

ART

Haymaker

"There is a general and valid acknowledgment that the better the painter the dumber he must be, and out of this dumbness the critic is born and makes hay."

French-born Jean Charlot, who wrote that bitter-seeming remark, is himself a cheerful contradiction of it. Charlot (rhymes with Hello) makes hay on both sides of the field. Last week his paintings and colored lithographs were packing people in at Colorado Springs's George Nix Gallery (including museum buyers from as far away as Washington, D.C. and San Diego), while Charlot himself expatiated on art in the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center School (which he directs) and put the finishing touches on his latest critical work—a history of Mexican mural painting.

Teamwork v. Originality. At 50, Charlot has behind him a career that includes Montmartre as well as Mexico City, and a 700-sq.-ft. mural at the University of Georgia.

The chief contribution that the Mexican muralists (Orozco, Siqueiros and Rivera) made to modern art, Charlot thinks, was in emphasizing "communal" painting, simple and clear in theme, instead of individual expression. "Perhaps," he says, "Mexico will point Europe back to the forgotten way." In Colorado, Charlot has put his own students to work on a gigantic fresco of the fall of Jericho, to "keep them out of mischief for months at a time, and help them understand that teamwork is important and that originality is not all-important."

Contemplation v. Fishing. Charlot's own work, nonetheless, is strikingly original. His new paintings were mostly reli-



Guy Burgess—Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center
CHARLOT (CENTER) & MURAL STUDENTS

Object: understanding.

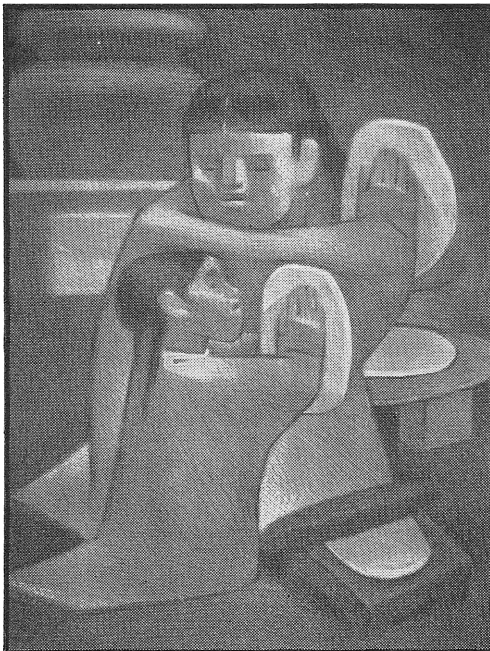
gious in theme, though they transferred the Biblical settings to Mexico.* Given Charlot's Mexican materials, a lesser artist would have done something picturesque, suitable for pious tourists, but Charlot's pictures were more than halfway abstract: the figures were squared off to look like pottery dolls and the colors were arbitrarily rich and sweet.

If his art reflected nothing of the scholarly complexity of Charlot's mind, it did reflect the simplicity of his life, which centers about two poles: his work and his wife and four children. Charlot's wife, Zohmah,

is a trim, dark lady who was raised in Brigham City, Utah, and abandoned the name of Dorothy Day after getting acquainted with Mexico as an art student. "When I married Jean," she confesses, "I thought 'I'm going to be an intellectual,' but instead he's taught me to read detective stories."

Charlot is content to stay within the few blocks that hold the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, a Roman Catholic Church, and his white frame house on Boulder Crescent. Colorado has, of course, other attractions for Charlot. "Since I came to this outdoor-loving land," says he, "I am engaging in contemplating fishing. That is to say, I am contemplating it."

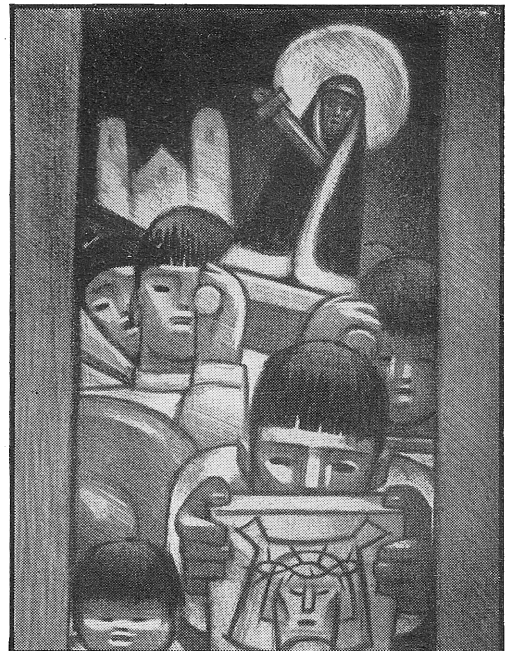
* An earlier example, a Charlot painting of the Nativity, appeared as TIME's Christmas cover in 1939.



"TORTILLERA LESSON"



"THE SPANISH COMB"
Result: contentment.



"PROCESSION AT CHALMA"

George Nix Gallery