

# ART

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## Monumentality busting out all over

Last Sunday, the Waikiki branch of the Bank of Hawaii unveiled two works of art that can be, with confidence, labeled monumental.

Ruthadell Anderson's tapestry is truly of mural scale. Edward M. Brownlee's sculpture nearly busts open the seams of the majestic entrance hall.

Monumentality is not, however, only a reward of size. It implies a bigness of concept and equally an awareness of location. It must also take into account the fact that a monument in a public place has a function different from that of a museum piece.

People do not go to the bank as art-lovers and browsers. It is the function of monumental art to catch the penny-wise visitor unaware and to imbue him, willy-nilly, with grandeur.

Both works realize this difficult role to perfection.

## Her tapestry is Hawaiian

Ruthadell's tapestry is solidly based in Hawaii. Not as much the Hawaii of today that the bank building signifies as the infinitely more mysterious prehistoric Hawaii.

Her theme, the globe of the sun snared into a gigantic net by a god-hero, is purely Polynesian.

This is matched by the physical make-up of the woven mural, including as it does native fibers, twigs and seeds.

The design takes into account the architecture that houses it. The building does not lack in curves, and the woven sunrays are variations on this basic motif.

Textures are even more surprisingly varied than colors. No machine-made weave could ever match the hand and wrist and heart of the weaver.

## This work weighs 7,000 pounds

Brownlee's bronze "Legend" weighs three and a half tons together with its pedestal of black terrazzo. It would be a paradox to call such a heavy object abstract. Its mere physical bulk is imposing.

Few bank customers faced with this awesome presence would dare bend to retrieve a fallen penny.

To me, it is the prow of an ancient canoe. The varied textures and patinas suggest the scars of some long, long voyage, and a hull incrustated with marine growth.

Prehistoric seafaring heroes come to mind. And the settling of our Islands over 1,000 years ago.

This "ship" stands high on its pedestal. Unlike most, this one is far from negative. Convex and concave, it moves with the light. Its restlessness could be that of the ocean itself. The black color, far from weakening the illusion, illustrates well Homer's image, when he speaks of a wine-dark sea.

## Some other works of note

Other monumental sculptures of worth have recently enriched our city.

The addition to the Ala Moana shopping center can pride itself on good esthetic planning.

Its mall makes an intelligent use of water. Small waterfalls create ripples around artificial stone forms to the delight of red and gold carp that become a mobile



"Legend" is installed by Brownlee, below, and his assistant Michael S. Roberts atop the sculpture.

part of the well-conceived design.

From the central pool emerges a welded sculpture by Bumpei Akaji, "A Flight of Birds." Semi-abstract V shapes touch each other barely at the tip of the "wings," while the whole expands outwards and upwards in a free-form inverted pyramid.

Unlike Brownlee's sculpture that is self-contained and dense, this one makes as much use of air as it does of solids. Its metal sheets are shot throughout with space and light.

## A fountain with nine waterfalls

Also at the new Ala Moana, downstairs at street level, a bronze fountain spouts its nine separate waterfalls. The sculptor, George Tsutakawa, is a Seattle artist. His work is worthy of that of our best local sculptors.

I do not know if Tsutakawa ever visited Hawaii but, in this setting, his fountain acquires a marked local flavor.

Its welded bronze plates strongly suggest a pile of rocks. Tsutakawa mentions that his inspiration for this sculpture came from far away, from the Himalayas where Tibetan travelers

these ancient monuments. Jammed in between the Surf-Rider Hotel and a rental booth for surfing boards, there stand the Four Kahuna Stones. It is told that these famous sorcerers of old, when faced with death, freely chose this metamorphosis.

It is difficult to stop and meditate in the heart of our Waikiki, bustling with visitors who, day and night, are in quite a hurry to relax. Yet the Four Kahunas invite meditation.

Public monuments started long ago with such stones. The story of taste has gone the full circle. Modern equates itself to primitive.

## It's not the same on the Mainland

Up to now, Honolulu has been fortunate as regards art in public places. On the Mainland, the nineteenth century fabricated to taste a whole population of statues.

Carved in marble or cast in bronze, they observe the living from the haughty height of their pedestals.

The late great orator stands, one hand hid in his vestcoat, Napoleon-like, the other holding a paper, presumably the text of a speech that the wide-open mouth delivers silently.

The thinker sits in an overstuffed armchair, finger dug into his temple to squeeze out of his bronze skull the last drop of a thought that shall remain forever unexpressed.

Standing or sitting, these statues haunt parks and parklets.

Reserved for grand vistas are the men on horseback, pennached and brandishing a sword. To balance the weight of the rearing warhorse, its tail extends and takes root into the pedestal.

## A statue of chocolate and gold

Honolulu is free from such quaint objects. The one exception is the statue of King Kamehameha. It is an im-



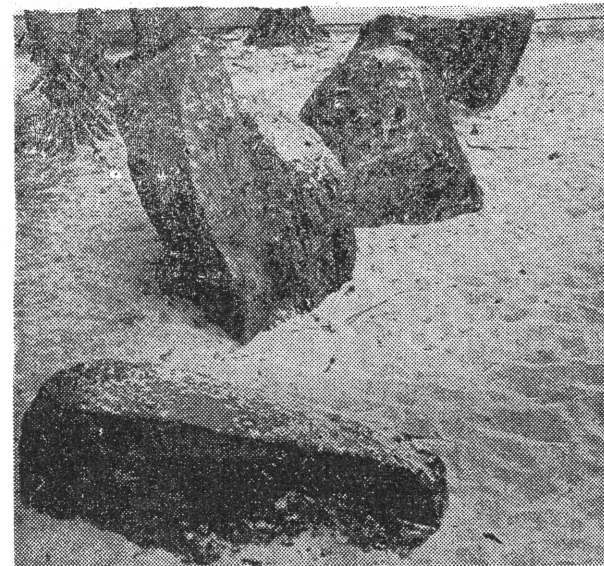
Tsutakawa's welded bronze fountain at the Ala Moana Center.

peccable period piece and its daubing of chocolate and gold is a pleasing departure from ghostly monochrome. May it remain unique of its kind!

Let us hope that the newly created State Foundation of Culture and the Arts will consider it as its first and

major duty to vest our emerging State Capitol in tasteful garments.

It is meant to be the architectural symbol of our State. Its monumental art should not fall short of the tasteful decor of the emporiums of merchants and the palaces of the money changers



The Four Kahunas of Waikiki

## Four forgotten Isle kahunas

In Waikiki—of all places—and facing Kalakaua Avenue, one may see one of