Collection

Luz

June 1924
black and red conté crayon on paper
15" x 11"
Charlot Family Collection

Portrait of Pintao

June 1924
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Luz Seated, Small Wall

July 1924
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Luz

August 1924
red conté crayon on paper
20" x 12 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Luz

September 1924
watercolor
12" x 9 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Still Life: Metate

September 1924
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

In 1974, Charlot was diagnosed as having cancer of the prostate. Radiation treatments and chemotherapy would keep the disease under control for the next four years. Confined to a wheelchair during the last months of his life, Charlot nonetheless remained active as an artist and a scholar until his death on March 20, 1979. His last article on Posada ("José Guadalupe Posada and His Successors," in the catalogue *Posada's Mexico*, edited by Ron Tyler for the Library of Congress and Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1979) was published posthumously; the catalogue and exhibition were dedicated to Charlot's memory.

Jean Charlot—distinguished artist, teacher, art historian, author, philosopher—was eulogized by the Hawai'i State Legislature in House Concurrent Resolution 153 which "enshrines the memory of Jean Charlot in the hearts and minds of the people of Hawai'i."

Notes

1. In true fresco, pigments suspended in water are applied to fresh, wet plaster. (In the *Preparatoria*, Charlot used a mix of lime, sand and cement.) In the drying process, the colors amalgamate with the plaster; the painting literally becomes part of the wall or panel. True, or *buon fresco*, is a much more permanent technique than *fresco secco*, a method of painting on dry plaster with pigments mixed in a binding medium, which can result in flaking.

This essay is based on recollections of the Charlot family, publications (see Bibliography) and other material contained in the Charlot Collection, Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i, the catalogue *Jean Charlot: Books, Portfolios and Murals* by Zohmah Charlot, and a chronology compiled by Laurence P. Hurlburt. All quotations are Jean Charlot's unless otherwise noted.

The Formation of the Artist: Jean Charlot's French Period

by John Charlot

Jean Charlot's French period—from his birth on February 7, 1898, to his departure for Mexico in the early 1920s—was crucial for his development and for our understanding of his art and personality.

For all his varied ethnic background—French, Russian, Spanish, Jewish, and Aztec Indian—my father identified himself as French. Towards the end of his life, on being honored by the Alliance Française of Honolulu, he ended his speech of thanks by stating that, despite all his travels and his feelings for the places he had lived in, he still remembered his home in France. He then recited the famous poem of Joachim du Bellay in which he calls that person happy

who after a long voyage can return to his home; for the dwelling of his forefathers pleases the poet more than the grandeur of Rome:

Et plus que l'air marin la douceur Angevine.

(And more than the air of the sea the sweetness of Anjou.)

As an artist, Charlot considered himself a member of the tradition of French classicism, which he traced through Poussin, Ingres, and Cézanne. He felt there were definite characteristics of French art that could be found also in his own work. One such characteristic was an interest in and respect for the object itself rather than as a mere pretext for stylistic exercise. He once contrasted Toulouse-Lautrec's portraits to the work of Piero della Francesca; the Italian was more willing, he argued, to sacrifice the peculiarities of his subject to the demands of his geometric experiments.

Moreover, Charlot believed that certain artistic sensibilities were peculiarly French. Once, when we were on our way to the Detroit Institute of the Arts, he told me how excited he was at the prospect of seeing Poussin's *Diana and Endymion*. When we arrived before the painting, he gazed at it with enormous admiration and delight. Then turning to me, he saw that I was more puzzled than responsive. With some exasperation, he blurted out, "You have to be French to understand it!" Later, when I asked him what he saw in the work, he explained how unusual it was at that time to do a painting "based entirely on color," an unusual view of the piece.

Head, Luz

October 1924
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Anita Brenner

October 1924
brown and red chalk
12 3/4" x 9 7/8"
Charlot Family Collection

Newsboys

October 1924
watercolor and pencil on paper
9 1/4" x 8 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Dowager and Newsboys

November 1924
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Burial of a Child

November, 1924
oil on canvas
10 3/4" x 14"
Charlot Family Collection

Portrait of Manuel Martínez

Pintao
November 1924
woodcut
12" x 9 1/2"
Charlot Collection

Hands Clasped

November 1924
oil on canvas
10 3/4" x 14"
Charlot Family Collection

Like many artists, Charlot remained close to his childhood. In a set of lecture notes on points of view, he describes a child who, as he grows, first sees a table from underneath, then sees the thickness of the table from the side, and finally sees the surface of the table top spreading out before him as his eyes emerge above it. Charlot based this passage on his own memories.

Similarly, he had been impressed as a child by a bronze horse of Antoine Louis Barye that had been placed on a dresser in his room. The figure was small, but the horse seemed monumental to Charlot as he looked up at it from his bed. During his final illness, he asked that the same bronze be put on the Korean cabinet next to his bed, reproducing, as he told me, his childhood point of view.

When my father visited Paris in 1968—the first time he had returned after leaving in 1921 for Mexico—we walked together to look at the apartment building in which he had grown up. I suggested we climb the stairs and knock on his old door. “I’m afraid I’d answer it,” he said with a laugh.

Charlot had a life-long interest in children’s art, which represented for him something essential in human nature. All young children are good artists, he said, but very few twelve year olds. At some point, the child’s inborn artistic nature was destroyed, and a break was made between the child and the adult. This did not happen to Charlot.

For this reason perhaps, Charlot kept and carried with him through his many relocations a large amount of material from his childhood. Among his own art works, the two earliest surviving drawings are dated 1900, and large numbers of drawings, cut-outs, and paintings in different media are available from the following years—forming, indeed, a continuous sequence until his death in 1979. Charlot's earliest attempts at forming the alphabet can be found among these sheets, and his productive career as a writer can be



Jean Charlot and his sister Odette
Paris, 1902

Back, Woman

November 1924
pencil on paper
9 1/4" x 12 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

In Praise of the Rebozo

December 1924
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Seated Nude, Back

1924
red conté crayon on paper mounted on
paper
19 3/4" x 12 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

List Arzubide

1924
pencil on paper
13 7/8" x 9 7/8"
Charlot Collection

Cover illustration for the book
Urbe: Super-poema bolchevique en
5 cantos, by Manuel Maples Arce

1924
color woodcut
5 1/2" x 5 3/4"
Charlot Collection

Portrait of Manuel Maples Arce

1924
woodcut
6 3/4" x 4 3/4"
Charlot Collection

Los ricos en el infierno

1924
woodcut
13" x 10 1/2"
Charlot Collection

followed in some detail through such documents as his letters (the earliest is dictated to a family member), notes, a handmade newsletter on ballooning, and his earliest published articles on the visual arts. Many of these writings are very personal poems, prime documents for our knowledge of his thinking and emotional state. Their number increases during his army service in World War I, when writing was more practical than painting, and production continues through the early Mexican period and sporadically thereafter. Finally, Charlot and his sister Odette, who remained in France, preserved a large number of family documents, including art works by other family members, books, and illustrations of art works that had impressed him. He was able to give me a good deal of information about these materials in a series of interviews I conducted with him in the early 1970s. The entire collection is a uniquely rich resource for the general study of artistic development. I will sketch only a few aspects of Jean Charlot's own formation.

In the earliest photographs of Charlot as an infant and child, he is clearly strabismic. This handicap is now treated by exercise. In Charlot's case, an eye muscle was cut and resewn, an operation that involved a long and painful recuperation, which, along with other things, made him acutely aware of his vision. In fact, Charlot was never capable of true binocular vision or depth perception. This had an obvious impact on his style, notably in those pictures in which the background is treated as a geometric design almost parallel to the picture plane while depth is created by the three-dimensional modeling of the bodies.

Moreover, each of

Charlot's eyes had a different type of vision. In one, his sight was very sharp, but the colors, though present, were very light, in fact, almost tones. In the other eye, the colors were unusually vivid, but the focus was weak. Curiously, these differences reproduce the debate in French art history between the Poussinists, advocates of line, and the Rubenists, champions of color; a false controversy in Charlot's view. Much of his art can be described as a—certainly conscious—exploration of the relation between line and color. For instance, in his mid-1960s series, *Tying Child to Chair*, Charlot traced the same outline drawing onto a set of canvases (imitating his fresco technique of incising the key lines into the wet mortar) and then colored each one differently. In this series, the color often works against the line: the cloth wrapped around the child is drawn three-dimensionally, but its strong and uniform color acts to preserve the two-dimensional picture plane. Throughout his work, Charlot used color in non-realistic, expressive ways.

More fundamentally,

Charlot's problems with his eyes convinced him of the artificiality of sight and the conventionality of its representation in art. Italian perspective was no more natural than architectural renderings; Charlot often quoted a teacher who described Italian perspective as the view of a man with his head nailed to a wall and one eye poked out. Accordingly, he chose to explore other methods, conventions, or aesthetics. These were, however, connected to other cultures, other ways of seeing, expressing, and living. That is, Charlot's artistic search led to his questioning the society in which he was

Reyes Perez

1924

sanguine (brown chalk) on paper

11 3/4" x 8 1/4"

Charlot Collection

Gonzalez Rojo

1924

sanguine on paper

15" x 11"

Charlot Collection

Nahui Olin

1924

red and brown chalk on paper

12 7/8" x 9 7/8"

Charlot Family Collection

Tina Modotti

1924

pencil on paper

11 1/4" x 8 7/8"

Charlot Collection

**Dansean á n.s. (nuestra señora)
de los Remedios**

1924

watercolor

12 5/8" x 9 3/4"

Charlot Family Collection

Boys Playing

c. 1924

watercolor and pencil on paper

9 3/8" x 8 7/8"

Charlot Family Collection

Manuel Martínez Pintao

c. 1924

ink and pencil on paper

18 1/2" x 12"

Charlot Family Collection

being reared and to his exploration of different ways of life. Ultimately, Charlot connected ways of seeing to ways of thinking and decided to use his art to make people see and thus think differently.

A striking quality of Charlot's childhood art work is its abundant imagination, which coexists with a precocious knowledge of the history of art. Throughout his life, that imagination could reveal itself in sometimes disturbing ways. When he read the newspaper report of the accidental death of a blind university colleague, he remarked, "It must be terrible to be a blind man in a burning car."

His imagination was naturally connected to his appreciation of art. In the mid-1950s, we were invited to tea at the New York apartment of a former patron of his. I noticed that my father was being unusually reticent (and I wanted him to shine). Suddenly, without a word, he got up and walked over to a Van Gogh landscape hanging on the other side of the room. He looked at it for a while and then resumed uncomfortably his seat. When on leaving I asked him what was wrong, he said, "I couldn't think of anything but Van Gogh's ear."

Dreams were inevitably important for him. At a dinner with a psychiatrist in the early 1960s, he recalled dreaming as an adolescent of leaving his bed, going down to the servants' quarters, and pounding with both fists on the door of the maid's bedroom. More unusual, he found as a youngster that he could dream in continuity; he could take up at night the dream he had awakened from in the morning. He then

found that he could control his dreaming, creating situations in order to experience them. For instance, he wondered what it would be like to have his head cut off and then visit his family and friends holding it under his arm. He stopped such experiments when he found himself being drawn ever more strongly into his dream world and detaching himself from his family and friends to return early to bed.

Throughout his life, his dreams could be both disturbing—for instance, soft, unattractive faces pressed up to his—and involving.



Anne Goupil Charlot, the Artist's Mother
Mexico, 1920s

Seated Mother and Child

n.d.

watercolor

8" x 6"

Charlot Family Collection

Still Life with Hearts

January 1925

oil on canvas

11" x 14"

Charlot Family Collection

Dance of the Pastoras, Chalma I

March 1925

oil on canvas

14" x 10 3/4"

Charlot Family Collection

Still Life with Watermelon

May 1925

oil on canvas

14" x 10 3/4"

Charlot Family Collection

Paloma, Hope (Noah's Dove)

May 1925

oil on canvas

10 3/4" x 14"

Charlot Family Collection

Church Patio, Cuernavaca

June 1925

oil on canvas

14" x 10 3/4"

Charlot Family Collection

Hand Pointing

June 1925

oil on canvas

10 3/4" x 14"

Charlot Family Collection

While I was assisting him on the 1958 fresco *Compassionate Christ* on Kaua'i, he and I shared a hotel room. One morning, he lingered in bed, rather than getting right up. When I asked him why, he said he had been dreaming of doing a fresco with the subtlest, most beautiful colors. I said I thought those of *Compassionate Christ* were among his best. "These were much better," he said, and lay a little longer thinking about them.

Charlot's imagination seems to have been connected to his unusual capacity for insight into other cultures. After a visit to Fiji, he experienced a remarkable surge of production, mostly connected to Fijian themes and sights. One afternoon, he found a painting taking shape under his fingers, the subject of which he couldn't place: a frightened Fijian mixing a bowl of *kava* in the forest at night. When he showed the painting to some Fijians studying in Hawai'i, they asked him with some surprise how he knew about *that*: he had depicted a sorcerer at work, hiding in the forest, afraid of the night, but anxious not to be detected and killed.

Charlot was interested in the workings of his mind, in the process of creativity, and once sought a grant to describe it fully: "I really thought I could paint a picture and describe what was going on inside of me at the same time." In his youth, however, such unusual experiences must have been problematic. He early made notes on a book about the relation of art to madness.

A stabilizing as well as inspiring force was religion. Charlot's mother was an unusually devout Roman Catholic, perhaps even mystical

His father was a free-thinker, with connections to the Masons. As a result, religion in Charlot's family was both strong and challenged. Moreover, because of his multi-ethnic family background, he was exposed early to other religions. He remembered staying as a very young child at his Jewish relatives' home and being impressed by a fearsome painting of Moses descending with the tablets from Mount Sinai; "It gave me the idea that other people could be equally serious about their religion."

Aside from an adolescent and only too successful experiment with turning tables (a then fashionable psychic exercise of making a table move by the laying on of hands), Charlot's religious practice was exclusively Catholic. He declined, for instance, an invitation to attend a secret Mexican Indian ceremony, while working as an archeologist in Yucatán. Nonetheless, he sometimes had experiences that would be recognized, for example, by Pacific Islanders as traditionally religious. His series of pictures in several media of pandanus trees growing from lava rocks on which they shed their leaves—against the strong backlight of the sun on the sea—was inspired by hearing drums while sitting in such a grove.

In his childhood and adolescence, Charlot was attracted by mysticism. He had long conversations with an old, indigent woman who had mystical experiences. One day, on entering her room, he found her in a trance and drew her portrait as she slowly returned from it. He took notes on mystical works and was a lifelong admirer of John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. That his own religious life did not follow such a direction reveals the strength of three countervailing aspects of his character.

Mountain Crags with Hut

June 1925
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Trees, White and Gray

July 1925
oil on canvas
10 3/4" x 14"
Charlot Family Collection

Street Sloping Up

July 1925
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Street Sloping Down

July 1925
oil on canvas
10 3/4" x 14"
Charlot Family Collection

Anita Brenner

August 1925
red chalk on paper
19 1/2" x 12 7/8"
Charlot Collection

Head, Luz

September 1925
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Collection of Henry Blakstad, Jr.

Palm Tree, House with Barred Windows

September 1925
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

The first was his feeling for the power of the physical and visual. The mystic whom he found most useful was the most visual: Anne-Catherine Emmerich. He gravitated toward the physicality of Catholicism—the ashes smeared on the forehead, the eatable bread of the Eucharist. The central expression of Catholicism was liturgical, a physical expression of the religious, appropriate to a religion of Incarnation. His own art would be liturgical even when the subject matter did not seem to be religious.

The second aspect of his character that turned him away from mysticism was the desire—felt by many extraordinary people—to identify himself with ordinary human beings. In both his art and his life, he avoided élitism and the élite. He wanted his religion to be that of the parishioner. This was not, however, condescension. My father once told me, during a period of my own religious enthusiasm, that he had set out to go through the heavenly mansions, the stages of mystical experience, described by Teresa of Avila: “I started with the first and worked myself slowly through each mansion. And then, when I finally entered the last, I found I was back in the first!” For Charlot, the lives of ordinary people were the ones based most clearly and immediately on the great problems and mysteries of life. Their lives were thus the most revelatory, as were the symbols he distilled from them. In *Work and Rest*, as the Indian mother on her knees grinds the corn to make tortillas, the child on her back is lulled to sleep (Illus. p. 144).

This lifelong identification with the people, in whichever culture he found himself, is

an essential characteristic of Charlot as an artist and a man. This attitude is, of course, part of the Christian emphasis on the poor in body and in spirit, an attitude emphasized by the French Catholic Renaissance of Charlot's youth, with its renewed interest in addressing social problems and in using liturgy, art, and literature to bring the Christian message to the people. Charlot was an admirer of such writers as Léon Bloy and Jacques Maritain, who based their radical social reformism on a stringently interpreted Christianity.

Charlot's attitude can, however, be traced more deeply into his childhood. Reared in the highly conventional world of the French upper middle class, the *grands bourgeois*, Charlot reacted strongly against its dehumanizing artificiality. His perception of it was characteristically aesthetic. He remembered one of his aunts stooping to kiss him; to reach her lips high above him, he had to pass level after level of silks, flounces, laces, and furbelows to reach a face set almost undiscoverable amidst its furs, veils, and far-reaching hat. From that world, he could descend into the kitchen, where the old cook, to whom he was devoted, would sit in her simple peasant's clothing, still shaped by a long folk tradition. Later in Mexico, faced with a general pro-Spanish prejudice against the indigenous people and culture, Charlot would fix on clothing as his point of attack: the *grande dame* in her imported finery looked ridiculous beside the classical simplicity of the Indian woman's garb. In his 1924 woodblock print, *Los ricos en el infierno* (The Rich in Hell) are all well dressed, at least in their expensive underwear (Illus. p. 122).

Pink Patio

September 1925
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Bather, Arm Raised

September 1925
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Collection of Henry Blakstad, Jr.

Luz Seated with Basket

1925
oil on canvas
28" x 22"
Charlot Family Collection

Temascal

1925
lithograph
28 1/2" x 22 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Great Nude, Chalma I

1925
oil on canvas
54" x 37"
Charlot Family Collection

Luz

1925
red chalk on paper
12 3/4" x 9 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Luz en Buste; Child on Back with Pink Bonnet

1925
oil on canvas
28" x 22"
Charlot Family Collection

Finally, Charlot's

Catholicism directed him to identify his talents and put them to use for the good of others. He once considered joining a monastery in Mexico, but decided against it because it would have stopped him from practicing his art. That art, however, was not to be pursued for its own sake, but with a sense of mission, a sense that directed him early towards liturgical and then more particularly towards public and monumental art.

Charlot's religious

conception of work explains in part the energy and effort that resulted in his unusual productivity. Work was also, I believe, a further stabilizing factor in his life. In it, he could put his sensitivity to use. He once described Cézanne to me as a 19th century French *bourgeois* who was also a painter: "He kept a strictly normal outside to the world, while all the adventure took place in his studio." By adventure, he meant "the experiments, the discoveries." I felt my father was also describing himself: all his life, he avoided the mannerisms associated with artistic behavior. A relative who knew Charlot in childhood remembered him only as a good playmate at a time when he was engrossed in aesthetic and intellectual "adventures": "He never talked about art to me." When I asked my father why he hadn't been interested in a student of his—an excellent artist, who told me she had chased him in the 1930s—he answered, "It was such a *cliché* for a French artist to come to America and marry a millionairess—like wearing a *berêt*." Similarly, Charlot's inartistic older sister Odette remembered that he had been very sweet to her when she was being neglected and he was being treated as the family star: "Without that, my life would have been horrible."

Charlot's choice of career was not immediately clear. He was multitalented. For instance, he had scored very high in mathematics, which won him an appointment very young as an officer in the French artillery (most of the older officers had already been killed).

His three main interests emerged very early in his life. In scholarship, besides following the demanding French curriculum, he was pursuing his own research on Mesoamerican cultures,



Drawing of a Running Bird
Paris, 1900
Charlot Collection

Pintao with Bowler Hat

1925
oil on canvas
28" x 22"
Charlot Collection

Mestiza with Orange Fan

July 1926
oil on canvas
39" x 22" (frame size)
Collection of Hawai'i State Foundation
on Culture and the Arts, Gift of Dr.
and Mrs. Robert Browne

Lady with Hat

August 1926
oil on canvas
32" x 23"
Charlot Family Collection

Nude Back

December 1926
oil on canvas
39" x 19 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Mother and Child

December 1926
oil on canvas
32" x 25"
Charlot Family Collection

Anita Brenner

1926
red chalk on paper
19 1/2" x 25 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Duel of the Malinches

1926
oil on canvas
17 1/2" x 22 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Medieval and early Renaissance literature, and art history. He gathered through his life an immense knowledge of a wide number of fields.

Secondly, his creative writing was so important to him that he had to make a conscious decision to become a visual artist rather than a poet. He would throughout his life return to creative writing, both poetry and drama.

Art, however, was from the earliest records a dominant interest. The two earliest surviving drawings are on a sheet dated 1900: a running bird and a still-life of a bottle on a table. Charlot remembered an earlier drawing of a dog running up a hill. His family had been astonished by it and had passed it around. Charlot's mother was an artist, and the family was quick to recognize and encourage his own work, providing art materials—including a large, red business ledger—and a tutor. Charlot could also study the books and Western, Chinese, and Mexican art works owned by the family. His first drawing of a person was a copy of one by Hokusai in Samuel Bing's *Le Japon Artistique* (Morse 1976:6). He would press his nose against the glass of a large cupboard in which were kept miniature folk sculptures of typical Mexican scenes. Visits to the Louvre and other museums left indelible impressions.

Charlot's parents kept his art works carefully, so his childhood progress can be followed step by step, a progress clarified by his later writings and interviews. He starts with pencil drawings and then begins to fill the outlines with watercolor. At one point he discovers that he can draw with a brush

without using a preliminary pencil sketch, and the color explodes over the page. He then tries new ways of balancing his pencil line and watercoloring.

In his ledger, he seems often to be copying from memory paintings that had impressed him in museums: soldiers with shakos charging downhill; boats in full sail. He makes paper cut-outs, decorates his bedroom with continuous friezes, and illustrates books around their margins. As was his later practice, he often works in series. For instance, in his early adolescence, he did a number of paintings from his parents' Paris bedroom, once surprising them by being hard at work on a sunrise as they awoke, catching the way the sun seemed to cut into the side of a neighboring chimney; he had drawn the side in pencil and now painted over it a half-circle of light.

In his talks and interviews, Charlot often emphasized the emotion of art-making. In perhaps his first oil painting, *Old Woman with Bonnet (Mathilde)*, c. 1911, a portrait of the family cook at Poissy, he started with her folk bonnet and continued down to her face and shoulders. When he painted in outline the curve of her breast, he experienced a strong sexual sensation and stopped, leaving the portrait unfinished. Similarly, he responded with strong emotions to the art works of others; as a child, he was frightened by the Egyptian gods in the Louvre.

Art was also a means of understanding. On the 1900 sheet can be seen two aspects of his art-making. The running bird is all verve, fantasy, and free strokes. The still life is a careful record

**Studies from Carnegie Institution
Archaeological Expedition to
Chichén Itzá, Yucatán**

1926-28

Five works in watercolor and pencil on paper

10 7/8" x 8 3/8"

One work in watercolor and pencil on paper

8 3/8" x 10 7/8"

Charlot Family Collection

Workers (Archeological Expedition study)

1926

watercolor

19 5/8" x 13 5/8"

Charlot Family Collection

Workers (Archaeological Expedition Study)

1926

watercolor

14 1/4" x 11"

Charlot Family Collection

Untitled (mother and child)

1926

ink and conté crayon on paper

25 1/2" x 19 1/2"

Charlot Family Collection

Untitled (mother and child)

c. 1926

ink and conté crayon on paper

25 1/4" x 19 3/8"

Charlot Family Collection

Juana

October 1927

oil on canvas

29" x 23 1/2"

Collection of Henry Blakstad, Jr.

of his observation. When Charlot saw the sheet in later life, he was more impressed by the latter drawing; he said he had obviously been looking very carefully at the object, which was unusual for a child around two years of age.

This close looking at an object in order to understand it is a characteristic of much of Charlot's work, especially the portraits and the nudes. A tragic example is the series of drawings done of his father as he was dying and then on his deathbed



Henri Charlot, the Artist's Father

1914

Boarding the train in Germany to return to France

(Illus. p. 99). Henri Charlot and Jean had been in Germany when World War I broke out, the war they realized would destroy the family business. They caught the last train back to Paris, and as it made its slow, halting way, Henri Charlot had a nervous breakdown. Jean kept his father collected and helped him back home and into his bed, from which he would never rise again. As his father lay dying, fluctuating in lucidity, Jean sat by his bedside drawing portraits of a frightening intensity. I am reminded of Akira Kurosawa's definition of an artist as one who doesn't turn away. Similarly, Charlot's gouache *Bullet* faces the on-coming missile directly as it shatters into abstraction the world around its target; the only way, Charlot told me, he could express that war experience.

Basic characteristics of

Charlot's expression are present in his work from the very beginning, most especially geometric composition. The 1900 bird runs at a dramatic diagonal; a diagonal is clearly implied in the earlier drawing of a dog running uphill. The 1900 still life has a table corner fitted to the shape of the paper. Geometric designs continue through the childhood drawings: abstract decorations, geometric objects like boats with triangular sails, and geometric compositions such as horses charging downhill, a precursor of Charlot's first fresco, *The Massacre in the Main Temple* of 1922-23 (Illus. pp. 118-121). Such compositions support the graphic personality of the woodblock series of *The Way of the Cross* of 1918-20, with its dramatic diagonals. This lifelong emphasis on geometric composition is one of the reasons Charlot placed himself clearly and consciously in the French classical tradition. He considered Cubism, the modern art of his youth, merely the latest chapter in that tradition.

Luz

1927

watercolor

20" x 14"

Charlot Family Collection

Henrietta Shore

1927

pencil on paper

22" x 15"

Charlot Collection

Nude (to the right)

1927

woodcut

6 3/4" x 4 1/4"

Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Robert

Browne

Nude II (to the left)

1927

woodcut

6 3/4" x 4 3/4"

Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Robert

Browne

Nude III (with raised arms)

1927

woodcut

6" x 4 3/4"

Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Robert

Browne

Pintao with Cap

1927

oil on canvas

36" x 28"

Charlot Family Collection

Great Builders I

1927

woodcut

19 3/4" x 12"

Charlot Collection

Charlot's own use of that tradition was not, however, hermetic; on the contrary, geometry should support legibility, a key objective of his art and element of his thinking. Charlot learned reading and writing at the same time he was working on his drawings, and he mixed letters and figures in a variety of ways, for instance, labeling parts of the picture or using letters and words as parts of the composition. In his liturgical work, he imitated Medieval lettered ribbons or scrolling, and in *L'Amitié*, the painting that sums up his French period, such a scroll is a prominent feature (Illus. p. 104). Charlot continued occasionally to use lettering throughout his career, notably in murals.

A number of key aesthetic decisions can be traced back to Charlot's early childhood. On a visit to the Louvre, he was frightened by the staring eyes of an Egyptian god. In his ledger, he drew a picture of the statue and then tried unsuccessfully to obliterate the large eyes by scrawling over them roughly with his pencil. The experience of the statue taught him, he said later, to avoid overly obvious and direct means of expressing the godhead. In the 1960s, a priest complained to me about my father's bronze crucifix: "Where's the face?" I responded that it was all over the body; that is, the whole work took on the expressiveness usually perceived only in the face. To use the face as one's prime means of expression was simply too easy.

Similarly, Charlot was uncomfortable using artistic techniques that did not present a challenge. Thus he used tempera for his portrait of his grandfather, the medium along with the style contributing to the unusual severity and seriousness—the

avoidance of stylishness—of the work. Charlot would use tempera also for *L’Amitié*, rather than oils. In fact, throughout his career, Charlot set himself problems in new and difficult media. As a result, he was often a technical pioneer, as in the revival of fresco in Mexico, the use of color art lithography in the United States, and the use of ceramics for monumental sculpture in Hawai‘i.

Charlot’s early sources of inspiration are also indications of his venturing beyond the conventional and accepted. He became very learned in the traditional history of art and literature (a young poem contains the line, *J’ai lu tous les livres*, “I’ve read all the books”), but quickly expanded his research to such subjects as Mesoamerican cultures. In literature, he read widely in Medieval and early Renaissance French, learned folk songs in Brittany during his visit there after his father’s death, and wrote poems during the war in the *patois* of the *poilu*, the soldiers of the trenches. This effort can be seen as part of the movement around Paul Claudel to enrich the poetic language, but many of Charlot’s special interests would be “discovered” only later, such as the dream poems of Théophile de Viau by the Surrealists.

Besides contemporary artists, Charlot was early influenced by Aztec codices, a number of which had been collected by his granduncle Eugène Goupil and deposited in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. He also made a large collection of Images d’Épinal, which, along with the folk woodblocks of Orléans, influenced his printmaking. A major influence, now difficult to trace, was the folk bas-reliefs of Brittany. Charlot produced an entire oeuvre of colored wood reliefs of religious subjects that were included in an exhibition

Great Builders II

1927
woodcut
18 3/4" x 12"
Charlot Collection

Builder Ascending Platform

December 1929
oil on canvas
13 1/2" x 11"
Charlot Family Collection

Great Builders I

1929
lithograph
13 1/2" x 18 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Reclining Nude

July 1929
pencil on paper
16" x 21 3/8"
Charlot Family Collection

Mestizas

1929
lithograph
14" x 10 1/2"
Charlot Collection

La Nana, New York

1929
lithograph
11" x 14"
Charlot Collection

Mother and Child

1929
lithograph
14 1/4" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Collection

sponsored by the Gilde Notre-Dame, the liturgical art group to which he belonged. These were all sold or given away after the exhibition, and the only surviving pieces, to my knowledge, are two panels of brightly colored wings, kept in the family because the buyer had them removed from the work he wanted. Charlot remembered showing some of these reliefs to a writer on liturgical art, who took him for a country Breton and encouraged him not to be spoiled by the city and its fashions!

As always, Charlot was interested in the genuine artistic qualities of certain folk arts, not in their picturesqueness. He saw in them the same virtues he found in Stephan Lochner and the Rhine School during his tour of duty in occupied Germany: authentic art values of composition and color along with legibility and effectiveness for the people they were designed to reach. That is, he was joining his core classical tradition to his expanding sources of inspiration. He



Charlot at an Exhibition of the Gilde Notre-Dame

Paris, c. 1916

The two woodcarvings of angels and a woodcut on the wall are Charlot's.

could do this because of the fundamental artistic values each tradition incorporated in its own way. For instance, he found the illustrators of the Aztec codices more cubist than the Cubists.

Already in his French period, Charlot developed a definite rhythm in the progress of his work: an alternation of initial analysis based on geometry and concluding synthesis, often based on an experience of native or folk art. As he entered each new period of his life or work—in France, Mexico, the United States, and the Pacific—he would submit the new sights to a prismatic examination in order to probe with his own eyes and mind their special characteristics. His final synthesis would be influenced also by his scholarly research of and artistic encounter with the art of the place. That is, he combined his personal perception with the art tradition of the given culture to reach an adequate expression of and for the place, an expression that would speak to its inhabitants.

His choice of sources of inspiration was closely connected to his view of the purpose of art. He emphasized throughout his life that art should be pursued not for its own sake, but for the good of others. This view impelled him towards liturgical and public and monumental art, which required a certain cultural continuity in order to be effective.

This perspective defined also his view of the artist. He and his fellow members of the Gilde were much influenced by the then current idea that the builders and decorators of the great cathedrals had been anonymous craftsman; this was opposed

Woman Seated with Child on Her Lap

March 1930
oil on canvas
30" x 28"
Charlot Family Collection

Woman in Rebozo (Luz)

March 1930
oil on canvas
28" x 20"
Charlot Family Collection

Portrait of Pintao

March 1930
oil on canvas
27 3/4" x 27 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Idol

October 1930
oil on canvas
40" x 30"
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Browne

Great Builders II

1930
lithograph
14" x 18 3/4"
Charlot Collection

Head I

1930
lithograph
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Collection

Head II

1930
lithograph
11 1/4" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Collection

to the Renaissance idea of the artist as genius. This view is now recognized as historically inaccurate, but in the early part of this century, it offered an alternative to those who could not accept the élitist image of art and artists that is still dominant today.

Charlot's first commission, the decoration of a church in Paris, would have enabled him to follow in the tradition of his models. The mural would have been in fresco, a difficult and traditional medium that had a particular, personal significance for Charlot: an older artist he admired, Marcel Lenoir, had tried unsuccessfully all his life to be given a wall on which to paint a monumental fresco.

Charlot's mural would have been the summation of his art up to that time: the design for a processional down both sides of the nave incorporated many of the themes and subjects found in his earlier work. The sunny side featured women and children in the light colors of Maurice Denis, an early influence on Charlot. On the shadowed wall of the nave, men wounded in the war made their way towards the altar.

When the commission was not funded, Charlot was so discouraged about the prospects of such work in France that he left for Mexico, where happily a veritable movement of mural painting would soon begin.

But before he left, foreseeing certainly the stylistic changes to come, he summarized his French period in the large *L'Amitié*, his

“master piece,” in the Medieval sense, of the first stage of his life and artistic career. Done in tempera—the closest he could get to fresco—it gives final form to a number of his favored subjects: his pet dog (recalling his very first drawing), portraits, a liturgical angel with lettered scrolling, flowers (the subjects of many of his war-time sketches in his military *carnet*), a cubistic village-scape, and the sunny coast of Brittany.

Charlot left France

for Mexico a young man, but he was already a developed artist with a definite direction, philosophy, and personality. He was soon to go through a new period of stylistic development, but the main lines of his work and thinking were already firmly established.

Moreover, many of his characteristics, developed in the French period, would have a decisive effect on the Mexican Mural Renaissance, both as his personal influence and in combination with others: in style, the joining of classical geometric composition with inspiration from native and folk sources; in purpose, public art for the public good; and in self-image, the artist as worker-craftsman rather than aesthete-genius.

Indian Head

1930
oil on canvas
10" x 8"
Collection of Edward Stasack

Tondo: Nudes

1930
lithograph
10 1/4" diameter
Charlot Collection

Woman with White Rebozo

1930
lithograph
14" x 10 1/2"
Charlot Collection

The Book of Christopher Columbus

By Paul Claudel
New Haven: Yale University Press,
1930
book illustrations
11" x 8 1/2"
Charlot Collection

Lowell Houser

1930
oil on canvas
16" x 20"
Charlot Family Collection

Portraits by Jean Charlot

by James Jensen

Portraiture is one of the most fascinating genres of art. Implicit in the making of a portrait is a complex and subtle consensual encounter between sitter and artist. This collaboration has been likened to a ritual, a dance, a debate, perhaps a duel, between two personalities. It is a tacit agreement for conscious display and conscious observation. It includes a mixture of trust and wariness. The subject poses and projects, submitting to the artist's eye but hoping to retain some control over what the artist sees and perceives. The artist selects, manipulates visual data and interprets it through the imposition of his personal style. The process for both is one of objectivity and subjectivity. Obviously, artist and sitter alike offer unique contributions to the finished portrait.

Dictionaries define a “portrait” in simple terms—as a likeness of a person. Certainly a portrait must provide a record of the sitter’s features if it is to be considered “good.” But if a portrait is to be effective, to have aesthetic quality and exert a pull upon the mind, it must go beyond physical characteristics and offer a sense of the subject’s inner self.

Jean Charlot’s

awareness of this principle is amply demonstrated in the sixty years of his forays into portraiture. Charlot created a remarkable body of work in this genre during his long career—approximately 175 portraits in oil and dozens more as drawings and prints. Yet this aspect of his work remains little known. In part this is due to the role which Charlot himself assigned to portraiture in his work. For him the making of portraits was essentially a personal and private activity. Since photography had largely assumed the demand for social portraiture, there were few commissions available, and Charlot built his public reputation on frescoes, murals and easel paintings of subjects drawn primarily from the daily life around him. While occasionally a portrait was commissioned or Charlot would use portraits as studies for figures in his murals, most of his portraits seem to have been done because he liked to study people. More specifically, he was interested in faces, delineating features and getting at the nuances of character and mood behind them. The vast majority of Charlot’s portraits are heads or busts, observed close-in, with few, if any indications of material props, costume or background which might create distracting associations.

Burden Bearer Carrying Load

November 1931
oil on canvas
40" x 30"
Collection of Honolulu Academy of Arts, Gift of Kenneth Kingrey

Lincoln Kirstein

December 1931
conté crayon (?) on paper
13 1/2" x 10"
Charlot Family Collection

Zohmah Painting

1931
oil on canvas
23 1/2" x 19 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Tondo, Zohmah

1931
oil on canvas
15" x 15"
Charlot Family Collection

Conchita

1931
pencil on paper
11 3/4" x 9 1/8"
Charlot Family Collection

Luz

1931
oil on canvas
48" x 30"
Collection of Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Browne

Nude, Back

January 1932
pencil and red and black conté crayon on paper
20" x 13 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Charlot was not interested in creating portraits of record, and he consciously avoided appropriating the ordinary from his sitters. Thus, his response to the person in front of him was never routine. This is perhaps best illustrated by the remarkable group of portrait drawings he did in Mexico in the 1920s, which range in style from



Chemin de Croix: Station XII

1919

Woodcut

17" x 11"

Charlot portrays himself, wearing his army uniform, at upper left.

Charlot Collection

detailed works composed of a mingling of strokes, hatchings, washes and textures to the most simplified outline sketches freely rendered in a few deft gestures in pencil and chalk. In their candidness and spontaneity, these drawings are an interesting counterpart to the portrait photographs which Edward Weston took about the same time—and often of the same people. It is possible that Charlot was in part influenced by Weston's photographic style in making his drawings. But in their powerful distillation of the essences of appearances and personalities, Charlot's portrait drawings did what no photograph could do.

Most of Charlot's portrait subjects were close friends or associates, people with whom he had an opportunity to establish a rapport or empathy. Yet familiarity or intimacy with the artist did not always lead to a request to sit for him, for there were many who were close to him or often around him of whom he never drew or painted a portrait. Charlot seemed to look for some special quality, whether it be a particular cast of a feature, shading of complexion or attitude in the eyes, to kindle response and desire to create a portrait. There were certain individuals in whom he never seemed to lose interest as models—Manuel Martínez Pintao, Luz, Anita Brenner, Eleanore, his wife Zohmah—and he did their portraits many times. The striking differences from one to another of the works in these respective groups of portraits illustrate what Charlot surely came to realize—that the human personality is too multiform and individual for even the most alert or

Great Nude, Chalma II

April 1932
oil on canvas
57 3/4" x 36"
Charlot Family Collection

Portrait of Eisenstein

April 1932
oil on canvas
18" x 16"
Charlot Family Collection

Reclining Woman

June 1932
pencil on paper
16 1/2" x 12 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Seven Pilgrims, Milpa Alta

August 1932
oil on canvas
39 1/2" x 50"
Collection of the Honolulu Academy of Arts, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Browne

Zohmah, Yellow on Purple

1932
oil on canvas
15" x 19"
Charlot Family Collection

Nude, Arms Raised

1932
oil on canvas
36" x 28"
Charlot Family Collection

Nude, with Painter's Hand

1932
oil on canvas
36" x 28"
Charlot Family Collection

accomplished portraitist to hope to catch its definitive revelation.

Occasionally, Charlot used himself as the model (Illus. p. 141).¹ Self-portraiture has a long tradition in art and is an intriguing paradox. The artist emerges from the other side of the easel to confront himself—the observer becomes the observed—and create a statement of how he sees himself or as he fancies others see him. Charlot's early images of himself reflect awareness of the new and ever-changing modes of modern art as he interprets his features as volumetric, chiseled facets influenced by cubism or as an assemblage of bright patches of color à la fauvism or orphism. Later self-portraits exude confidence as they show a man at ease with himself and secure with the world around him.

In many of Charlot's portraits we sense that the subjects are caught slightly off-guard, for there is a subtle but pervading sense of vulnerability. It is perhaps this quality which makes them so accessible and so affecting. Charlot worked with a gentle and benign predator's eye, searching for the unguarded moment, the unself-conscious revelation in his probings of personality. The results are sympathetic portraits of disarming frankness and uncompromising candor. Imbued with Charlot's own special brand of humanity, they convey both likeness and personality of others, and yet like mirrors they give us back a reflection of some part of ourselves.

Notes

1. Charlot also portrays himself
(on left) in *Chemin de Croix: Station XII*, illustrated on page 60.

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Honolulu Academy of Arts from the exhibition brochure *Portraits by
Jean Charlot*, 1985.

Jean Charlot: The Nude Figure

by James Jensen

Jean Charlot's paintings, drawings and prints of nudes affirm his place in an important and long tradition. The nude figure has been a subject of contemplation since prehistoric times, appearing as early as ten to fifteen thousand years ago in bulging statuettes, the so-called "Venuses" from paleolithic caves, and, later, in the third millennium B.C., in geometrically streamlined marble carvings from the Cyclades. The nude as an art form that may be considered whole unto itself, however, was invented in Greece around the fifth century B.C. The Greeks considered physical perfection a mark of their sophisticated culture, and nudity, as reflected in their paintings and sculpture, acquired a kind of moral value.

Few things are more complex than man's reactions to the nude human body. While the Greeks lauded the nude for expressing high ideals, subsequent cultures and periods at times attacked the nude for arousing impious thoughts, stimulating prurient or sexually imbued interests. In the world of art, these two attitudes were formalized in semantic distinctions made between "naked" and "nude." The differentiations have never been more succinctly set forth than by Sir Kenneth Clark thirty years ago in his published collection of lectures *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*: "To be naked is to be deprived of our clothes, and the word implies some of the embarrassment most of us feel in that condition. The word 'nude' on the other hand, carries, in educated usage no uncomfortable overtone. The vague image it projects into the mind is not a huddled and defenseless body, but of a balanced, prosperous and confident body: the body reformed." In the course of his lectures Lord Clark demonstrated that historically the nude came to be considered the most central and serious vehicle laden with layer on layer of meaning—aesthetic, cultural and psychological.

No artist involved in depicting the human figure can do so without confronting the nude (and its intellectual connotations). Jean Charlot was no exception. Judging from Charlot's remarkable body of work in this genre, he was a man in whom the unclothed human form evoked powerful feelings—of mystery, tenderness, sensuality, awe and respect. The nude played a more important role in Charlot's art than perhaps has been generally realized. It was a subject to which he frequently returned during the period from the early 1920s to the late 1930s, producing

Nude, Prismatic

1932
oil on canvas
36" x 28"
Charlot Family Collection

Tondo, Back

1932
oil on canvas
30" x 30"
Charlot Family Collection

La Mer

1932
oil on canvas
30" x 48"
Charlot Family Collection

La Montagne

1932
oil on canvas
30" x 47 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Jerry

1932
colored pencil on paper
20" x 13 5/8"
Charlot Family Collection

Self-portrait

1932
oil on canvas
15" x 15"
Charlot Family Collection

Mother with Child on Back

1933
color lithograph
25 1/4" x 20"
Charlot Collection

dozens of paintings and well over one hundred drawings and prints. Like his portraits, Charlot's nudes have remained a lesser-known aspect of his work because they have seldom been exhibited together in significant numbers. Many of the drawings have never been exhibited, and it is in these works in particular that one senses Charlot's endless fascination with the nude and his desire to know it fully, in all its nuances.

In the exhibition are a pair of 1922 drawings of a male nude. Probably the same male model is shown in both, depicted in two of many customary poses assumed by a professional model in a classroom or studio situation. These two sheets point up the fact that for Charlot, as for many young artists before and after him, painting and drawing the nude was the foundation of all academic training. In particular, drawing the male nude had been, ever since Michelangelo's time, one of the supreme proofs of skill, demonstrating an artist's command of anatomy and understanding of musculature. Approaching the model in a formal way, Charlot rendered him with a solidity that could only have been learned in life class. The outline and contours of his body are defined not only by line but by delicate shading. Charlot masterfully uses the white of the paper to convey a sense of volume and mass. The bumpy, gnarly musculature seems a somewhat exaggerated interpretation of a highly developed body, but it also may be the legacy of cubism, as if the sharp contours and shallow concave planes resulted from subjecting the form to some general law of refraction.

These two drawings are the only representation of male nudes in the exhibition. After this early period, Charlot apparently had little interest in the male nude and seldom used it as the central subject in his work. The one major exception was a large painting depicting Eve offering the apple to Adam (1932). Though the figure of Adam (Lincoln Kirstein was the model) is a large and imposing one, it is the figure of Eve which nevertheless attracts and dominates the viewer's attention. It was the female form which preoccupied Charlot.

The delight which he took in exploring the diversity of postures and attitudes presented by the female nude is revealed in a series of drawings also from 1922. Unlike the drawings of male nudes which rely on shading contrasted with the light of the paper itself to establish form, the female nudes, rendered in reddish and black inks over blue pencil underdrawing, utilize only line. Using long, discursive outlines to articulate contours, Charlot is after a different selection of information in these works than in the male nudes. Wonderful in their spareness and simplicity, these studies reveal Charlot's virtuosity as a draughtsman. His secure sense of freedom and knowledge of form allow him to employ the expressive force of strongly drawn outline in capturing the essence of the subjects.

From the following year, 1923, is a large drawing of a reclining nude, posed for by Nahui Olin, whose face was immortalized in the famous intense photographic portrait by Edward Weston. Drawn in soft charcoal, Olin's body is arrayed across the sheet like a frieze. A pleasing rhythm is established and flows

Nude Seated

1933
lithograph
9 3/4" x 7"
Charlot Collection

Untitled (portrait of a woman)

1933
pencil on paper
9" x 11"
Charlot Family Collection

Lavandera

1933
lithograph
11 1/4" x 9 1/2"
Charlot Collection

Picture Book

1933
32 bound color lithographs
11 1/4" x 9"
Charlot Collection

Malinche

Prospectus for *Picture Book*
1933
color lithograph on zinc, offset
6" x 8"
Charlot Collection

Tortillera (Picture Book wrapper)

1933
brush on zinc lithograph, offset
11" x 17 7/8"
Charlot Collection

Guitar Player

1933-35
oil on canvas
58" x 38"
Charlot Family Collection

through the curves and angles of her long, lithesome body. The eye's movement is arrested momentarily by the ingenious device of the bent leg crossed over the knee, creating a perfect triangle, before moving on down the extended leg and being released through the pointed foot. Charlot capitalizes on the characteristics of the charcoal to describe outline boldly and to permit the figure to emerge from the background. He utilizes to advantage the medium's capacity to define sweeping contours and to suggest, when rubbed, the presence of light. The beautiful finish and the solidity and naturalism of this drawing distinguish it from the exaggerated male nudes and the female silhouettes of 1922. Here Charlot pursues an elegant classicism. Nahui Olin is cast in the tradition of the odalisque, like Manet's Olympia, a mixture of the aristocratic and the down-to-earth. The figure is used as a vehicle for mood, one of *luxe, calme et volupté*. She possesses a sensuousness that is emphasized by her alert expression and open mouth, the braid which snakes down and crosses her arms, the soft press of her buttock against the support, and the slight arch to her body. A sense of inhalation, of uplifting vitality, imbues her with allure, the allure of being and becoming.

The drawing of Nahui Olin seems virtually unique in Charlot's work. The conventional beauty, in the tradition of the Greek ideal of proportion, of Olin's body and the naturalism he used to depict it did not sustain his interest. It was another woman he encountered in Mexico, Luz Jiménez, a very different physical type, who was destined to become his favored model and a lasting inspiration in his work (Illus. pp . 113, 136). Charlot never seemed to lose interest in Luz as a subject. He

painted and drew her portrait many times, as he did her body, and indeed many of the nudes of Luz are in effect portraits, so convincingly did he infuse them with a sense of personality.

As Luz's broadly chiseled Indian/Spanish features intrigued him, so her body inspired in him the urge to envisage things in terms of heaviness, roundness and fullness. In her plain earthiness, Charlot perceived a metaphor for the timeless and the universal. He apotheosized her qualities in large paintings such as the two versions of *Great Nude, Chalma* (Illus. p. 127), in which we see her standing like a classical Venus or Aphrodite, proud, noble, dignified—the embodiment of all that he admired in the ancient race she represented. In *Idol* (Illus. p. 137) the monumentality is further pronounced in the sculptural sturdiness of her form, and the analogy to an ancient deity is unmistakable.

In a more intimate vein, Charlot delighted in depicting her body for its own sake. He was particularly fascinated by her back, and one of the most sensitive and beautiful of all Charlot's drawings is one in red conté crayon which reveals a purely sensual response to light caressing the surface of her back, picking out the subtle details of the depression of her spine and the folds of flesh. The softness of the medium emphasizes the sensuous nature of the subject, and Charlot achieved a masterly interaction of crayon and paper that produces a magnificently luminous image.

The Offering

1934
lithograph
12 1/8" x 10 1/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Mother with Child in Front

1934
color lithograph
26 1/4" x 17 1/2"
Charlot Collection

La Familia

1935
oil on canvas
44" x 33"
Charlot Family Collection

Rythm [sic]

1935
lithograph on aluminum, offset
6 1/2" x 8"
Charlot Collection

Tondo: After the Bath

1935
lithograph
10 3/4" x 9 3/8"
Charlot Collection

Eleanore

1935
oil on canvas
16" x 20"
Charlot Family Collection

Eleanore

1935
pencil and red chalk on paper
14 3/8" x 18"
Charlot Family Collection

Luz served as the prototype for the nude female figures which Charlot used in his depictions of women bathing or doing coiffures. The theme of women involved in intimate activities was an important one in his work, and he did many variations in paintings, drawings and prints. He treated this theme in one of his largest and most complex early paintings, the *Great Bathers, Chalma* (1930, oil on canvas, 60" x 80"). In the center, Charlot employed a favorite device: two nudes standing, one facing out toward the viewer, the other turned presenting her back. Around them are other figures in a landscape. The two nudes have a solid and earthy monumentality, direct descendants of the bathers of Rubens, Courbet, Renoir and, above all,



Luz Weaving at Home
Milpa Alta, Mexico, 1920s

Cézanne. Charlot's bathers maintain an aura of detachment and ambiguity. On the one hand they seem evocations of an ideal of female innocence and on the other like mother-goddesses—symbols of fertility, abundance incarnate.

How different then are a series of nudes painted by Charlot in 1932 and 1933. They come as a surprise, for they possess none of the voluptuousness of Luz and the bathers. The continuous surfaces, easy transitions and delicate modeling that seemed an essential factor in depicting the earlier nudes suddenly gave way to decisive simplifications and violent distortions. These works are loosely handled and there is less concern for transcription on the literal. Somber colors are replaced by brighter, harsher hues. Proportions are exaggerated without concern for the rules of anatomy, and there seems to be a conscious attempt to show the substructure, the bones of the body and how the flesh covers them. We can only speculate about what Charlot was searching for in such works. Perhaps the diluted influence of cubism was reasserting itself, or the artist felt a turn to greater abstraction and distortion would heighten impact. While these works seem at first glance strangely awkward, it is only when one looks at them for a time that one begins to understand how this apparent disproportion strengthens the design as a whole. The psychological effect of these nudes is curious. They seem deliberately evocative and emphatically physical, invested with sexual feelings that go beyond the sensuality of his earlier depictions of the nude. In the most disturbing work in the series, *Nude with a Cigarette*, the figure, whose arm appears unfinished and

Eleanore Nude from the Waist

1935
pencil on paper
18 7/8" x 14 1/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Bathers

1935
oil on canvas
15" x 16"
Charlot Family Collection

Bathers

1935
fresco
14 3/4" x 18 5/8"
Charlot Family Collection

Cargador Resting with Sugar Cane

February 1936
oil on canvas
19" x 15"
Charlot Family Collection

Characters of the Reformation

By Hilaire Belloc
New York and London: Sheed and Ward, 1936
book illustrations; lithographs
11" x 8 1/4"
Charlot Collection

Lavanderas, Nude

April 1937
oil on canvas
30" x 30"
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Browne

Tortillera Lesson

July 1937
oil on canvas
36" x 30"
Collection of Henry Blakstad, Jr.

whose face dissolves in a ghostly glow, exudes an eroticism proclaimed by the rosy aureole of her sexual parts.

Such psychological potency is also found again in a pair of works, likewise painted in 1932, which symbolizes the ocean and the earth or land, *La Mer* (The Sea) and *La Montagne* (The Mountain). Like the famous sculptures of Maillol, *L'Air*, *La Rivière* and *La Montagne*, each embodies the attributes of its analogous subject. In Charlot's *La Mer*, the figure has a soft fleshiness and reclines in an ethereal dream-state in a moonlit landscape by a body of water. (*Reclining Nude*, Illus. p. 138) is a study for *La Mer*.) Pale light slithers over the forms of her body and smooths them out, creating a sense of translucent liquidity. In *La Montagne* (Illus. p. 139) a massive, compact nude reclines in restless slumber on firm ground. The heavy outlines of her body and her reddish brown coloring evoke the earth, while the rhythmic sequence of hump and hollow of her hips, breasts and arms blends with the mountainous landscape behind her. Like *Nude with a Cigarette*, *La Mer* and *La Montagne* convey a suggestion of sexual readiness.

The distortions and allegories which preoccupied Charlot in 1932 gave way to more objective explorations of the nude in the mid and late 1930s. After 1935, however, nudes as independent subjects began to diminish in his work. Perhaps Charlot felt he had solved the mysteries of the nude and after nearly two decades of intensive questioning and exploring had reached an intuitive understanding

of the human form. Certainly Jean Charlot never lost his conviction that the human figure is simultaneously the most complex and potentially the most eloquent subject an artist can handle, and that depicting the human is the most forthright expression of an artist's own humanity.

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Honolulu Academy of Arts from the exhibition brochure *Jean Charlot:
The Nude Figure*, 1987.

Zohmah with Shawl

1937

oil on canvas

14" x 18"

Charlot Family Collection

Head with Rebozo

1937

lithograph

7 1/2" x 8 3/4"

Charlot Collection

Jean Charlot's Repertory of Motifs

by Mike Weaver

All art is religious.

Even if a painter chooses to paint an
anti-religious theme, if the result is art
at all, it will be religious at the core.

—José Clemente Orozco

Like many artists before him, Jean Charlot believed that art could serve as the visual bible of the illiterate and the poor. The unlettered laity learned to read an alphabet of lines and plastic values even if the Roman alphabet was beyond their immediate reach. The windows, the sculpture and paintings of the church moved and edified countless humble souls who knew the stories of the Bible through the oral repetition of prayers and sermons. Charlot wrote: "When

we refer today to art as propaganda, we think of closed fists and red banners, forgetting that other kind which, for centuries, disseminated the lessons of martyrdoms and miracles" (1972, vol. II:70). Living and working as he did through the Modernist period of art, Charlot knew that followers of the School of Paris¹ would consider it a cardinal sin, as it were, to produce paintings and prints with overtly Biblical subject matter. However, by devoting his life to a certain craftsmanly practicality he was able both to resolve his own position as a believer and to make work which is never out of place wherever a loving relationship between the common people and God still exists. His folk-liturgical art retains its quiet force within the lines, values and colors of an art of printmaking not likely to lose its meaning while art for sacramental purposes endures. Like santos painting, his work was intended to make a Jacob's ladder to connect us with God.

Some artists have found
the connection between Mary Madonna and Mary
Magdalene one of immense psychological importance. But
Charlot, it seems, was not especially interested in this
relationship. To translate a French caption he wrote for
one of his prints (Morse 1976:101 plate 132):

Virgin or whore, dressed or not,
When art takes over, doesn't matter a jot!

Like marriage, art sancti-
fied everything under the bed sheet. Charlot was evi-
dently more interested in the relation between Mary and
Martha. Mary's mystical mind wandered beyond the
kitchen, while Martha grumbled at her sister's apparent

Rest and Work

1937
oil on canvas
23" x 20"
Collection of St. Francis Medical
Center

Rest and Work at Doorsill

July 1938
oil on canvas
36" x 30"
Charlot Family Collection

The New Hat (Negress, N. Y.)

September 1938
oil on canvas
12" x 9"
Charlot Family Collection

Tortilleras

1938
lithograph on aluminum, offset
12" x 9"
Charlot Collection

Interior with Girl Sewing

1938
oil on canvas
35" x 29"
Collection of Gertrud Roberts

Coiffure (Delousing)

1939
oil on canvas
30" x 27"
Charlot Family Collection

First Steps

1939
oil on canvas
40" x 30"
Collection of Ivan Hawkins

uselessness. Yet Charlot never fully accepted this difference, any more than others accept the one between the Madonna and Magdalene. In *Woman with Basket*, the basket usurps the importance of its bearer not because of its usefulness but because such a pannier may contain mystical disks of unleavened bread made by *tortilleras* who look as much like praying saints and angels as housewives (Illus. p. 148). *Woman with Bundle* is an analogous glyph of a person with a parcel of linen on her head, whose hands are raised in the gesture of St. Veronica holding up the kerchief with the Holy Face (Illus. p. 149). *Raising of Lazarus* shows Mary and Martha



Woman With Bundle
1935
lithograph
8" x 6"
Charlot Collection

looking down on a head framed by grave clothes also shaped like Veronica's veil. This Veronica motif, so widely featured in the folk art of the Oaxaca region of Mexico, was one often used by Charlot in his search for a symbolic yet plastic abstraction of a sacred subject consistent and consonant with the distaff side of life.

Tondo: Bathers shows

the upper figure making the Veronica gesture or kerchief sign in a context related to a Tarascan terra cotta² of a delousing scene in subject, and to a Raphaelite tondo transformed by Ingres in form. The theme of *Tondo: After the Bath* (Illus. p. 143), like many of the nude figure studies in Charlot's work, originates in a steam-bath subject of 1925, *Temascal* (Illus. p. 124). But this Mexican communal bathhouse scene is keyed to a view through the window of a *Calvario*—three crosses on a hill. The typology of Baptism, prophetic of purification and Resurrection, suffuses this early picture with thoughtful motifs which we recognize in subsequent work by Charlot: hairdressing, motherly care, woman laundering, child washing mother. In *Bathers*, a child rinses off its mother, but Charlot's French caption asks whether it does not depict John baptizing Jesus, while the English caption asks why a dove (the Holy Spirit) is hovering near. In *Coiffure: Idols*, the act of delousing suggests a sisterly embrace—a Kiss of Peace such as that exchanged by Elizabeth and Mary at the Visitation. In *Woman Washing*, a crouching figure paddles a shirt in a stream, but in the background another holds up a cloth in a pinning action evocative of the Veronica gesture. In the

Woman with Cradle

October 1940
fresco
21" x 26 1/2"
Collection of Paul and Fredrica
Cassiday

Père Couturier

1940
oil on canvas
12" x 16"
Charlot Family Collection

Preparing for the Dance of the Pastoras

September 1941
oil on canvas
50" x 40"
Charlot Family Collection

Preparing Malinche for the Dance

September/October 1941
oil on canvas
50" x 40"
Charlot Family Collection

Head of Negress, Black Sweater

November 1941
oil on canvas
16" x 12"
Charlot Family Collection

Head and Hand, Negro in Profile

November 1941
oil on canvas
12" x 16"
Charlot Family Collection

Negro Head with Cap

November 1941
oil on canvas
12" x 16"
Charlot Family Collection

captions, a robust attitude to bodily cleanliness (Martha) is matched by a mystical washing away of sins (Mary).

The last mural Charlot painted in Mexico for the Ministry of Education, *Lavanderas* (1923), already contained such motifs of women with bundles and baskets on their heads, holding up linen in the Veronica gesture, and washing clothes in a river (Charlot 1963 [1967]:plate 45a). Always lightly



Cargador at Rest

1933

lithograph on stone

11 1/4" x 9 1/4"

Charlot Collection

charged with meaning, Charlot collected these visual types throughout his career, depicting them in *Picture Book* (1933), *Mexihkanantli* (1946-7), and *Picture Book II* (1972-3). He considered J.M.W. Turner's *Liber Studiorum* (1808) his precedent—a repertory of motifs for use as source material. But Charlot included text pages of captions to extend the significance of the titles of his images, which made his picture books more like seventeenth-century emblem books or Ripa's *Iconologia*³ than Turner's. In *Picture Book* (1933) Charlot wrote rhymed captions in French and English (by no means straight translations of each other), and Paul Claudel, the poet-playwright, contributed *dévises*, or extended titles. Witty as they are, these captions enlarge the meaning of the images, Charlot assuming the homely Martha role as a rule, and Claudel adopting that of the mystical Mary. In *Motherly Care*, Charlot's comment emphasizes the generous physical protection that the enormous form of the bending mother provides, while Claudel wrote: "She asks who is his father." Charlot's captions for *Cargador* probably refer to St. Christopher, "who found even his giant strength no match for the miraculous weight of his Burden," whereas Claudel identified the image directly with Christ—"Crucified to the stone" (Illus. p. 142). In *Cargador at Rest*, Charlot provides a sugar-cane replacement for St. Christopher's gnarled staff, and curls a noose adjacent to his head to evoke the betrayal of Judas, or a memory of Christ led to the Crucifixion on a rope. His printer, Lynton R. Kistler, watching him draw the stone for this lithograph, feared that he might copy the image directly from a pre-Hispanic terra cotta but was much relieved to discover that he did not. Charlot's mastery of his Aztec and Mayan sources was such that he felt no need for copying. On the contrary, what he wished to do

Negro Head

Study for mural, Post Office, McDonough, Georgia

November 1941

oil on canvas

15 1/2" x 11 1/2"

Charlot Collection

Carmen

By Prosper Mérimée

New York: Limited Editions Club

1941

book illustrations; lithographs

11" x 8 1/2"

Charlot Collection

Rest on the Flight with Angels

Washing Diapers

1941

oil on canvas

20" x 24"

Charlot Family Collection

Tortillera with Child

1941

lithograph on zinc, offset

12 1/2" x 18 1/2"

Charlot Collection

Sculptor

Study for Visual Arts mural, Fine Arts Building, University of Georgia

Georgia

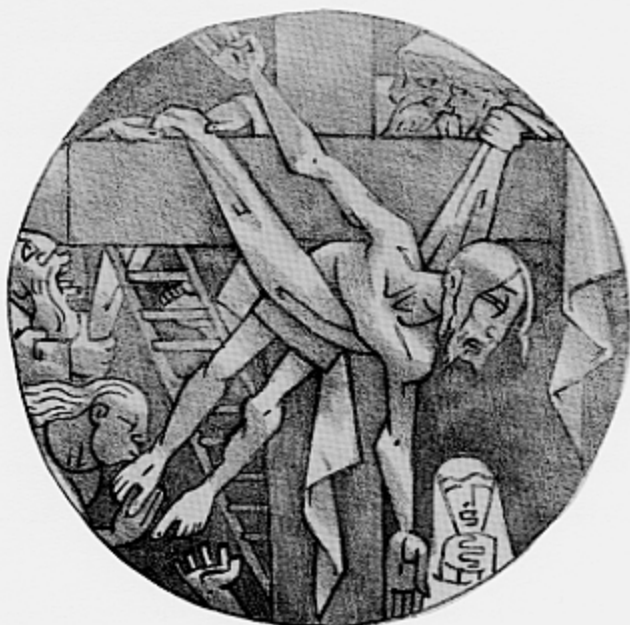
December 1941

charcoal on paper

25" x 19"

Charlot Family Collection

was to synthesize his cultural sources, Mexican Indian and Christian, in such a way that a resonance would be struck in the mind of the viewer to encompass both traditions simultaneously. He wanted to communicate with his animated motifs or glyphs not a story but a quality of thought and feeling which would awaken an inward sense of the religious. Occasionally, Charlot suspected that Kistler did not like to print overtly religious subjects—sacred art intended for church use, like a *Via Crucis* or a Madonna or a Holy Face—even if Kistler protested that this was not the case (Morse 1976:140, 295, 333). But Charlot himself did not believe that Fra Angelico would have been a better artist if he had been able to avoid religious art: “In other moments of art



Chemin de Croix, Station XIII, Descent from the Cross

1934

lithograph

4" diameter

Charlot Collection

history, propaganda was thought of as a sound enough ingredient of art, and certainly the one obvious reason for producing art" (1972, vol. I:322). Charlot had, after all, begun his career in France in La Gilde Notre-Dame, a group of craftspersons dedicated to liturgical art. His model artist was the religious painter Marcel Lenoir (1872-1931).

At the end of the First World War, in 1918-20, Charlot carved a *Via Crucis* in woodcut (Illus. pp. 60, 103). This *Chemin de Croix*, consisting of fourteen Stations of the Cross, was in one sense his original picture book or polyptich of Christian motifs. Each station included an inscription below the image, together with a vignette symbolic of an incident in the Christian story. In 1934 Charlot drew another four Stations of the Cross, intended when complete to make up a (fourteen-station *Chemin de Croix*) booklet. *Station XIII, The Descent from the Cross*, included a motif of vital importance to his work. It shows Christ being lowered from the Cross by Joseph of Arimathea with the aid of a cloth. In the Mexican context this cloth was a rebozo used by a woman to support her child as it took its first steps or to tie it into its chair. As a looped piece of cloth it is closely related to the motif of Veronica's kerchief. It serves as a lowering, holding, and restraining device in both senses of the word—a useful domestic contrivance such as Martha might use and a robe or shroud of the Passion such as Mary might contemplate. In *First Steps*, a resonance from *Station XIII* reverberates in our minds when we recognize that these first steps of childhood foreshadow the descent from the Cross. In another version a folded paper toy chicken in the bottom right hand corner of the image replaces the cock-

Potter

Study for Visual Arts mural, Fine Arts Building, University of Georgia

December 1941

charcoal on paper

19" x 24 5/8"

Charlot Family Collection

Muse

Study for Music mural, Fine Arts Building, University of Georgia

December 1941

charcoal on paper

24 3/4" x 18 7/8"

Charlot Family Collection

Harpist

Study for Music mural, Fine Arts Building, University of Georgia

March 1942

charcoal on paper

25 1/8" x 19"

Charlot Family Collection

Spectators of Tragedy

Study for Theater mural, Fine Arts Building, University of Georgia

March 1942

charcoal on paper

25" x 19"

Charlot Family Collection

Hand of Muse II

Study for Music mural, Fine Arts Building, University of Georgia

April 1942

charcoal on paper

19" x 24 3/4"

Charlot Collection

crow vignette in the *Chemin de Croix* to represent the Denial of Peter.

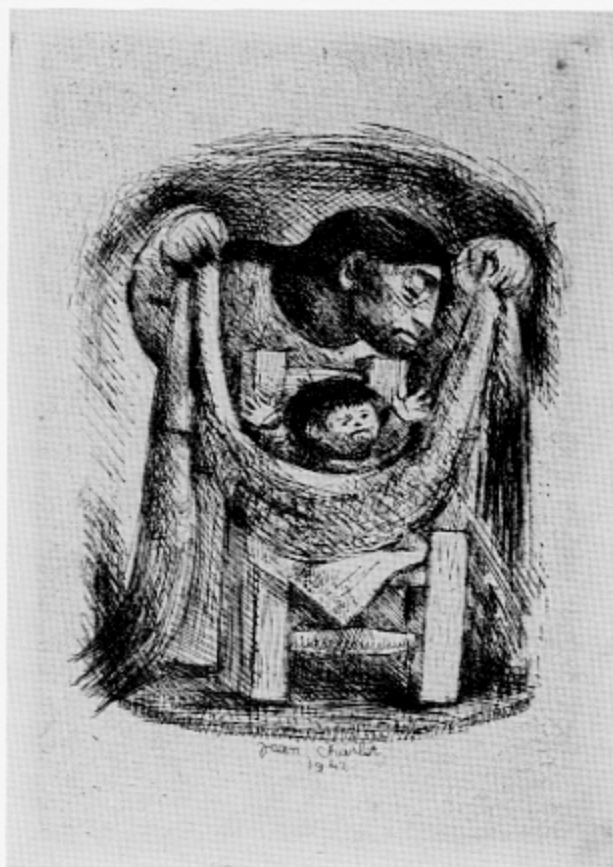
Woman Tying Baby in

Chair is even more clearly related to *The Descent from the Cross*. Without a title for the picture we would not know whether the child was being tied in or let down. The chair itself, made of roughly carpentered planks takes the place of the Cross, over the crossbar of which the Mother now leans. In one version her arms hold up the rebozo in the Veronica gesture and the infant's face merges with it to make a Holy Face. In another chair picture, *Playing with the Dog*, the triangular back of the crossbar of the chair evokes the symbol of the Holy Ghost, while in the vignette corner is an apple or ball. In *La Nana*, the child is offered a Mexican straw toy which combines the Cross of the Crucifixion with St. Andrew's cross of martyrdom. As Charlot remarked about this lithograph: "There is something of a mixture of Christian and pagan in it." In *The Glass Ball*, the ball seems to refer emblematically to the *homo bulla* theme (man's life is but a bubble), but when related to a *santo* from which Charlot made his Christmas card in 1948 it alludes to the globe of the world redeemed by its Saviour.

The French Catholic

Revival before and after the First World War embraced a conception of the peasant which Charlot was never to abandon. Before him, his friend Paul Claudel had valued the simple, loyal, and deeply felt religion of the French peasant. In Mexico, however, Charlot moved in a circle which was Marxist and fiercely anti-clerical. Sharing with Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros the desire to portray peasant life, he saw nothing in the Christian

view of life to stand in the way of celebrating the apotheosis of the poor and the downfall of the rich. *Los ricos en el infierno* (Illus. p. 122), a woodcut originally intended for the revolutionary paper *El Machete*, proved a certain social solidarity with his Marxist friends, who in turn “found it difficult not to hold on to the apron strings of the Mother (church) they kicked” (1963, [1967]:26). The muralists fused pre-Hispanic and popular Mexican art with the colonial Christian tradition. Charlot wrote: “In



Mother Tying Child in Chair
1942
etching and drypoint
7" x 5"
Charlot Collection

Study for Mural, Journalism Building, University of Georgia
1943

ink on paper
28 3/4" x 115"
Charlot Collection

First Steps

January 1943
oil on canvas
12" x 16"
Charlot Family Collection

Great Malinche with Orchestra

August 1943
oil on canvas
50" x 70"
Collection of Henry Blakstad, Jr.

Self-portrait

1944
oil on canvas board
12" x 9"
Charlot Family Collection

First Steps

1946
lithograph
14" x 9 3/4"
Charlot Collection

Sunday Dress

1947
lithograph on stone
14" x 17 1/2"
Charlot Collection

Sacrifice of Isaac

1950
pencil on paper
39 1/2" x 28 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Mexico, it was Christ's choice to blow the breath of great religious expression in the nostrils of men who, indeed, were not professional do-gooders" (1972, vol. I:291-92). In short, Communist artists of genius were infinitely to be preferred to mediocre Christian ones when it came to conveying a profoundly sacramental view of life. It was not a matter of having the right pious attitudes but of expressing a depth of thought and feeling which was classically Mexican. In a similar way Charlot was able to communicate directly with Mexicans (and later, Hawaiians) on terms which the people might be expected to understand. Just as the great nineteenth-century French realist painters turned to popular imagery in order to bring it to the people, so Charlot, first influenced by French popular art prints from Épinal⁴ and then by those of José Guadalupe Posada, offered work which accorded with Mexican folkways. It was his special gift to be able to translate religious ideas into sensuous graphic form so naturally as hardly to be recognized for what it truly was—liturgical art quite untainted by overt propaganda and full of the gusto of everyday life.

Notes

1. The School of Paris generally refers to the great period of French painting during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

2. The Tarascan Indians of Michoacán in western Mexico (flourished fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) are famous for small clay figures, often female, which reflect the daily life of the people.

3. *Iconologia*, a basic
source book on iconology by Cesare Ripa, was first published
in Rome in 1593; the illustrated edition in 1603.

4. *Images d'Épinal*, French
folk prints, were produced by the same family in the city of
Épinal since the eighteenth century.

Jean Charlot's Book Illustrations

By Nancy J. Morris

Jean Charlot's first book illustration was a 1923 portrait of the poet List Arzubide published in Mexico as the frontispiece for a collection of Arzubide's poems. The last set of illustrations completed by Charlot was for *A First Book*, a children's book with text by Zohmah Charlot. The stencils for the color plates were at Charlot's bedside when he died in 1979. Charlot's son Martin completed the color overlays for the eventual publication of *A First Book* in 1980. Between these years, 1923 and 1979, Charlot executed illustrations for fifty-two books.¹ He was one of the most significant twentieth century artists who has turned to book illustration, and he took on this work with the same zest and enjoyment he gave to major oils and murals.

Surveying the fifty-two works of illustrations, one is struck by the variety of moods, styles and techniques included. For purposes of discussion, the Charlot illustrations can perhaps best be approached through a grouping process, with pauses for some particular favorites.

Picture Books

Charlot produced two works called *Picture Book*, the first in 1933, the second forty years later. These could more accurately be called portfolios, but we will overlook that distinction. Charlot most certainly would have been willing to do so. He had definite opinions against "art books" and instead wanted to produce art for the people.

Charlot had two intentions in the 1933 *Picture Book*. He wanted to make something that was not too "artistic" but "rather a picture book or a collection of little prizes like one is given in school" (In Rutgers University Art Gallery 1974:14). Secondly, his idea was to present a repertory of motifs he had used. As a precedent he pointed to the motif books by Turner, *Liber Studiorum*, or even earlier examples, the motif books prepared by Medieval and Renaissance artists and their workshops.

The 1933 Charlot *Picture Book* contains thirty-two images. Each picture is an original lithograph, each is a composite of six or seven colors, and each is extraordinary (Illus. p. 142). To produce these lithographs, Charlot drew the image for each color separately on the individual plates, using his unique

Flight into Egypt

1950
pencil on paper
39 1/2" x 28 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Rest on the Flight

1950
oil on canvas
40" x 30"
Charlot Family Collection

Holy Family

c. 1950
pencil on paper
28 1/2" x 38"
Charlot Family Collection

Captain Cook

**Fresco fragment from mural,
*Early Contacts of Hawai'i with
Outer World*, Bishop Bank,
Waikiki**
1951-52
29 1/2" x 28"
Collection of The Contemporary
Museum, Honolulu

Missionary Woman Spinning

**Fresco fragment from mural,
*Early Contacts of Hawai'i with
Outer World*, Bishop Bank**
1951-52
28" x 26"
Collection of St. Francis Medical
Center

Boy and Girl with Doll

**Fresco fragment from mural,
*Early Contacts of Hawai'i with
Outer World*, Bishop Bank**
1951-52
29" x 38"
Charlot Family Collection

ability to plan color separations and combinations in his mind. Charlot himself arranged the printing of each color onto the sheets of paper that would ultimately become the book.

Images are accompanied by short inscriptions—similar in tone to haiku verse—composed by the French writer Paul Claudel and by Charlot. The mysterious inscriptions, though obviously related to the images, have an independent existence. Charlot explained that he wished to achieve a certain distance between image and caption. The lines composed by Charlot remind us of his lifelong interest in communicating not only in visual art but also through words.

Mexican subjects fill the pages of the first *Picture Book*, summarizing Charlot's involvement with that country. Charlot had drawn and

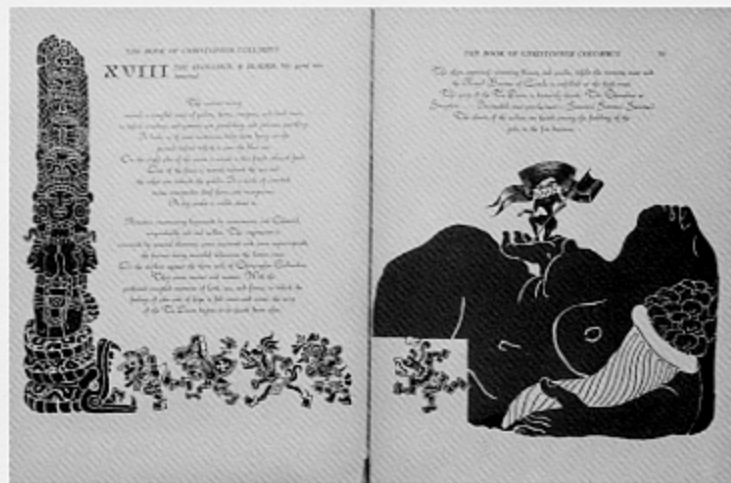


Illustration for *The Book of Christopher Columbus* by Paul Claudel

1930

11" x 8 1/2" each page

painted many of the subjects earlier, reaching for the essence of the experience and for other dimensions. The imaginative qualities and the technical achievement of the 1933 *Picture Book* have made it a classic of the lithographer's art.

Like the first *Picture Book*, *Picture Book II* (1972) has thirty-two images and, as with the first, was done in collaboration with Charlot's favorite printer, Lynton Kistler. Mexican subjects are included with a series of Hawaiian and Fijian images distilled from Charlot's visual impressions in these Pacific islands (Illus. p. 158). Seeing the two books side by side invites comparisons, but perhaps Charlot himself said it best: "First one is young. Second less young."

A third portfolio, *Kei Viti*, was completed in a limited color range, not, Charlot insisted, from "laziness" but with a deliberate attempt to depart from the chromolitho style and experiment with a portfolio similar to those of Toulouse-Lautrec, Maurice Denis and others where, with less color, the paper plays a larger role.

The Art of the Book

Charlot produced two outstanding series of illustrations for the Limited Editions Club of New York. The first, Prosper Mérimée's *Carmen* published in 1941, contains thirty-four original lithographs. We know something of the research undertaken for these images. There is a surviving Charlot sketchbook with watercolor drawings for the *Carmen* costumes

Holy Family at Night

July 1952
oil on canvas
30" x 40"
Charlot Family Collection

Untitled

1952
watercolor
29 1/2" x 22"
Collection of The Contemporary
Museum, Gift of Tseng Yuho (Betty)
Ecke

Dark Madonna

1954
lithograph
20" x 14 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Ko Ke Kumulipo (The Drummer)

1954
oil on canvas
40 1/4" x 50 1/4" (frame size)
Collection of Hawai'i State Foundation
on Culture and the Arts, Gift of the
Charlot family in memory of Jean
Charlot

Mock Battle

1956
color offset lithograph on zinc
18" x 12"
Charlot Collection

Mock Victory

1956
color offset lithograph on zinc
18" x 12"
Charlot Collection

patterned after drawings from the Los Angeles Public Library. Another series of drawings shows Charlot's plans for composition. Next, Charlot completed a series of oil paintings in the same size as the final lithographs. Several of these small oils are in the possession of Honolulu collectors; one, at one time was owned, appropriately, by Gypsy Rose Lee. Others are scattered throughout the world.

Charlot chose a series of brilliant colors—fierce reds, vivid blues, and passionate purples—to suggest the flavor of the book's Spanish characters and smoldering plot (Illus. p. 154). Included also are several somewhat gruesome scenes which Charlot thought necessary in order to show accurately the world of Carmen and Don José. The publishers carried this mood still further by binding the book in a brilliant multi-color silk fit for a Gypsy queen. A final touch of luxury in the book is the fine, specially made paper, watermarked with the name, "Carmen." Charlot's intention was to complete the most beautiful printing job of color lithographs ever produced in the United States. Many will say he succeeded.

First published in 1927 with indifferent illustrations by another artist, a subsequent Limited Editions Club edition in 1962 of Thornton Wilder's *Bridge of San Luis Rey* with Charlot's lithographs is a particularly happy union of author and artist. The Latin American setting of the text, its strong moral and symbolic content, and its contrast of effete colonials and humble peasants inspired sixteen original Charlot lithographs and made this novel and edition worthy of the Pulitzer Prize for literature it had earlier won.

In 1930 Charlot illustrated

The Book of Christopher Columbus written by his good friend, Paul Claudel. Claudel's work was conceived as a "lyrical drama." Although some critics consider the play impossible to stage, it has been elaborately produced, most notably by Jean Louis Barrault, with such devices as flocks of live trained doves on stage, and long lengths of flapping white cloth which at times represent Columbus' sails, at others, violent wind storms.



Portrait of Father Damien from *Damien the Leper* by John Farrow
1937
lithograph
7 3/4" x 5"
Charlot Collection

Veronica

1956
fresco
48" x 48"
Collection of the Catholic School
Department

Crucifix

n.d.
wood and bronze
12 1/2" x 14 3/4"
Collection of the Catholic School
Department

Malinches

1957
oil on canvas
20" x 36"
Collection of Allen Oglesby

The Bridge of San Luis Rey

By Thornton Wilder
New York: Limited Editions Club
1962
book illustrations
11" x 6 7/8"
Charlot Collection

Still Life: Fiji, Pot and Tabua

1963
oil on canvas
30" x 30"
Charlot Family Collection

Tabua II

1963
oil on canvas
12" x 16"
Charlot Family Collection

Gone

1963
oil on canvas
40" x 30"
Collection of Ivan Hawkins

Charlot's illustrations bring this work to life in another way. He illuminated the pages with a fantastic collection of sea gods and monsters, Aztec warriors, and a Columbus with his standard raised on the palm of a reclining nude representing America. Unfortunately, unlike the Limited Editions Club books mentioned above, *The Book of Christopher Columbus* was printed by Yale University Press on inferior paper stock which is fast deteriorating.

Portraits

Throughout his lifetime Charlot retained a strong interest in portraiture. Each of Charlot's portraits offers a unique solution to the challenge of portraiture: that of producing a likeness while at the same time suggesting the moral and spiritual qualities of the subject. Many of Charlot's subjects were associates, others he knew through books. Charlot's gifts in portraiture grace a number of books as frontispieces depicting such diverse characters as poet-philosopher Paul Claudel, artist Henrietta Shore, and author Prosper Mérimée. A portrait completed for John Farrow's *Damien the Leper* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1937) is noteworthy for those of us in Hawai'i because it represents Charlot's first association with a Hawai'i subject.² Charlot's Damien portrait is as unsentimental and non-idealized as the sculpture by Marisol Escobar done in 1969 for the National Statuary Hall in the Capitol in Washington, D. C. and for the Hawai'i State Capitol. Interestingly, Charlot submitted a proposal for the Damien sculpture, but in typical Charlot style, was

generous in his praise of the Marisol work ultimately chosen.³

For *Characters of the Reformation* by Hilaire Belloc (London: Sheed and Ward, 1936) Charlot produced twenty-three original lithographs. These are especially interesting from a technical point of view because the images were drawn and printed using a new color lithography process invented by Charlot and Albert Carmen. There were



Elizabeth I from *Characters of the Reformation* by Hilaire Belloc
1937
lithograph
4 1/4" x 3 1/2"
Charlot Collection

Mexican Kitchen

June 1967
oil on canvas
60" x 40"
Charlot Family Collection

Mayan Profile (Guatemala)

December 1967
oil on canvas
10" x 7 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Still Life with Tortillera Statuette

1967
oil on canvas
24" x 47 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

Tortilleras

1967
oil on canvas
40" x 44"
Charlot Family Collection

Tying Child to Chair

1967-69
oil on canvas
66" x 47" (frame size)
Collection of Hawai'i State Foundation
on Culture and the Arts

Woman with Basket

November 1969
oil on canvas
30" x 40"
Collection of Ivan Hawkins

Pots in a Mexican Kitchen

1969
oil on canvas
24" x 28"
Collection of Ivan Hawkins

many ups and downs during the production of the book, causing Charlot to declare the experience a "harrowing" one. He drew and printed a total of eighty-six plates to produce the twenty-three final portraits. The work deserves additional comment because it illustrates Charlot's attention to accuracy in historical documentation.

Brush Stroke Drawings

A number of Charlot's book illustrations, especially in his later years, are reproductions of pen and ink line drawings. Charlot liked the economy of black and white brush drawing and found the results more beautiful to his eyes than mechanically produced multi-color facsimiles.



Joachim: "And To Think I Wanted a Boy!"

Illustration for *Cartoons Catholic*

1978

5 1/2" x 7"

Cartoons Catholic

(Huntington, Indiana: *Our Sunday Visitor*, 1978) is a collection of gently humorous yet profound drawings completed during the period when Charlot served as an illustrator for a number of Catholic newspapers. The drawing, "*And to think I wanted a boy!*" says much about Charlot and his Catholic faith. Catholicism for Charlot was not a religion to be taken out for an hour on Sunday, but a faith to be lived. Because of this, he avoided the pompous and grandiose qualities associated with so much religious art. Here, the parents of the Virgin Mary show their obvious delight in their daughter and the drawing becomes much more than a Bible lesson, but rather, a lesson in living. Mary's father is not the last father to have wanted a boy but found that he was enchanted with the girl he got.

Charlot adapted this style of illustration in several books on Hawaiian themes. He developed a serious interest in the Hawaiian language, and wrote plays in Hawaiian. Because he understood and loved the language, he brought a great deal of depth to the simple drawings he created for Samuel H. Elbert's grammar text, *Spoken Hawaiian* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1970). The drawing accompanying this essay illustrates a grammatical point having to do with whether to choose an "a" or "o" to show possession. Many a student might wish that all grammar books were so entertainingly illustrated.

Illustrations For Children's Books

Approximately half the books Charlot illustrated were intended for children. To

Drawing for fresco Kahuna with Sacred Stone

1969
pencil on paper
42" x 43"
Charlot Family Collection

Kahuna with Sacred Stone

1969
fresco
44" x 44"
Collection of the University of Hawai'i
Department of Art

Hula Ki'i #1

1972
oil on canvas
39" x 47" (frame size)
Collection of Hawai'i State Foundation
on Culture and the Arts

Hula Ki'i

1972
oil on canvas
30" x 40"
Charlot Family Collection

Mexican Pottery Duck

June 1973
oil on canvas
18" x 24"
Charlot Family Collection

Picture Book II

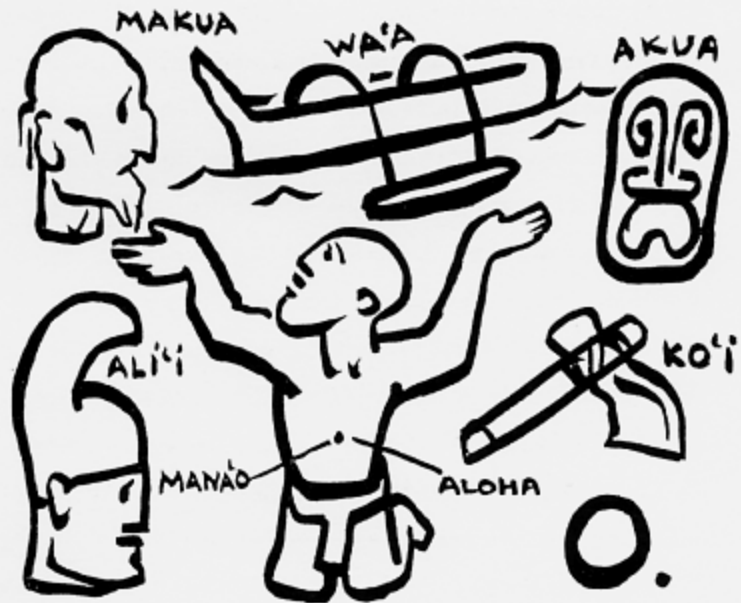
Los Angeles: Jacob Zeitlin, 1973
slipcase; cover; color lithographs
11" x 8 7/8" (cover size)
Charlot Collection

Presenting the Tabua

1973
serigraph
20 1/4" x 15 1/4"
Charlot Collection

illustrate for children requires an empathy and understanding of childhood, qualities which Charlot had in abundance. It is enlightening to review the many images in his total body of work—oils, prints, and murals—having to do with children. Typical Charlot children are inventive, curious little creatures, out to explore the world, yet ever conscious of the comforting, bulwark-like mother figure always nearby.

One of the books Charlot illustrated, Joseph Krumboltz's *And Now Miguel* (New York: Crowell, 1953), won a Newbery Prize, the most significant American annual award for excellence in children's literature. Another, Amelia Martinez Del Rio's *The Sun, the Moon, and a Rabbit* (New York: Sheed and



O-Words Are One's Birthright

Illustration for *Spoken Hawaiian* by Samuel H. Elbert

1970

4" x 4 1/2"

Ward, 1935), executed in the turquoise, emerald, magenta, peach and topaz colors of Mexico, was chosen by critics in 1935 as one of the "Fifty Books of the Year."

"Being a mural painter by trade," Charlot once wrote, "I approach a book as an architecture. The sturdiness of the page, the margins, the continuity of style are the important considerations. A child looking at one of my books should feel a sense of order and logic quite independent of the story-telling" (Morse 1976:87).

Notes

1. A complete list of Charlot's illustrations is in Zohmah Charlot's *Jean Charlot: Books, Portfolios, Writings, Murals* (Honolulu: Privately published, 1986).

2. Father Damien (Joseph Damien deVeuster, 1840-1888) was a Belgian Catholic missionary to Hawai'i who volunteered to serve the leper colony on the Island of Moloka'i, eventually contracting terminal Hansen's disease himself.

3. A bronze sculpture, 45" high, was cast from the ceramic maquette Charlot made for the State competition in 1967. The bronze *Damien* was installed at St. Anthony's Church, Wailuku, Maui in 1980.

Self-portrait

1975
etching
8 1/2" x 8 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection

Hala Leaves and Black Lava, Kapoho, Hawai'i

1976
oil on canvas
20" x 24"
Charlot Family Collection

Iolani Luahine, Head

1976
oil on canvas
12" x 16"
Charlot Family Collection

Guatemalan Weaver

1977
oil on canvas
24" x 32 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

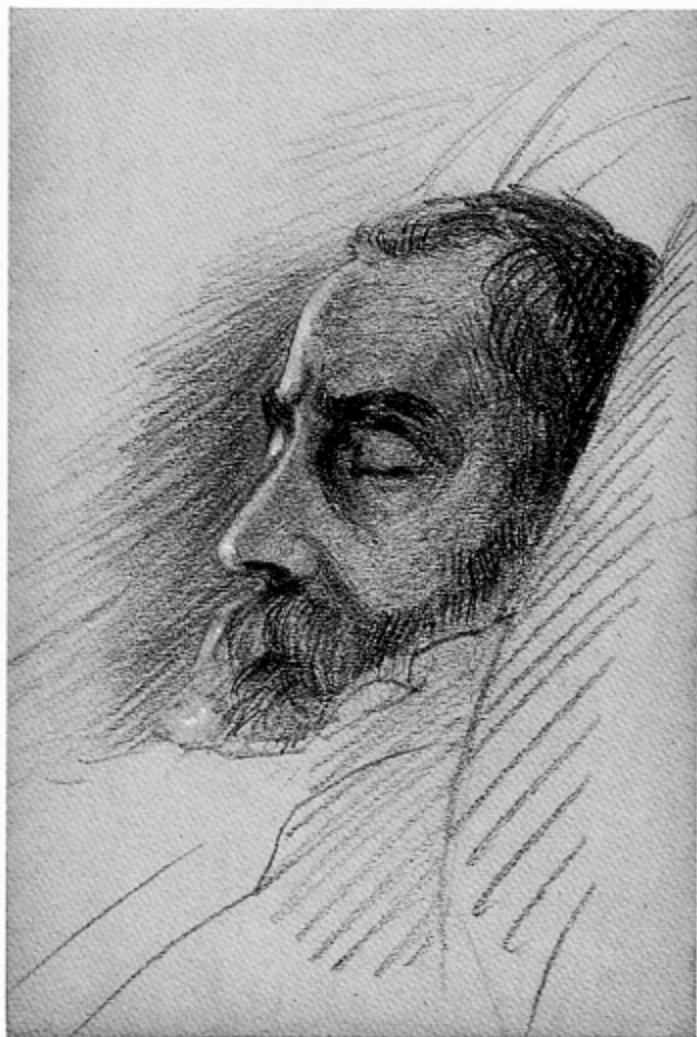
Warrior, Fiji

1978
oil on canvas
20" x 16"
Charlot Family Collection

Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well

Study for fresco at Maryknoll School, Honolulu

1978
oil on canvas
20" x 24"
Charlot Family Collection



Father

1915

pencil and chalk on paper

5 3/8" x 3 5/8"

Charlot Family Collection



Brittany, Trees (Sunny sous-bois)

c. 1916

oil on paper

5 5/8" x 8 1/2"

Charlot Collection



Landau
December 1, 1919
gauche
14 5/8" x 10 1/8"
Charlot Collection



Soldier (front)
1920
gouache
14 3/4" x 10 1/8"
Charlot Collection



Chemin de Croix (Via Crucis)

1918-1920

woodcut (wood blocks and 15 plates)

17 1/2" x 12"

Charlot Collection



L'Amitié

1921

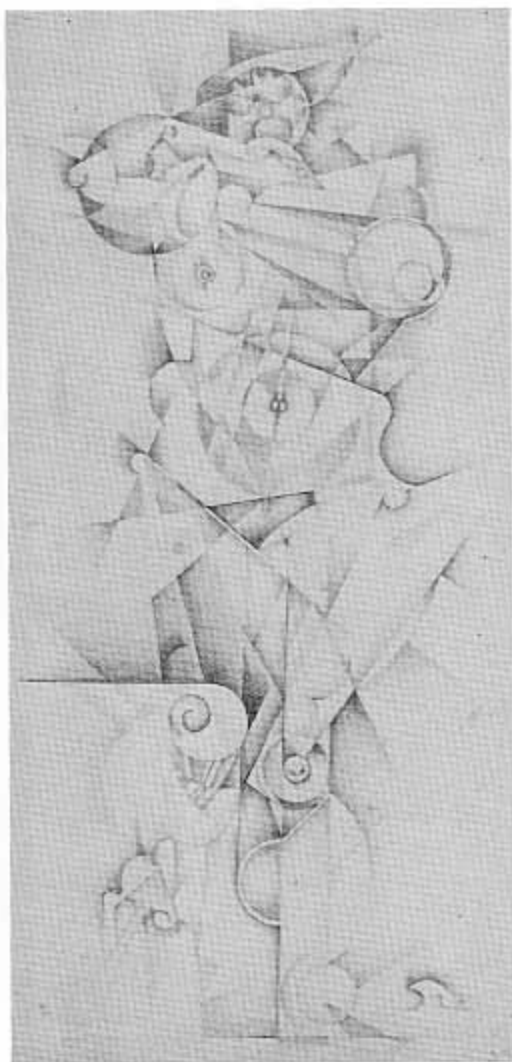
gouache

58 5/8" x 55 5/8"

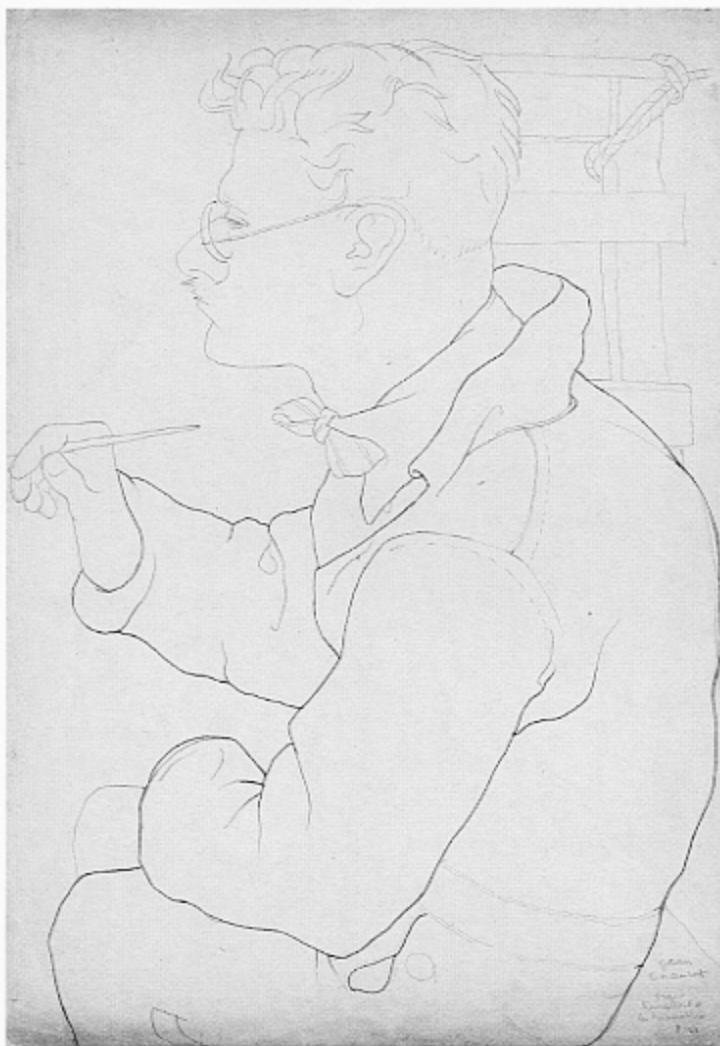
Charlot Family Collection



Man with Cigarette (Trinidad)
1922
oil on canvas
34" x 24"
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles
Hamane



Standing Woman
c. 1921
pencil on paper
14" x 6 3/4"
Charlot Collection



Orozco Working
August 1923
pencil on paper
15" x 10"
Charlot Collection



Diego Rivera
August 1922
pencil on paper
11 3/4" x 8 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection



Xavier Guerrero
1922
pencil on paper
11 7/8" x 8 7/8"
Charlot Collection



Portrait of Siqueiros

February 1924

ink on tissue

16 7/8" x 13 7/8"

Charlot Collection



Manuel Martínez Pintao

c. 1924

ink and pencil on paper

18 1/2" x 12"

Charlot Family Collection



Luz
January 1924
pencil on paper
11 3/4" x 8 7/8"
Charlot Family Collection



Luz

May 1924

black and red conté crayon on paper

15" x 11"

Charlot Family Collection



Nuhui Olin
February 1924
watercolor
12" x 9"
Charlot Family Collection



Mestiza with Orange Fan

July 1926

oil on canvas

39" x 22" (frame size)

Collection of Hawai'i State Foundation
on Culture and the Arts, Gift of Dr.
and Mrs. Robert Browne



Tina Modotti
1924
pencil on paper
11 1/4" x 8 7/8"
Charlot Collection



Anita Brenner
1926
red chalk on paper
19 1/2" x 25 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection

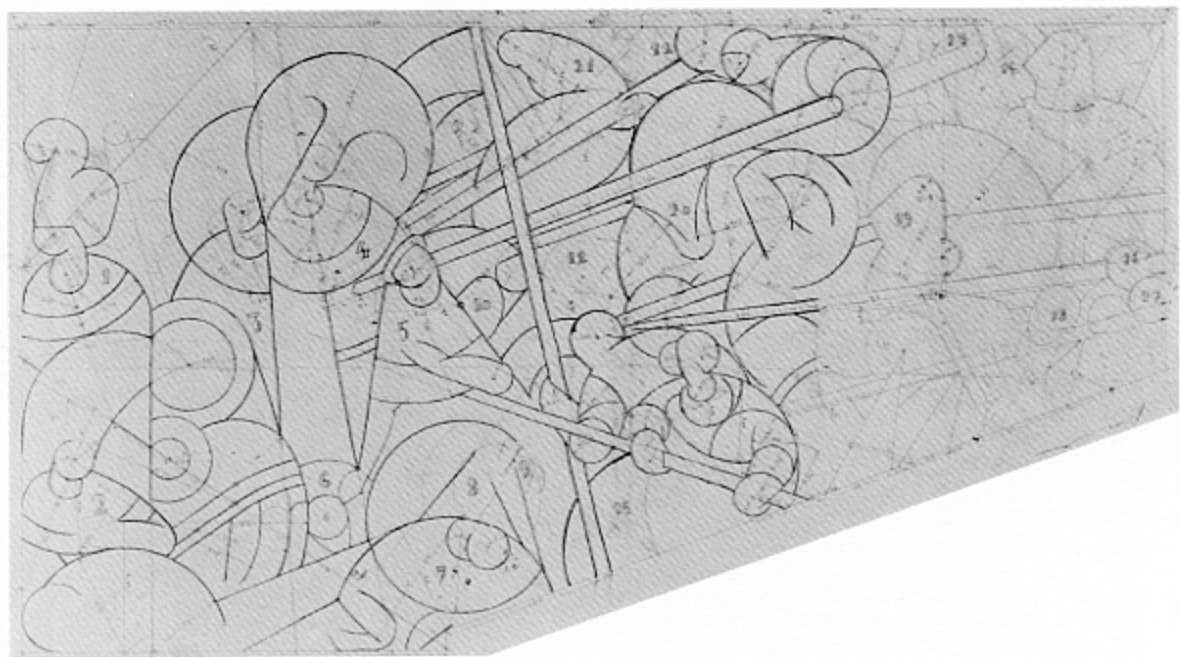


Diagram for the mural
Massacre in the Main Temple,
Preparatoria, Mexico City
1922
pencil and ink on paper
19 1/2" x 33"
Charlot Collection



*Drawing for Massacre in the
Main Temple*

1922

watercolor and pencil on paper

17 1/2" x 32"

Charlot Collection



**Drawing of Head, full scale,
for *Massacre in the Main Temple***

1922

pencil on paper

31 1/2" x 24 3/4"

Charlot Collection



**Drawing of Head, full scale,
for *Massacre in the Main Temple*
1922
pencil on paper
17 1/2" x 21 3/4"
Charlot Collection**



Los ricos en el infierno

1924

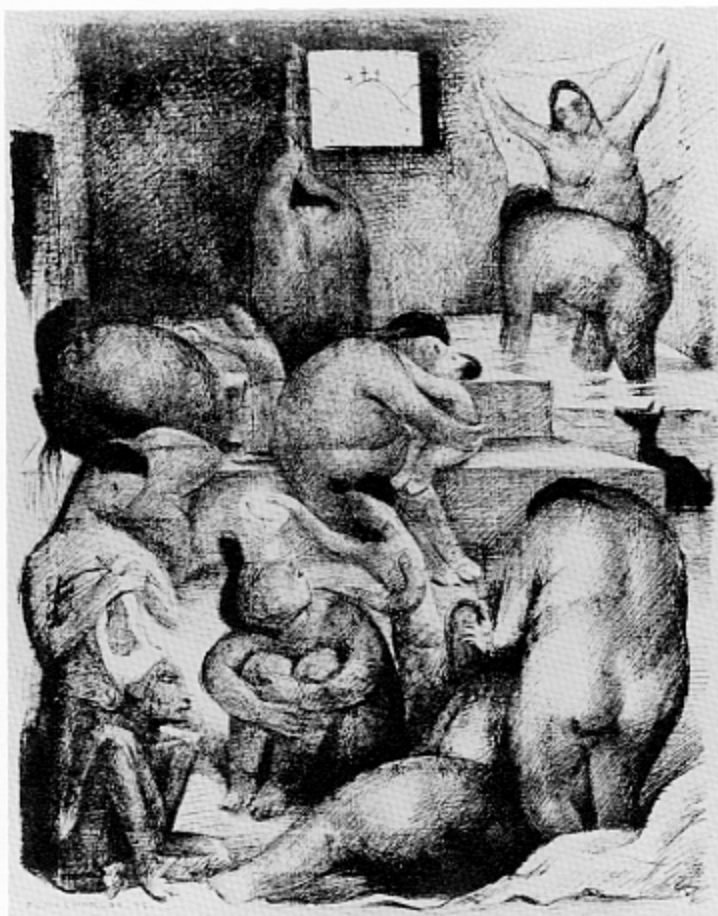
woodcut

13" x 10 1/2"

Charlot Collection



Lady with Hat
August 1926
oil on canvas
32" x 23"
Charles Family Collection



Temascal

1925

lithograph

28 1/2" x 22 1/2"

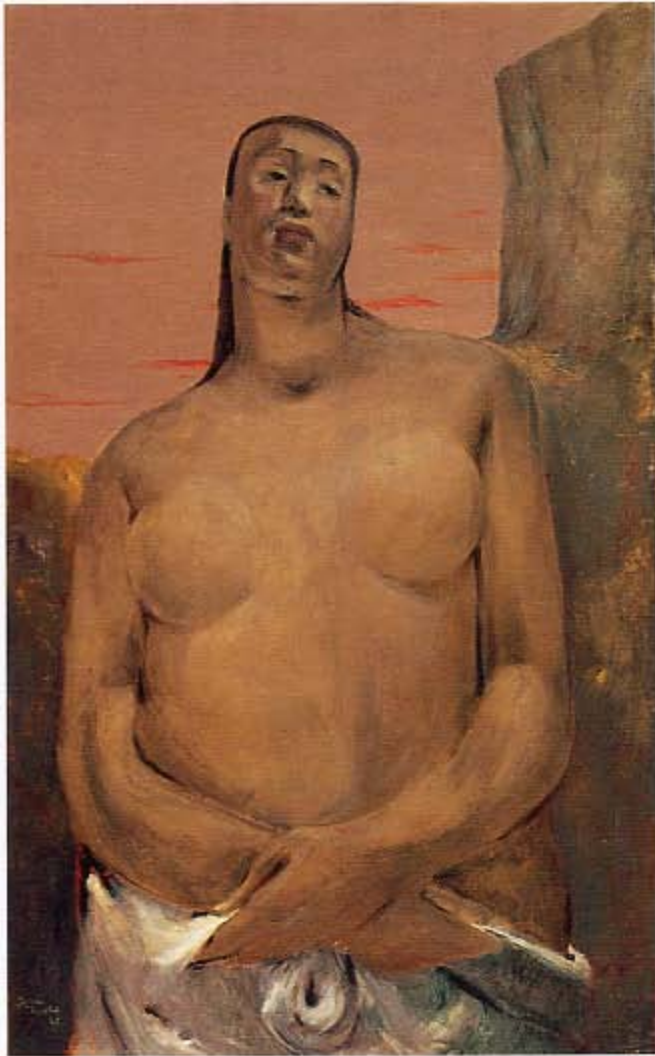
Charlot Family Collection



Nude III (with raised arms)
1927
woodcut
6" x 4 3/4"
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Robert
Browne



Nude Back
December 1926
oil on canvas
39' x 19 1/2'
Charlot Family Collection



Great Nude, Chalma II
April 1932
oil on canvas
57 3/4" x 36"
Charlot Family Collection



Woman with White Rebozo

1930

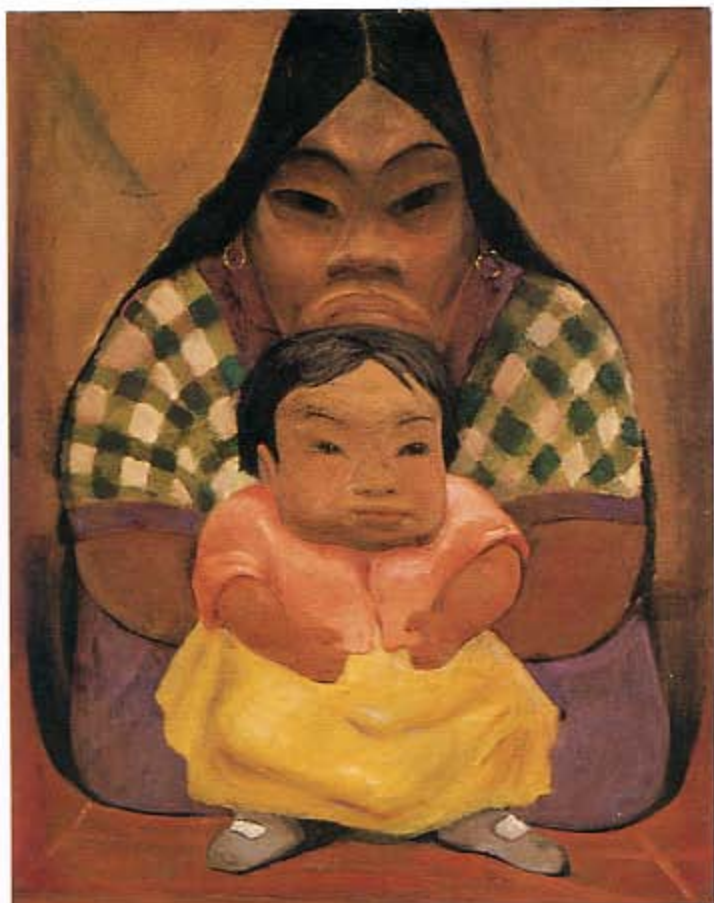
lithograph

14" x 10 1/2"

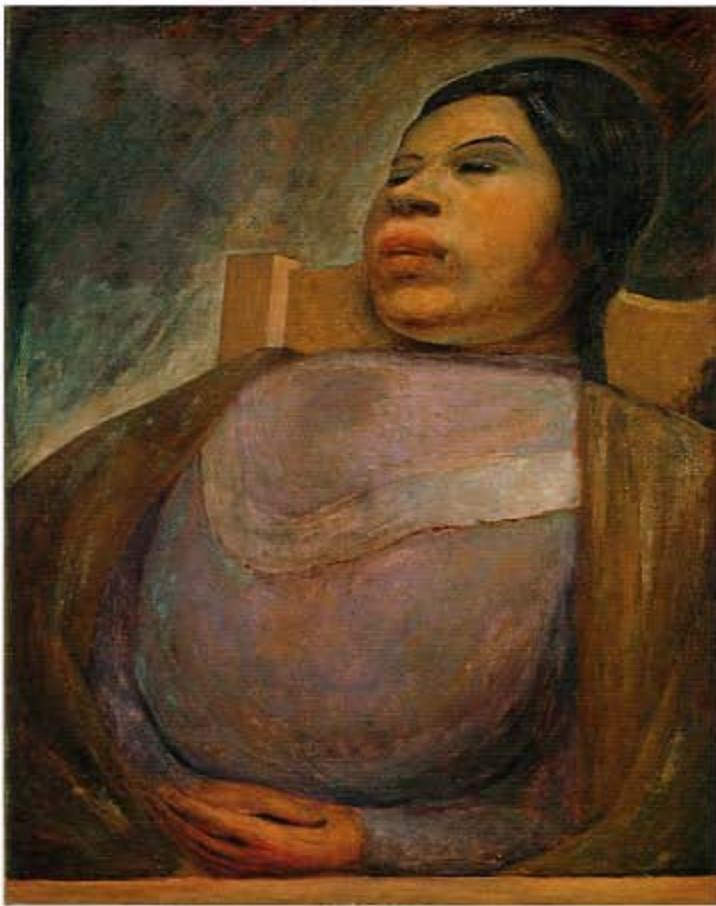
Charlot Collection



Luz with Basket
February 1924
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection



Mother and Child
December 1926
oil on canvas
32" x 25"
Charlot Family Collection



Juana

October 1927

oil on canvas

29" x 23 1/2"

Collection of Henry Blakstad, Jr.



**Study from Carnegie Institution
Archaeological Expedition to
Chichén Itzá, Yucatán**
1926-28
watercolor and pencil on paper
10 7/8" x 8 3/8"
Charlot Family Collection



Dance of the Pastoras, Chalma I
March 1925
oil on canvas
14" x 10 3/4"
Charlot Family Collection



Seven Pilgrims, Milpa Alta

August 1932

oil on canvas

39 1/2" x 50"

Collection of the Honolulu Academy
of Arts, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert
Browne



Pintaõ with Cap
1927
oil on canvas
36" x 28"
Charlot Family Collection



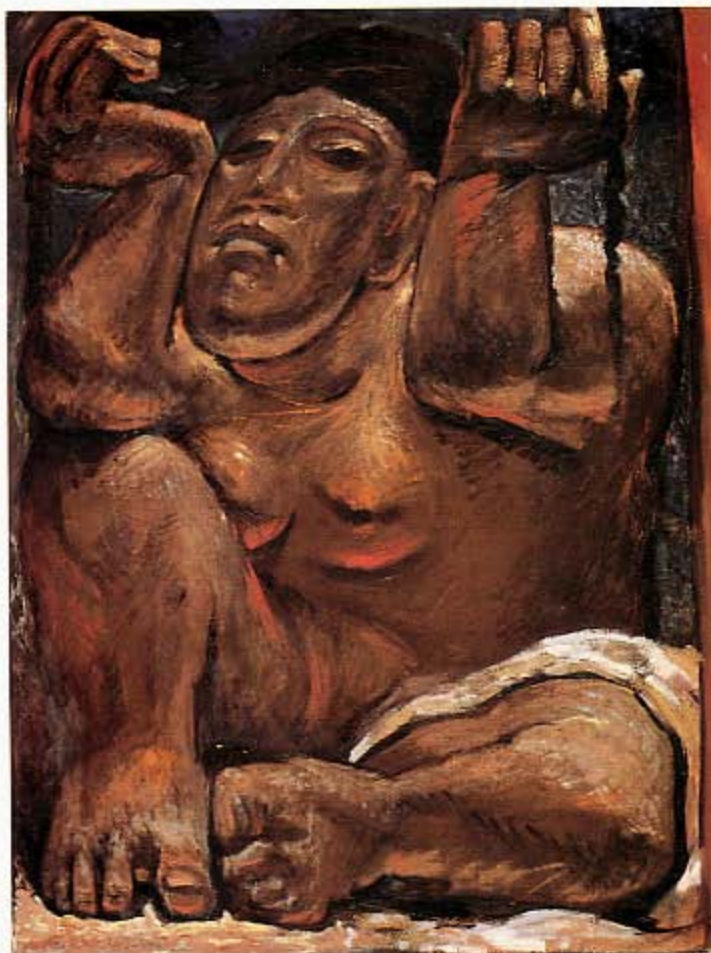
Luz

1981

oil on canvas

48" x 30"

Collection of Hawai'i State Foundation
on Culture and the Arts, Gift of Dr.
and Mrs. Robert Browne



Idol
October 1930
oil on canvas
40' x 30'
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Robert
Browne



Reclining Nude

July 1929

pencil on paper

16" x 21 3/8"

Charlot Family Collection



La Montagne
1932
oil on canvas
30" x 47 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection



Zohmah Painting

1931

oil on canvas

23 1/2" x 19 1/2"

Charlot Family Collection



Self-portrait
1932
oil on canvas
15" x 15"
Charlot Family Collection



Cargador

Picture Book

1933

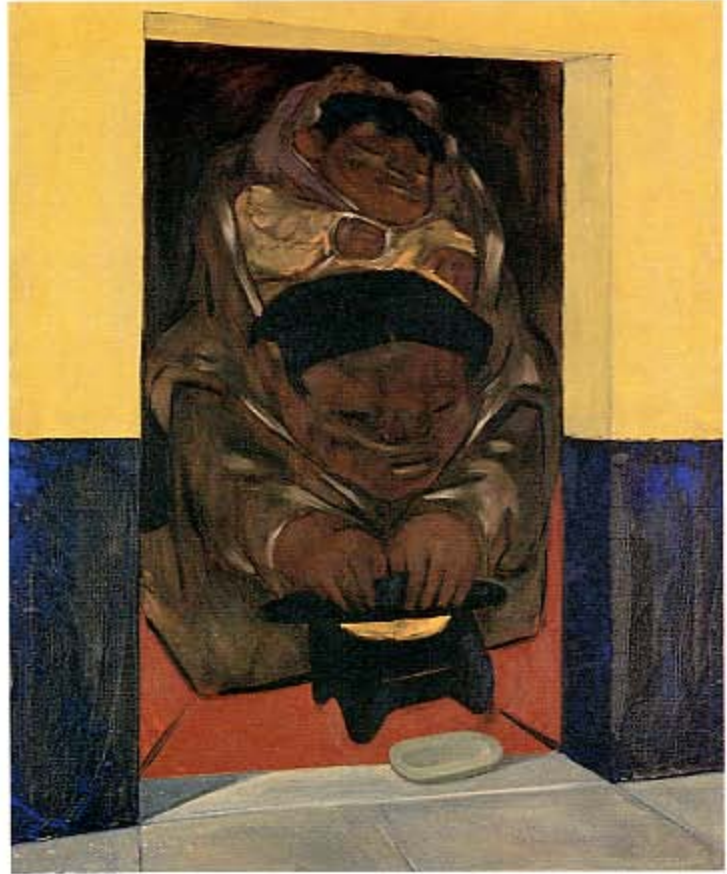
color lithograph

8 1/4" x 6 1/2"

Charlot Collection



Tondo: After the Bath
1935
lithograph
10 3/4" x 9 3/8"
Charlot Collection



Rest and Work at Doorsill

July 1938

oil on canvas

36" x 30"

Charlot Family Collection



First Steps

1939

oil on canvas

40" x 30"

Collection of Ivan Hawkins



Great Malinche with Orchestra

August 1943

oil on canvas

50" x 70"

Collection of Henry Blakstad, Jr.



Holy Family at Night
July 1852
oil on canvas
30" x 40"
Charlot Family Collection



Woman with Basket
November 1969
oil on canvas
30" x 40"
Collection of Ivan Hawkins



Veronica

1956

fresco

48" x 48"

Collection of the Catholic School
Department



Potter

**Study for Visual Arts mural, Fine
Arts Building, University of
Georgia**

December 1941
charcoal on paper
19" x 24 5/8"

Charlot Family Collection



Muse

**Study for Music mural, Fine Arts
Building, University of Georgia**

December 1941

charcoal on paper

24 3/4" x 18 7/8"

Charlot Family Collection



Head with Rebozo
1937
lithograph
7 1/2" x 8 3/4"
Charlot Collection



Dark Madonna
1954
lithograph
20" x 14 1/2"
Charlot Family Collection



Carmen

By Prosper Mérimée

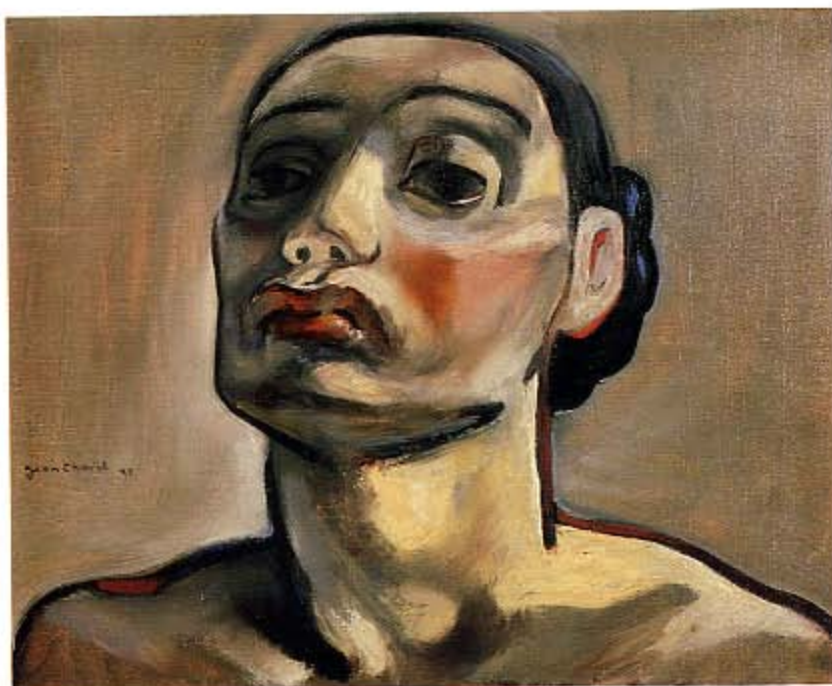
New York: Limited Edition Club

1941

lithograph

6" x 6"

Charlot Collection



Eleanore
1935
oil on canvas
16" x 20"
Charlot Family Collection



Ko Ke Kumulipo (The Drummer)
1954
oil on canvas
40 1/4" x 50 1/4" (frame size)
Collection of Hawai'i State Foundation
on Culture and the Arts, Gift of the
Charlot family in memory of
Jean Charlot



Captain Cook
Fresco fragment from mural,
*Early Contacts of Hawai'i with
Outer World*, Bishop Bank
1951-52
29 1/2" x 28"
Collection of The Contemporary
Museum, Honolulu



Fijian

Picture Book II

Los Angeles: Jacob Zeitlin, 1973

color lithograph

8" x 6"

Charlot Collection



Hula Kī'i
1972
oil on canvas
30' x 40'
Charlot Family Collection

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