

# ART

By JEAN CHARLOT



## A flower that blooms in the spring

"Flora Pacifica" has become, within a very few years, one of our most eagerly awaited annual events. Perishable by nature, the display can only last a few days.

The show is now over. It has received its substantial share of publicity. A few more thoughts come to mind concerning its value as an art exhibition.

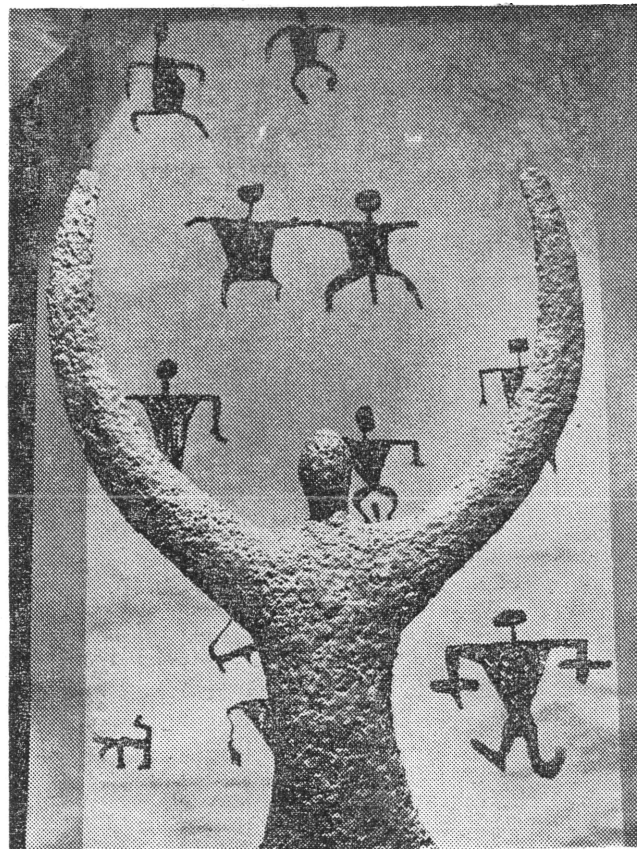
Art, even when understood in its limited meaning of fine arts, suffered epochal changes in our century.

"Art is man made," "painting is flat," and "sculpture is in the round." These hackneyed truths have collapsed and all the king's men would labor in vain in attempting to prop them up.

## Something like Irish chowder

A new term—mixed media—supersedes the old labels: oil, watercolor, drawing. It is a kind of grab bag for art works for which there are as yet no given names. Stuffed parrots, trophy heads and dead cats, not to mention nuts and bolts, add zest to present-day art shows.

The old concept of sculp-



The bronze figure is by Satoru Abe, in a niche designed by Mrs. Evan Lloyd. The petroglyphs are rubbings from Kauai.

ture implied wood or stone, and volume. New materials have changed all this. Now sculpture can also mean wire boundaries that stake out an inner space. Artists have successfully created sculpture to play in, sculpture to walk through and to get lost in.

## Explosion in modern art

The old-fashioned artist created his work for permanency and hopefully conceived art as his legacy to posterity. Today, a Tinguely tinkers with dynamic sculptures whose purpose is to destroy themselves, thus blowing up the myth of an art conceived as eternal.

Given this panorama of a contemporary art in flux, "Flora Pacifica" needs no excuse whatsoever to rank as an art show. Its very transitory nature makes it one of those up-to-date esthetic adventures, a "happening".

In fact, "Flora Pacifica,"

as concerns style, may be a step ahead of other art shows in town.

## Beauty viewed with suspicion

The one hurdle in reviewing this show as an art show is, paradoxically, its obvious

## Charlot talk tomorrow

Honolulu artist Jean Charlot will lecture, tomorrow night in connection with the exhibition of his work now on view at the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

Titled "Charlot on Charlot," the illustrated lecture will be held at 8 p.m. at the Academy. There will be no admission charge and the public is invited.

A retrospective exhibition of paintings, drawings, book illustrations and mural cartoons by Charlot is being shown in the Academy's second floor galleries through May 15.

beauty. Art critics shy away from the term. In truth, it does hardly fit some of the best work done today. The artist's sights may be set beyond beauty, or sidewise, or round about it.

"Flora Pacifica" is a beautiful show, superabundant in beautiful sights. This is all the more surprising in that its raw material—plants and flowers—is more usually associated with prettiness, this natural enemy of beauty.

## Whoosh! Like in 'Mary Poppins'

The art of the show is quite free from artiness. It looks rather as if great and small chunks of nature had been magically transplanted up to the second floor of Jefferson Hall, at the East West Center.

This year's major creation, the mangrove swamp, is so successfully recreated as to seem hostile to man. Only the Melanesian masks feel at ease in it. Through the maze of earth roots and aerial roots, these monstrous godlings observe the onlooker as intensely as they are observed by him.

Our re-estimate of primitive art is a major esthetic achievement of the century. We labeled it an art fit for museums.

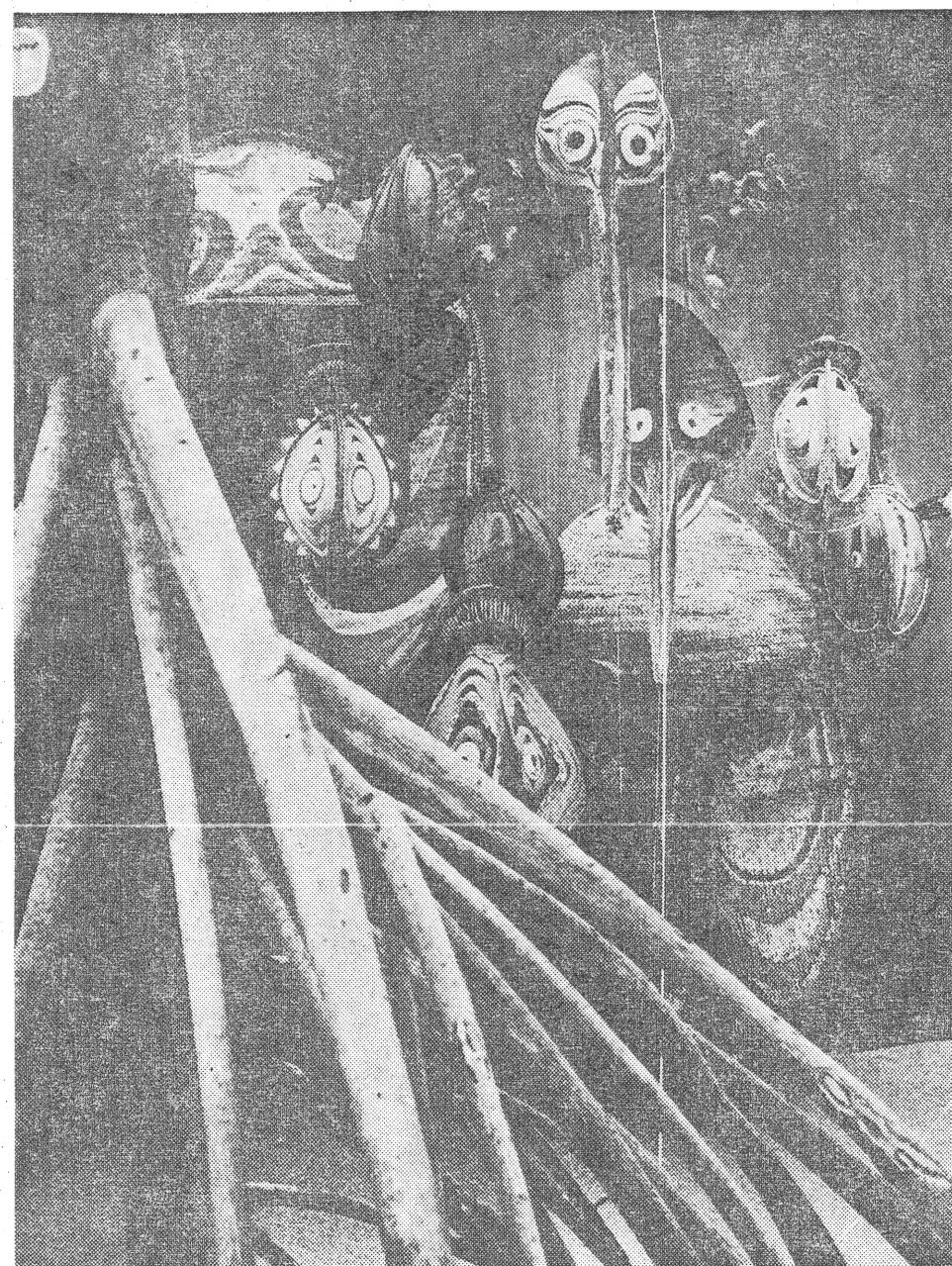
## Ancient purposes: Rites and magic

We should not forget, however, that the mask-weaver, the drum-carver, the god-maker, had a very different goal in mind than to please museum curators. Their reasons were primarily ritual and magical.

So convincingly does the present display underline this deeper truth that it wipes away the need for scholarly footnotes.

"Flora Pacifica" also features this year a gallery of Hawaiian trees and plants, hala, taro, sugar cane and others. Hawaiian culture is tied up intimately with such native plants.

I refer to that Hawaiian culture that flourished long before visitors from the West and visitors from the



Mangrove roots and New Guinea masks in an arrangement by Mrs. Harold Kawamoto. —Photo by John Titchen.

East converged on these Islands bent on a long, long stay.

## Culture, language merit respect

Being the host, Hawaii could not treat its ensconced guests otherwise than with a heartfelt aloha. To repay this hospitality, the visitors in turn should not forget that there are such things as Hawaiian culture and a Hawaiian language.

"Flora Pacifica" allows us to see nature through Hawaiian eyes; to realize how, for a full millennium, a most complex culture managed to thrive on an exquisite economy of means.

Nature was more than a provider of artifacts. Each plant, ti, bamboo, kukui, ohia, was linked with the emotions and religious rites of ancient Hawaiians. Indi-

vidual exhibits link anew each plant with its too often forgotten meaning.

Past and present blend. Juxtaposed to the stalk of a banana plant a modern bronze sculpture echoes the curvilinear rhythms of ancient petroglyphs.

## A striking scene in red and black

The 'ohelo bush is strikingly displayed. Set against an 'abstract' background of

charred wood, charcoal black against fiery crimson, the unassuming berry regains its ancient dignity as a familiar of Pele.

Indeed, New York's Museum of Primitive Arts would have much to learn and much to gain should it invite James Hubbard and Paul Weissich, together with their devoted helpers, to treat New York to a similar display.