

Jean Charlot's Exhibit At Academy Impressive

The following review on Jean Charlot's show at the Honolulu Academy of Arts is written by Dr. Gustav Ecke, acting curator of Chinese art at the academy and internationally known scholar in Chinese art.—The Editor

"Dominating Jean Charlot's show currently on view at the Honolulu Academy of Arts remains the cartoon of the University of Hawaii fresco. Drawn in pale pencil on warm, brownish paper, transferred from its rigid architectural setting into a gallery, the sketched composition seems to possess a more personal though not less monumental note than the severe mural.

"A master who hails from the sphere of Maya traditions speaks here still more mysteriously. One knows already that the Polynesian world Charlot interprets is as far from Gauguin's sweet grandeur and melancholy, as it is from the eternal spring expected by the sight-seer.

"Charlot's Hawaii is a world of pristine charm, revealed in great

human symbols. Eternalized with them is the sway of motherhood and lordly heroism, the dignity of daily toil, the wailing dirge and the hula of death and beyond all, the boundless horizon of the ever-divine sea.

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"A maze of halas and the volcanic ridges of the background are shown in separate sketches. It is here that Charlot displays his

renowned sense for the abstract.

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"The crystalline structure of the barren slope calls for the ink and brush of China's greatest abstract master Wang Lu Tai, while the tangled rhythm of stems and hanging hala roots would have enchanted Wen Cheng-ming, the 6th century wizard friend of trees and ancient gnarled branches. This link to Chinese design, perhaps unknown to the artist, seems to be significant.

"Yet it is the sphere of plain humanity which attracts the artist most. One would hardly need to know of Charlot's preference for the Brothers Le Main or for Chardin, to understand that he lives in his art with the meek and the poor.

"But again it is not lowly meekness he depicts. In his art simplicity fuses with an angular grandeur that endows his "Bathers", "The First Tooth", and other daily topics with strange monumentality.

"Indeed, Charlot's art is not sensual as Gauguin's, but austere. Meek though, if not Christian in spirit, it is haunted by a weirdness of sight which the sombre Mexican color scheme is hardly apt to mitigate. In the eyes of Zohmah this sight becomes a vision.

"Yet before eventually entering upon the weird world of Mexico proper, we should have a long look at two most charming paintings by this singularly stern and stringent master. The two parts of the "Rest on the Flight into Egypt" are again a revelation. Here we see the godly simplicity, the childlike bliss of the truly pious rendered in compositions of everlasting candor. One might be inclined to meditate, did not a touch of roguish humor force us to smile. The ass' ears are the very guides to Heaven.

"In these two pictures, if anywhere in modern art, the inspiration of the earlier Quattrocento has been rekindled."