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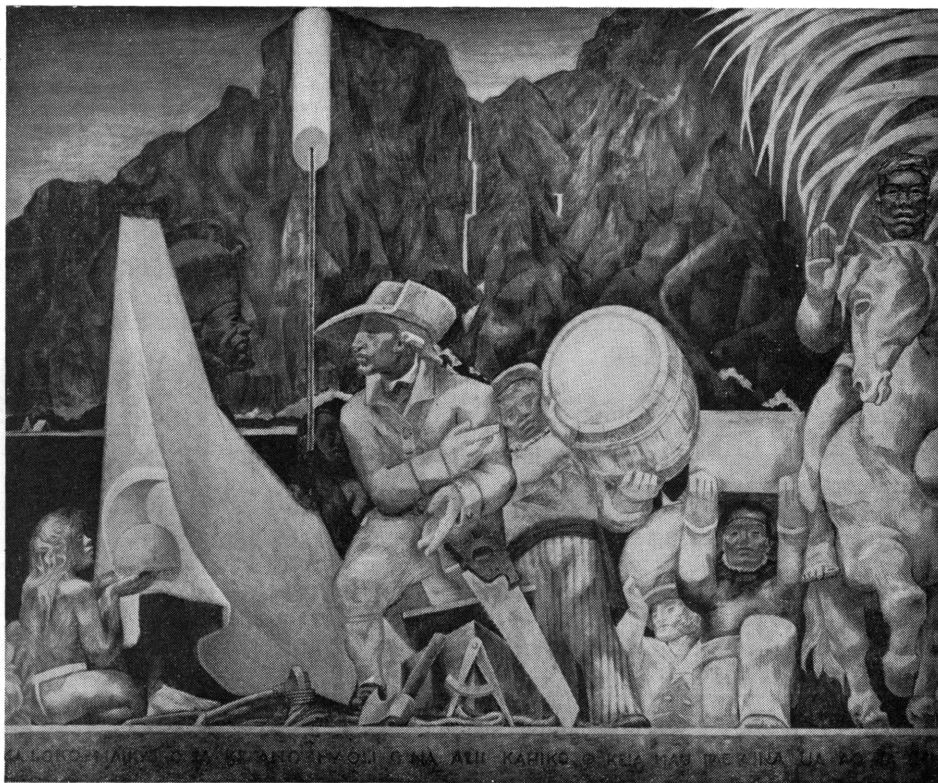
Photography by Robert Wenkam

A CHARLOT FRESCO



The fresco in progress showing wall curvature at top, left

The central section of the mural depicting the early forms of barter: the exchange of feather cloaks and helmets for metal tools and kegs of nails; pigs for longhorn cattle and goats brought from California by the English, in section shown on next page illustration



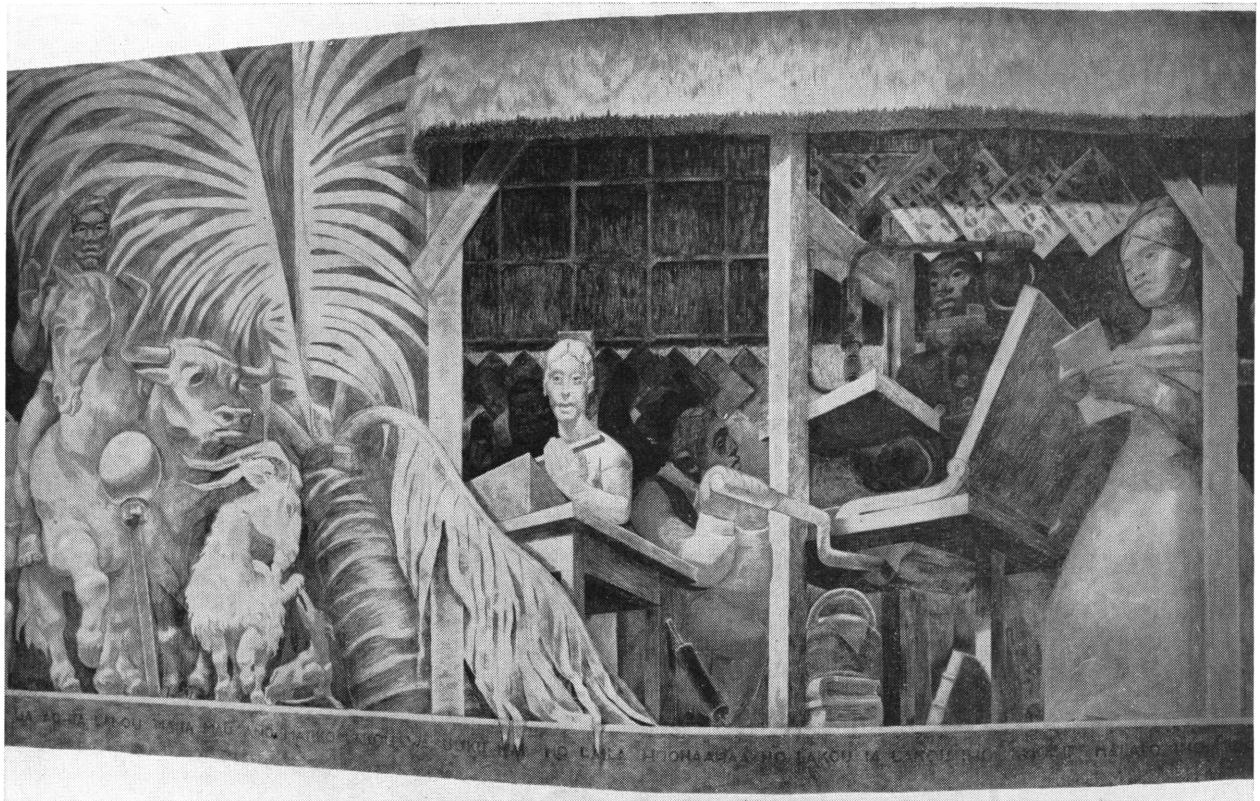
A JEAN CHARLOT FRESCO MURAL in the Waikiki branch of the Bishop National Bank of Hawaii, depicting early cultural exchanges between Hawaii and the outer world, is the magnet which draws hundreds of visitors each banking day. Even at night, when the doors are closed, the mural can be seen through the specially designed windows.

Honolulu architects Wimberly and Cook, A.I.A., with Paul D. Jones, A.I.A., Associate, felt that if an important mural were designed as an integral part of the bank, and if the bank were open to the street so the mural would become an important part of the design, they would have an effective public relations and advertising feature. With this in mind the building itself was designed as a showcase for the Charlot mural, and the entire architectural concept of the bank revolves around this feature. At an early stage in the sketches, the architects realized that there would be times when the glare from the windows facing the tellers would become a problem, and golden glass was used for the entire front to cut the glare. In designing the mural, Charlot kept in mind the limitations posed by this architectural restriction and achieved colors which permit the mural to be seen at night through the glass with good color.

Charlot was on the mainland at the time the building was completed and occupied by the bank, so it was necessary for him to work on the mural while the bank's business was being conducted. Instead of provoking a nuisance this actually provided a very interesting operation. The mural was divided into some thirty areas. Charlot worked three afternoons a week and completed one area during each afternoon's work. On scaffolding high above the bank floor, the artists were busy combining paint and plaster in the classic technique of the "true fresco." To the casual observer, however, there



A demonstration showing (left) the cartoon drawing in full scale and (right) the completed section in fresco



King Kamehameha II (at hand press) inaugurates printing in the Islands

was little evidence of the enormous amount of creative planning and effort which had already gone into the work.

Conceived, from the first, as an integral part of the building's architectural plan and decor, the mural began as a small-scale watercolor sketch, a half-inch to the foot, prepared by the artist. Before work on the walls could actually get underway, it was necessary to produce a preliminary drawing—this time in a scale of six inches to the foot—on large sheets of butcher paper. This was the transitional stage in developing the mural to full size.

With these preliminaries complete, a second set of

pencil drawings were made (again on butcher paper) to the full size of the mural. Over these pencil drawings the artists made tracings on thin transparent paper. While the painting mortar was still fresh, these tracings were laid in place on the wall. The artists then, using a small nail, incised the outline of the figures through the tracing paper and into the fresh mortar, after which the work of applying the color began.

Colors in the painting blend closely with the mortar on which it is laid. Special coats of mortar were required to do the job properly; first a "rough" coat prepared according to a trusted formula of cement, lime, and sand, and second, the painting coat, or "in-



Above: three stages of fresco—bottom section shows the base wall; directly above it, a wet section with head in process of completion; top section shows dry finished fresco surface with working drawing temporarily affixed to it for painter's reference

tonaco," composed of volcanic ash, lime, and cement. Fresh layers of painting mortar were laid each morning as work on the mural progressed. Because pigments for this kind of work are not available commercially, Charlot bought dry colors and ground them to his own specifications. By a sort of capillary action, the colors seep deep into the texture of the mortar and blend with it. As this mortar dries, it undergoes a change in chemical composition. Lime is produced by burning limestone, a process in which much of its hydrogen is removed. When this lime mortar is soaked with water, it picks up hydrogen again and reverts to limestone as it dries. For this reason, a fresco mural is a highly permanent type of wall decoration. Because the colors impregnate the mortar itself, they retain their brilliance permanently.

Charlot has pointed out that the execution of this mural presented some unique problems, the foremost of these being the curved surface on which the painting was to be done. This required extra care in preparing the working sketches in order to avoid distortion of the figures.

The finished mural, one of the most striking and colorful works of its kind, is eloquent of the integrity with which Charlot and his associates developed the true fresco treatment and achieved with it a powerful and moving interpretation of Hawaii's first cultural exchanges with the outer world.

Below: The making of kapa, left below, contrasts with the introduction by missionaries of the spinning wheel and the sewing of the first mu'umu'u (dress goods) being fitted on a native woman. This is the first part of the fresco





Kamehameha I (seen seated, center) receiving Russians; Choris painting ruler's portrait; and botanist, Von Chamisso, behind the artist



An early missionary (center) teaches the alphabet to native students. Right end of 73' fresco