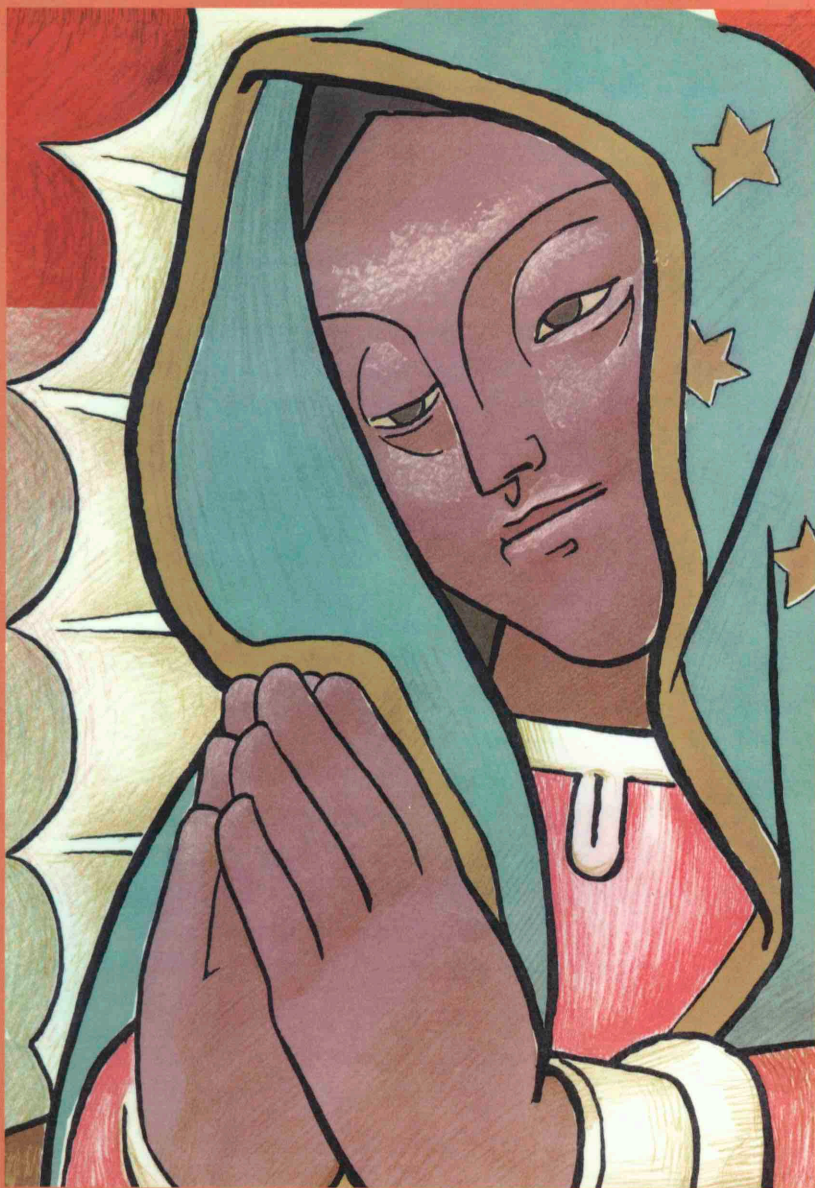
 Catholic
Southwest
A Journal of History and Culture





CATHOLIC SOUTHWEST
A JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND CULTURE

Volume 25

2014



Published by
The Texas Catholic Historical Society
with the cooperation of
The Texas Catholic Conference
and
The Texas State Council of the Knights of Columbus

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Catholic Southwest: A Journal of History and Culture (ISSN 1098-5468) is published once a year. Correspondence concerning contributions and editorial matters should be addressed to Dr. Richard Fossey, Editor, *Catholic Southwest*, 202 LSU Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70808 or submitted electronically to rfossey@louisiana.edu. Correspondence concerning book reviews should be addressed to Dr. Thomas W. Jodziewicz, Book Review Editor, *Catholic Southwest*, University of Dallas History Department, 1845 East Northgate, Irving, Texas 75062. All other correspondence should be addressed to *Catholic Southwest*, Texas Catholic Conference, P.O. Box 13285, Austin, Texas 78711.

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The journal is sent to members of the Texas Catholic Historical Society. The annual membership fee is \$20. A parish membership is \$20. A library membership is \$25. Without a membership, the single-issue price of the journal is \$15. Correspondence concerning membership dues and back copies should be addressed to Texas Catholic Historical Society, P.O. Box 13285 Austin, Texas 70711.

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Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in HISTORICAL ABSTRACTS and AMERICA: HISTORY AND LIFE, and presented on the World Wide Web by EBSCO.

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Back cover: Frida Kahlo (fourth from right), Diego Rivera (second from the right), and Jean Charlot (far right) – 1931, Palacio de Cortes, Cuernavaca, Morelia, Mexico. Collection of the University of Hawai'i Hamilton Library (Charlot Collection photo album). Photographer unknown. The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission (image enhanced for publication by Kevin Duffy of Louisiana State University)..

Contents

ONE FAITH BUT MANY CULTURES IN THE CATHOLIC SOUTHWEST	1
JEAN CHARLOT'S SOUTHWEST RELIGIOSITY Glenda L. Carne and Amanda L. Pierce	3
SR. BLANDINA, FR BAKANOWSKI, AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GERMS ON THE FRONTIER Thomas W. Jodziewicz	22
"YOU ARE AS GOOD AS ANYONE THAT WALKS GOD'S EARTH, AND NEVER FORGET IT!" THE SBS CREATE THE "NEGRO NOTRE DAME" IN JIM CROW LOUISIANA Amanda Bresie	44
HOLY CROSS HOSPITAL, AUSTIN: THE BIRTH, GOOD LIFE, AND DEATH OF A COMMUNITY RESOURCE Marian J. Barber	60
BOOK REVIEWS	77
INDEX OF ARTICLES	91
INDEX OF AUTHORS	97
ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF ARTICLE TITLES	106
ARTICLE ABSTRACTS	90

Jean Charlot's Southwest Religiosity

By Glenda L. Carne and Amanda L. Pierce *

Jean Charlot, the muralist, modernist, illustrator, educator, and author, lived and worked in Colorado and the greater Southwest in the mid-twentieth century. During this time, and throughout his life, he completed many liturgical-themed lithographs, book illustrations, and frescos emphasizing the religiosity of peoples he encountered at every station of his career. Interviews of the late artist illustrate the importance of Charlot's religiosity, his interest in the regional religious practices of peoples in the greater Southwest and Mexico, and his motivations for the completion of important mid-twentieth century works. Charlot's father was Russian; his mother was of partial Mexican ancestry.¹ He identified himself, culturally, as French, yet he had the unique ability to connect and commune with the many other cultures he encountered as he moved through his life and career.² Charlot's experiences with the Mexican muralists Orozco, Siqueiros, and Rivera solidified his interest in fresco and, more importantly, the telling of stories through his art.³ He had Mexico deep in his blood, faith, and memory as he settled in the U.S. and expanded his knowledge of the greater Southwest's diverse cultures.

Charlot's religious works result from his personal and professional experiences as well as his acute skill of observation. Early in his career indigenous images are imprinted in his work. His Southwest inspirations technically and geographically begin in the late 1940s in Southern Colorado and continue into his tenure at the University of Hawai'i.

Charlot, along with his young family, first moved to Colorado in 1947, where he spent about two years as Director of the Art School at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. The family lived in Colorado for less than two years, but Charlot continued to work in Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico for the next few years. Charlot's religiosity shaped the totality of his work, and his experiences in the Southwest and Mexico dominated his mid-century works. Although Charlot's work has been previously investigated, there is a gap in information about his time in the U.S. Southwest and the importance of regional religious themes in his work. Through access to transcripts of interviews and information from the artist's son, this piece seeks to better understand the Southwest regional representations Charlot completed during his lifetime. Throughout his life, "Charlot was filling the role of the cultural catalyst, the insider-outsider, the participant-observer, conscious of the historic importance of the period" of time he spent in Mexico.⁴

Jean Charlot was born in Paris in 1898. He attended the *École des Beaux-Arts* until his

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service as an artillery officer during World War I. After returning from his commission in the French Army, his work shifted from wood carving to woodcuts and engraving. One of his earliest works, a woodcut of Christ, was completed when he was just 18 years old.⁵ In creating the *Head of Christ*, Charlot explained that he wanted to make a repeated image that could be sold and displayed in a Paris shop. He explained that although it was likely the first piece he tried to sell, it didn't really sell. He used a Spanish sculpture as inspiration for the woodcut.⁶ In the 1920s, Shortly after World War I, he moved to Mexico where these engraving and print skills would prove valuable in his study of Posada's Mexican Broadsheets.⁷

In 1921 Charlot arrived in Mexico to live with his uncle. His mother and grandmother were of Mexican descent, and he felt very much at home with the Mexican modernists he encountered in the art world. In Mexico, he had the opportunity to be a part of an exciting push by the Mexican government to create art works in public buildings. Along with Orozco, Siqueiros, and Rivera, Charlot is recognized as one of the most important muralists of the twentieth century. In Mexico, he worked and socialized with many important artists, perfecting his technique of fresco painting on the public walls of several government buildings. Charlot painted the first mural-size fresco, *The Massacre in the Main Temple* (illustration 1), at the Preparatoria in Mexico City, work now considered among the best of Mexican frescos.⁸ The Mexican muralists clearly fused pre-Hispanic and popular Mexican art with Christianity.⁹

In addition, Charlot traveled with the Carnegie archeological expedition of the Yucatan, recording images of the expedition's archaeological discoveries.¹⁰ He moved to New York in 1929 to contribute to books on the expedition's findings.¹¹ By 1940, Charlot received dual French and U.S. citizenship; in 1941 he became an artist-in-residence at the University of Georgia; one year later he was an instructor of art history at the University of California at Berkeley. During his time in California he had several exhibits and did periodical and book illustrations and color lithographs. The following year he was artist-in-residence at Smith College in Massachusetts, and he returned to Mexico in 1945 on a Guggenheim Research Fellowship.¹²

Charlot and his family moved to Colorado Springs in 1947, where he began his tenures as Director of the School of Art (the Broadmoor Art Academy) at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center and as an Art Program Director at the Fountain Valley School (then "Fountain Valley School for Boys").¹³ At the Fountain Valley School, Charlot completed several projects still in the school's collection. A Patio Fountain and a tiled coffee table for the adobe-style Hacienda's multi-purpose building are found at the school. During his short time in Colorado Springs, he accomplished several lithographs with local printer, Lawrence Barrett. He had anticipated completion of a Stations of the Cross project for the Fountain Valley School's chapel, but he left the Colorado Springs area before this project came to fruition.¹⁴ In addition, he planned a public mural for a Downtown Colorado Springs park, but the project was never started, as the family's stay in Colorado was short.¹⁵

Jean Charlot collaborated with several well-known artists and authors including Fray Angélico Chávez and Louie Ewing. In 1948 he prepared the cover piece for Fray Angélico Chávez's *Our Lady of the Conquest* (illustration 2), a monograph on the religious traditions of the area and the patroness of Santa Fe and the once Spanish Kingdom of New Mexico. Our Lady of the Conquest, or *La Conquistadora*, was Don Diego de Vargas' personal statue of Our Lady of the Rosary, which was carried into battle as the Spaniards prepared to reconquer Santa Fe in 1692.¹⁶ Charlot's design for the cover favors the stillness and simplicity of

New Mexico *santos*, but the child being held by the Virgin seems to conform the design with Charlot's interpretation of a mother holding an infant.

Fray Angélico Chávez was born in New Mexico in 1910 and educated in Franciscan seminaries in Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana. He was ordained in Santa Fe in 1937 and entered the Chaplain Corps of the U.S. Army in 1943.¹⁷ Chávez was a leading twentieth century ecclesiastical historian of New Mexico.

The front cover of Chávez's book was designed by Charlot and silkscreened by New Mexico lithographer and painter, Louie Ewing. Ewing worked in and around Colorado and New Mexico and completed several serigraphs of pieces from the collection of the Laboratory of Anthropology and School of American Research in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Ewing completed a series of silkscreens that complimented E. Boyd's Portfolio of American Design of the late 1930s. Ewing had worked on some of the images of the *santos* with Boyd.

Several of Charlot's art works are in private collections in Colorado Springs. At least two of these works were completed in the fresco tradition. A small fresco, *Tortillera*, was originally located in the mud/storage room off the kitchen of a modest downtown home which was once the residence of the Charlot family. The mural has since been removed by the City of Colorado Springs, restored, and is in the collection of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. The original work was in the tradition of a true fresco, a technique perfected by Charlot in Mexico requiring the introduction of pigments and lime into wet plaster. The approximately 3' x 4' fresco depicts a woman preparing tortillas, her infant strapped to her back and cradled in the rich, blue traditional Mexican *rebozo* (shawl). Its simplicity is characteristic of Charlot's works of similar subjects. The subtle elegance of the small piece is a testimony to Charlot's unique ability to portray everyday life with emotion and grace.¹⁸

Charlot was fascinated with local culture. While in Colorado Springs, he studied the unique collection of *santos* at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. In Mexico, he studied religious processions and the daily acts of everyday people. The image of the simple Mexican tortilla maker (*la tortillera*) is reflected in many pieces Charlot created of similar subjects. Charlot personified qualities that link art and human activity both to human nature itself and also to a more spiritual, religious context.¹⁹ This particular piece also has some writing in the upper right hand portion of the fresco (illustration 3). One can only speculate on what it is, as the writing is not fully visible and appears to be intentionally blended into the background of the work, but I propose that Charlot's interest in a Nahuatl verse is reflected in this piece. In a 1949 recording, Charlot discusses a verse developing themes that Charlot's son, Dr. John Charlot, says were always on his mind when painting certain subjects.

The Last Prayer of a Dying Son to his Mother
Náhuatl poem, attributed to Nezahualcoyotzin

*Mother dear, when I die, bury me under the beaten earth of the kitchen,
 And when you do the tortillas
 And thinking of me, you cry—
 If somebody asks you, "Why do you cry?"
 Answer, "The wood that I put in the fire is green,
 And it is the smoke that chokes me."²⁰*

A second fresco in a home built in 1949 in Colorado Springs is of a Mexican woman. The

piece, approximately 3' x 5', was painted by Charlot on a detached piece of Celotex in 1931 and then gifted to the homeowners upon completion of their new home, the first "modern" style home built in Colorado Springs. Terra-cotta, mustard, and gray shades dominate the full-bodied depiction of an indigenous woman (illustration 4).²¹ Her eyes are almond-shaped and highly detailed. Incising of the fresco is apparent around the outline of her body and head.

Martha Tilley, the owner and still-occupant of the home, remembers Charlot carrying the piece into the near complete home and choosing its location: "Charlot brought it into the room. The house wasn't quite finished and we were worried we wouldn't have glass in the windows at that time. There was a horrible windstorm in Colorado Springs that day. With help, Charlot proceeded to put it up in the exact location it remains." Artist Edgar Britton painted the black block of color that acts as a pedestal of the standing woman. "We call her Maria, the name of our maid when we were living in San Miguel de Allende Mexico," Tilley advised.²² Most certainly, the indigenous woman depicted is Luz Jiménez, an important friend, linguist and artists' model well known in Mexico.²³

Charlot practiced mural painting in Colorado Springs in private residences and with students at the school. Like many other wall paintings, those frescos painted at the school have since been removed or painted over and nobody really even quite remembers where they were located. In the late 1940s, Charlot and many other important artists of the time clashed with the Administrator of the Fine Arts Center. Information on Charlot's tribulations in Colorado is recorded in correspondence chronicled in a recent graduate work. The seemingly hundreds of letters and minutes documenting meetings and personal discussions tell us little about what really happened. Charlot kept daily diaries of his life and work and the stories of students and people involved in the art world in Colorado Springs during the 1940s. These accounts are equally valid and present an alternative view of Charlot's tenure and the reasons for his exit from his position.²⁴

Many associates perceived Charlot as ecclesiastic because of his respect for religion and the religious themes apparent in his work. Contrary to the belief of several of Charlot's colleagues who knew him in Colorado and who commented on how calmly and priest-like Charlot handled his "situation" at the CSFAC, Jean Charlot was not a trained Jesuit. He simply maintained a faithful, composed and observant character throughout his life.²⁵ The school was floundering, he was not able to complete the projects he had envisioned, Charlot had a young family to support, and there were other opportunities. Alfredo Zalce in a 1971 interview with John Charlot said, "Jean was...serene, quiet, 'equanime.' But with a very nice sense of humor, very sharp... The objects of his humor were commands, pretentious people." His actions in Colorado Springs were typical of his character. Although things were tumultuous in Colorado Springs, he asked Zalce to come to Colorado to teach, but he declined.²⁶

Charlot never painted a public mural in Colorado, as he did in almost every other venue he lived or worked in, but he did complete several carefully executed lithographs. In these small works, Charlot was undoubtedly influenced by the colorful illustrations of the Aztec codices, Posada's woodblocks, and the folk art and religious processions he experienced in Mexico.²⁷ The basic characteristics of his work include dramatic diagonals, geometric composition, and geometric designs, all of which are clearly visible in his 1948 lithographs completed with Barrett and in a particular painting, *Los Malinches*, in the collection of The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. *Los Malinches* (The Malinches, a folk dance depicting Spanish and Indian contact), is an active composition of costumed figures in a Mexican style.

Figures in the painting are performing *Los Matachines*, a popular regional religious folk dance representing a mock battle. The stylized painting is a creation of geometric shapes combined with intense and colorful hues. The painting uses little perspective, yet it manages to achieve extreme depth and movement. The original "Malinche" dance was used as a medium of instruction to emphasize Christianity over indigenous beliefs.²⁸ Champe explains that the Franciscans introduced dances and fiestas in honor of Christian saints replacing Aztec deities.²⁹ The Aztec leader Moctezuma was also added to the Matachines displaying his "conversion" to Christianity. Claude Stephenson, in his 2001 Ph.D. dissertation entitled "A comparative analysis of Matachines music and its history and dispersion in the American Southwest," asserts that the *Matachines* is of Mexican descent, combined with elements of Spanish culture and Catholicism.³⁰ Versions of the *Matachines* dances found in both the U.S. Southwest and Mexico include the portrayal of "*la Malinche*" by one or more girls dressed in white. *La Malinche* is an Aztec woman who became Cortez's mistress and helped to conquer the Aztecs. The incorporation of *Las Malinches* in the dances may also refer to both the Virgin of Guadalupe and La Conquistadora, two regionally important manifestations of the Virgin Mary. The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center owns a large oil of *Los Malinches*, purchased during Charlot's tenure as Director in the late 1940s.³¹

Charlot is collected by major museums throughout the world. In addition to many pieces in Colorado-area private collections and the pieces owned by the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center (CSFAC), his works are in the Colorado collections of the University of Colorado at Boulder (UCB), the Fremont Center for the Arts in Cañon City, and the Kirkland Collection in Denver.

UCB owns a copy of another Mexican Kitchen scene called "*The Distaff Side or Mexican Kitchen*." According to Morse, this particular piece was completed in Arizona and printed in Los Angeles in association with the American Association of Artists.³² Charlot writes in letters to his wife in 1951 that he is particularly pleased with this AAA piece.³³

The CSFAC and Fremont Center own copies of the 1948 lithograph, *Mexican Mother*, a common theme in Charlot's work. Charlot completed the color lithograph in Colorado Springs and was photographed by William Bowers (Bill Bowers) in 1948, as he began the layout preparations for the lithograph. Approximately 160-180 copies of the lithograph were offered as an Arts Center membership renewal premium in 1948.³⁴

The Kirkland Museum in Denver has a print of *El Volador*, the flyer. The ceremony of *Los Voladores*, is a Mexican Indian ceremony dating before the Conquest. It expresses the rhythms of the universe, sacrifice, the four cardinal directions, and human desire to overpower nature. Charlot created several versions of this ceremony. Charlot's print rendition of the flyer is a lithograph of the center flyer, the man who carefully releases others from the top of the pole. The flyer is represented standing on the very top of a pedestal from which four men swing, upside down, to make their way to the ground. With the introduction of Christianity, *Los Voladores* was given room in the ceremonial calendar of the Church and survives among some of the cultures in the rugged country along the Sierra Madres straddling the modern Mexican states of Veracruz and Puebla. During the ceremony, an eighty-foot high pole is mounted and maneuvered by five men. One of the men dances on the top of the pole while four others dangle themselves off, ropes tied around their waists as they whirl in slow, widening circles to the ground. A fifth man, positioned on the top of the pole, plays a flute/drum and slides to the ground after the four touch down on the earth.³⁵ Charlot's lithograph depicts the fifth

man, instruments in hand.

Although Charlot's tenure in Colorado was short, he was able to complete several lithographs with the great printer Lawrence Barrett, who Charlot describes in his notes as "a very nice man."³⁶ These pieces are of Mexican subjects and were produced in quantities of 250. "The Procession at Chalma" and "Volador" (illustration 5) are examples of the collaboration of Barrett and Charlot. The Taylor Museum collection at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center is world-renown for its Southwestern collection. Within that collection is Alice Bemis Taylor's personal collection of Colonial New Mexico *santos*. The *santos* reflect the religious spirit of New Mexican Spanish Catholics. They included painted and sculpted holy figures, both divine and human, that adorned churches and home altars in Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico. Church art, a vital part of Spanish religious tradition harkened to the tenth century. The few *santos* figures imported for liturgical use were insufficient to satisfy the needs for religious objects in the area.³⁷ A local tradition evolved and these original pieces are found in and around the Southwest in museum collections. Charlot used *santos* as inspiration to complete two 1948 Christmas cards that reflected the Taylor Museum's collection of New Mexican *santos* (illustration 6). The colonial depictions of Catholic saints were used as inspiration for personal cards for the Charlot family and the Stallings family.

In describing the regional stylization of the Colonial introduction of images of saints, Charlot writes, "Those who dismiss Colonial Hispanic art as merely an import from Spain fail to realise (sic) how tenaciously it transformed itself, and how well it governed its American growth to fit changed conditions."³⁸ He goes on to say, "Humble as the Santos may be, they hold for us a lesson of imperative actuality."³⁹ Charlot's small lithographs, by design, reflect the simplicity and calligraphy employed by early Southwestern *santeros*.

At least one of the original, inspirational pieces is attributed to Pedro Antonio Fresquí, once known as the "Quill Pen *Santero*." Fresquí painted in an unusual style. His work is unlike that of any other Mexican or New Mexican *santero*. Panels attributed to the Truchas Master have been tree-ring dated to the late 18th century. His style seems to have been influenced by Mexican or European prints imported into the area. Fresquí painted in a flat, linear, or calligraphic style that may have been the reflection of European or Mexican woodcut prints and images available to be used as samples.⁴⁰ These prints are very different than the *La Conquistadora* cover piece Charlot did with Ewing and Chávez for the story of Our Lady of the Conquest. They reflect Charlot's experience with the more humble pieces in the Collection of the Taylor Museum in Colorado Springs.

Charlot's greatest disappointment during his time in the region, and perhaps an impetus for his departure from a permanent residence in the greater Southwest, was his inability to convince Colorado Springs' arts leaders to support the completion of a mural design depicting the westward pioneer movement. An important theme to those dominant cultures in the West, the mural would have been viewed as culturally appropriate in the community. Charlot's plan for a mural included a large fresco showing wagon trains and early settlers moving against the backdrop of Pikes Peak. Charlot was a muralist; he believed, "mural painting can alone quench the need of the mural painter, and then only while in the making."⁴¹ Charlot was unable to complete his mural commemorating Colorado Springs' pioneers. Cartoons of the plan are available at the University of Hawai'i.

Although unable to complete the Colorado mural project in the late 1940s, during the same period in his life Charlot was able to complete a 1951 Arizona mural depicting the



Illustration 1: Fresco detail (close) – Massacre at the Main Temple – Massacre en el Templo Mayor – One of Charlot’s fresco murals at the Escuela Preparatoria, Mexico, D.F. Stairway, West Court, 1922-23 – Photograph by Egmont Contreras, 14’ x 26’. © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.



Illustration 2: Cover for Our Lady of the Conquest by Fray Angelico Chavez in an edition of 2000 original covers printed in color by Louie Ewing, approximately 7” x 9”. Jean Charlot 1948. © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.



Illustration 3: Fresco, Tortillera. Jean Charlot 1947, approximately 3’ x 5’. Photo by Glenda L. Carne, 2003. © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.

Illustration 4: Fresco on Celotex. Maria (likely Luz Jiménez). Jean Charlot circa 1947, approximately 4' x 6'. Photograph by Seth Trotter and Glenda L. Carne, 2003. © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.



Illustration 5: Limited edition lithographs, on stone, B & W, Volador & The Procession at Chalma. Jean Charlot 1947-48, each approximately 9 3/4" x 13 1/2". © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.



Illustration 6: Christmas Card, 1948, color lithograph for Mr. and Mrs. William S. Stallings. Jean Charlot (with Lewis and Martha Tilley) 1948, card 6 1/2" x 5", retablo approximately 8 3/4" x 6". © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission. Nuestra Senora del Rosario, Pedro Antonio Fresquis. Date unknown. Photo courtesy The Taylor Museum of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center.

Illustration 7: Fresco Man Subdues the Aggressive Forces of Nature. Jean Charlot 1951, 25' x 25'. Photo courtesy Arizona State University. © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.



Illustration 8: Illustration from Our Lady of Guadalupe by Helen Rand Parish. Jean Charlot 1955. Photography courtesy the late William (Bill) Bowers. © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.



Illustration 9: Detail of Syracuse University Fresco Village Fiesta. Jean Charlot 1960. 9' x 45'. Photocourtesy Syracuse University. ©The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.

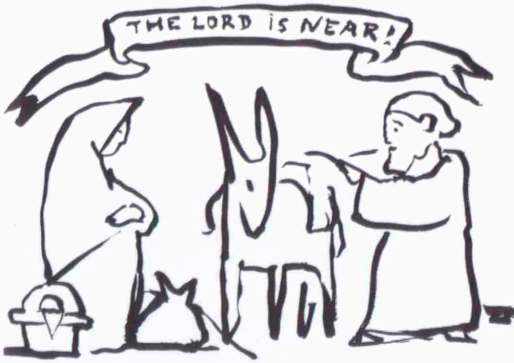


Illustration 11: From Cartoons Catholic. Jean Charlot 1970, approximately 5" x 7". © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.



Illustration 11: The Limeans Celebrate a Feast Day from the Bridge of San Luis Rey, Thornton Wilder, Jean Charlot, 1962, 6 1/2" x 4". © The Jean Charlot Estate LLC. With permission.

dichotomy of spirituality of the Hopi Snake Dance and the scientific discovery of anti-venom at the University of Arizona. "While in Arizona," his son, Dr. John Charlot, writes, "Charlot was a guest of Fred Kabotie, the famous Hopi painter and illustrator of Indian subjects."⁴² Charlot wrote in several letters to his wife that he believed Kabotie would have been the best choice for this particular venue, as he had followed and admired Kabotie's work since the 1930s.⁴³ Charlot's impression of the Hopi Snake Dancers is reflected in the upper section of the mural.

The Snake Dance ceremonial is a religious event held to bring rain for crops. Charlot depicts a Hopi man taking snakes from participants; the snakes will later be released into the desert to carry Hopi prayers for rain. Charlot's dancers are similar to Kabotie's, possessing remarkable detail in the kilts, headwear, and necklaces. The faces of the participants, however, are executed with a distinctively Charlot chisel, emphasizing the indigenous eyes, noses, and jaw lines of the dancers.⁴⁴ Beneath the Hopi ceremonial mural, a mural commemorating the venom research of Herbert Stahnke, is a strong comment on the cultural dichotomy of the Southwest.⁴⁵ Charlot worried some Arizona viewers might be offended by the snakes, but the composition appears to have succeeded with both Stahnke, after a change to the number of sections in the scorpion's tail, and University administration (illustration 7).⁴⁶ A small lithograph, *Hopi Snake Dance*, was completed in Arizona and printed in Los Angeles. It depicts a vignette of one of the pairs of dancers from the mural in Tempe.

In a home in Tempe, Arizona, Charlot painted a small 5' x 3' fresco above a fireplace entitled, "The Procession at Chalma." The painting is currently protected and preserved under some vintage 1970s dark brown paneling, in a home that is now leased near the ASU campus. The fresco is a larger version of the "Procession at Chalma" lithograph completed with Lawrence Barrett in Colorado Springs (illustration 5). A photograph of the completed work is not currently available. A cartoon of the private fresco executed in Arizona is included in the Charlot Collection at the University of Hawai'i. As the mural was completed with the remaining colors used for the ASU Mural, its hues are most certainly gold, sunset, and maroon, colors of the Arizona desert sunset. Charlot was paid by the home's owner with a squash blossom necklace that was sent to his wife, Zohmah in Hawai'i.⁴⁷

The Chalma procession had been imprinted in Charlot's memory. In 1925, Charlot, in the company of Frances Toor, Anita Brenner and Luz Jimenez' family, made a pilgrimage to Chalma, a Catholic shrine at a sacred pre-Hispanic cave-site. The pilgrimage was three or more days from the *Milpa Alta*, Luz's home village, set among the high cornfields south of Mexico City, with the group spending two nights along the way. Charlot drew profound spiritual and artistic inspiration from the folk-religious activities he observed on this pilgrimage. His works include several paintings and graphics on Chalma and other syncretic religious themes. He illustrated several books by Anita Brenner, a native of Mexico and the author of socio-cultural histories of the country. Brenner's books vary in content, but most always incorporate local religion, mythology, folklore, and tradition.⁴⁸

Charlot also painted *Homage to la Virgen Morena* for the Mount Carmel Catholic church in Tempe, now the Newman Center at ASU. This oil appears to have disappeared. When checking several resources in Tempe, including the Newman Center at ASU and the new Mount Carmel Parish, it could not be located. We may view, however, the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, reflecting Charlot's Mexican experiences, in his successful incorporation of Mexican-Indian and Christian syncretism evident in his illustrative work, *Our Lady*

of *Guadalupe*, by Helen Rand Parish, a 1955 children's book (illustration 8).⁴⁹

The story of Our Lady of Guadalupe involves an encounter on Mount Tepeyac, the site of a former shrine to an Aztec goddess, between an Indigenous man and the Catholic Virgin Mary. Our Lady of Guadalupe is the Patron Saint of the New World, North, South, and Central America. The story of her appearance to the humble Juan Diego almost five hundred years ago has been a popular Southwest religious theme. The story of the dark virgin is ancient, brought to the Americas by Spanish of Moorish descent, and first translated from the Nahuatl language of the Aztecs from sixteenth-century documents. The story encouraged the building of Mexico City's Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The use of dark skin tones and rich, earthy colors combines with chiseled, block-like shapes to successfully illustrate the story of the miraculous appearance of the Virgin to a Mexican Indian.⁵⁰

Charlot also realized the Guadalupe images in the fresco decorating an Abbey Church in Kansas. The Abbey Church, completed in 1957, follows the design of Frank Lloyd Wright's prairie style architecture. The Church features the 21 by 29 foot fresco *Trinity and Episodes of Benedictine Life*, painted in 1959 by Jean Charlot. On the lower level of the church are other chapels, often used to accommodate smaller groups of people, dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Scholastica, and St. Joseph. This image of Guadalupe is more traditional, with a grisailles of Juan Diego opening his tilma filled with roses as its base.⁵¹ Charlot has a strong personal interest in the miracle of the Virgin of Guadalupe. He studied many accounts of it in both Spanish and the native Nahuatl language.⁵² Charlot understood the dynamics of the religious syncretism of the Catholic Southwest, combining European Catholic and indigenous culture and beliefs, which is evidenced in his works depicting the Virgin of Guadalupe and in his appreciation for indigenous cultures and their ceremonies. This understanding proved beneficial during his tenure in the Southwest and with his illustrations of children's books focused on local cultures.

In 1953, Charlot illustrated Joseph Krumgold's *And Now Miguel*, a story of a family in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico. For the Catholic residents of Los Cordovas and the Chavez family, *San Ysidro* is a saint for all farmers. He is evoked to insure fertile crops and rain. He is appealed to when there is no one else to help.

In the book, Charlot has carefully illustrated the procession of *San Ysidro*. Krumgold had also made a documentary about the lives of a Spanish-American shepherding family living in the village of Los Cordovas, near Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico, where Miguel Chavez lives his family traditions as he comes of age herding sheep. In the film, Miguel evokes the assistance of *San Ysidro* as he is challenged by adolescence, local culture, tradition, and the struggles of the Chavez family moving their sheep in the upper Rio Grande valley. Miguel prays for the harvest and for a personal "miracle." He wants to be considered a real *Pastor*, shepherd, and accompany the adults on into the summer pastures in the mountains with the sheep.⁵³ The feast day and procession of *San Ysidro*, May 15, is described in both the book and film. Krumgold first met the Chavez family around 1949 or 1950. Once a Hollywood screenwriter and producer, he won a Newbery Medal in 1954 for this book and produced the U.S. State Department documentary film of the same name in 1953.⁵⁴

After 1949, Charlot made his permanent home in Hawai'i, where he continues to be highly regarded. In Hawai'i, he thrived as an artist and scholar, publishing, producing easel paintings and lithography, completing numerous murals in churches, public, and private buildings in Hawai'i and the South Pacific. He also continued to provide illustrations for

many books, writing, and teaching. Soon after Charlot joined the art faculty at the University of Hawai'i, as he had done in Mexico and the Southwest, he learned an indigenous language, studied the native cultures in the area, and painted his trademark frescos in churches and other institutions. From his home and workplace in Hawai'i, he continued to maintain strong relationships with friends in the Southwest U.S. Several private collectors in the area have examples of wonderful hand-printed, religious-themed, Christmas cards that Charlot traditionally distributed to his friends throughout his life.

In addition to the projects previously discussed, Charlot's extensive creative work includes hundreds of articles on art and art criticism. As a noteworthy art critic and writer, he published several books on art and artists. He produced ceramic tiles, sculpture, and mosaics while continuing his interest in murals in the fresco form. In addition to the frescos Charlot completed in Mexico, planned in Colorado Springs, and completed at ASU, in Hawai'i and the Pacific, he also completed Catholic-themed murals at Notre Dame and Syracuse University in New York.

The Syracuse fresco, painted in the summer of 1960, is a 45 x 9 foot mural on the east wall of the Shaw Dormitory dining hall (illustration 9). In remarks made to students at the dedication ceremonies held in June 1960, Charlot describes the *Village Fiesta*. The piece is of a saint's feast day in Mexico. Charlot's description of this fresco helps to understand his thoughts when composing the mural. "The subject of the mural is the *Village Fiesta*. It is neither altogether Spanish, nor Indian, but a fusion of both in a spirit..." emphasizing again Charlot's ability to understand the syncretism that occurs in fused cultures such as those found in the Southwest.⁵⁵ Charlot goes on to describe the fresco technique in a brief documentary about the fresco:

The painting is done in the fresco technique, one of the most ancient methods of painting, Fresco, of course, means "fresh," and every morning, if you have a mason, he puts an area of fresh lime-mortar on the wall...What holds the pigment to the wall is the lime...After each piece is completed, you trim the edges...so that the wall accumulates these pieces as a sort of jig-saw puzzle.

Throughout his personal life and artistic career, Charlot managed to synthesize ideas that at first appearance seem to be in direct opposition, a concept important to the understanding of the layering of cultures present in the U.S Southwest. He understood how the "pieces" of this culturally complex puzzle fit together defining a unique heritage. Although Charlot was a devout Catholic and created a vast amount of liturgical art during his lifetime, while in Mexico he socialized with a group of people who were clearly and openly Marxist. He felt it better to interact with a group of Communist artists whom he considered geniuses than with mediocre Christian artists.⁵⁶ Charlot shared, along with his communist artist friends, the same goals of helping the poor and marginalized. He understood the blending that occurred when Western European culture overlapped with indigenous culture; and he was able to reconcile his traditional arts, Catholic faith, and European background with his knowledge of the indigenous in all of the areas in which he lived and worked. This knowledge proved valuable in his depictions of cultures and religiosity of the Southwest.

When he moved to Hawai'i, he incorporated the jagged angles of the coastal cliffs and

rocks into the indigenous faces he produced in his liturgical pieces, frescos, and illustrations on the island; and he learned one Polynesian language, Hawai'ian. While his images of Mexico and the Southwest were earth-toned and rounded, his Hawai'ian images are equally organic. They capture deep ocean colors and introduce mineral-like faceted angular shapes.

Charlot's small frescos in Colorado are of Mexican subjects, but his plan for a mural on the struggle of pioneers would have been distinctively "Western." In Arizona, Native American influence dominates the ASU fresco, while the small mural painted in a nearby Tempe home was again of a familiar Mexican religious ceremony—a procession at Chalma, Mexico. His attention to the thematic importance of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Southwest culture is noteworthy. Although Hawai'i became Charlot's home until the end of his life, his experiences in Mexico and the Southwest U.S. are imprinted in the designs he left in Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. Later, his veneration of Hawai'i and admiration for its indigenous customs become solidified, while liturgical themes abounded.

In a series of interviews/discussions with his son, Dr. John Charlot, in the 1970s, he ended a discussion with:

I think we should realize that God can really get into all the nooks and cracks of everybody's conscience and that art, however strange it can look, may be inhabited by a good spirit of a sort and a certain power regardless of how unusual it seems to people who haven't looked at it before. That goes also for works of art that have no religious or liturgical intent.⁵⁷

In the 1960s and 70s, Charlot continued collaborations with F.J. Sheed of Sheed & Ward Publishers of New York. Sheed & Ward's quarterly newspaper, *Sheed & Ward's Own Trumpet*, was a bulletin, newspaper-style printed on newsprint, containing excerpts and commentaries on some of Sheed & Ward's recent books, which catered to Catholic authors and readers. In Number 87, the 1968 edition, Charlot illustrates an included poem by Robert W. Castle, *A Place to Sleep*. The poem is a prayer to Jesus, who most of all understands the challenges of a place to sleep. Charlot's line drawings dominate the 1968 newspaper. The Castle poem is highlighted with a line drawing of the *Flight from Egypt*, in a typical Charlot style. Joseph wears a pointed, wide-brimmed hat, typical of the traditional garb of a Mexican peasant.

In the 1951 book, *Dance of Death*, written and illustrated by Charlot and published by Sheed & Ward, an introductory page is dedicated to José Guadalupe Posada, the Mexican master of the theme of death. The book contains lines of poetry and illustrations of death.⁵⁸

In an additional collaboration with Sheed, *Cartoons Catholic, Mirth and Meditation*, Charlot's illustrations are collected with commentary by Sheed. According to Sheed, Charlot illustrated articles for *The Trumpet* for more than 20 years, proclaiming in the commentator's note, "Invariably he found meanings in my writing that I wished I had thought of myself. Now it's the other way around, he has made the pictures, and I have to utter them in words."⁵⁹ Most of the illustrations in the book originally appeared in the *Catholic Bulletin*, the official publication of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and the Diocese of New Ulm, Minnesota. The 9th entry depicts the third Sunday of Advent with Mary and Joseph preparing their donkey for travel (illustration 10). A banner in the illustration proclaims, "The Lord is Near!" The 48th entry in the book, illustrated with singing, dark-faced angels, is a tribute to

the 1964 canonization of the Christian martyrs of Uganda.⁶⁰

In 1962, Charlot illustrated a re-released *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, written by Thornton Wilder in 1927. The book contains several color illustrations completed by Charlot. On page 82, a particularly colorful and typical Charlot illustration, titled *The Limeans Celebrate a Feast Day* (illustration 11). The illustration resembles Charlot's procession illustrations of his experience at Chalma, Mexico, and the feast illustrations in the Northern New Mexican village of Los Cordovas, where Miguel and his family herded sheep.⁶¹

Charlot continued to work on completing murals in Hawai'i until shortly before his death in 1979. He is one of the few non-Mexican artists who participated in the fascinating muralist movement in 1920s Mexico. His ideas and knowledge have been passed to his students who speak of him with admiration and respect. His experiences in Europe and Mexico are imprinted in the work he created in each of the communities he visited or lived in, including the greater Southwest.

James W. Lane wrote, "The Work of Jean Charlot has a soul. He is a man obviously to whom ideas, as well as the manner of expressing those ideas, mean much. Simple, unconfounded, is his wise vision of humanity."⁶² Charlot taught at Notre Dame in 1955; and shortly thereafter at nearby Saint Mary's College, he was commissioned to paint a series of removable frescos depicting the Catholic heritage of the College.⁶³ Noted Latino Scholar, Dr. Gilberto Cardenas, Professor of Sociology at Notre Dame, has called Charlot a "visionary."

Throughout his career, in the Southwest and other places along his life's path, Charlot was a *purveyor* of art and culture and religiosity. Perhaps these are reasons that he was able to transition and transform from being a fresco artist as part of one of the great artistic movements of the twentieth century, to the Arts Students League in New York City. His tenure at The Fountain Valley School on the southeastern plains of Colorado, reflections on Hopi ceremonialism in Arizona frescos, and his illustrations of *La Conquistadora* of Santa Fe and a coming of age story about a young boy's wish to join the men in his family herding in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of New Mexico are evidence of his commitment to his understanding of Catholicism and regional religiosity. His talents and appreciation of humanity were diverse. When considering the artistic and history of Southwest art and religiosity, Charlot's mid-century tenure in Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico merits further study.⁶⁴

Endnotes

- 1 Karen Thompson, "Jean Charlot: Artist and Scholar," in *Jean Charlot: A Retrospective*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Art Gallery, 1990), 5.
- 2 John Charlot, "Jean Charlot and Local Cultures," *Jean Charlot, Paintings, Drawings, and Prints, Georgia Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fall 1976): 26–35.
- 3 Amy K. Galpin, "A Spiritual Manifestation of Mexican Muralism: Works by Jean Charlot and Alfredo Ramos Martinez" (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois-Chicago, 2012).
- 4 John Charlot, "Eulogy for Charlot, Jean 1889-1979: Artist and Writer."
- 5 Peter Morse, *Jean Charlot's Prints: A Catalogue Raisonné* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press and the Jean Charlot Foundation, 1976), 3.
- 6 Peter Morse, 3.
- 7 Jean Charlot, "Jean Charlot: Posada's Dance of Death," (New York: Pratt Graphic Art Center, 1964), and JoAnn Kiser, "Influence of the Posadas on the Creators of The Mexican Muralist

- Movement: Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros, and Charlot" (master's thesis, The University of Colorado, Boulder, 1991), 40-42.
- 8 Photos of Mexican murals are courtesy of Egmont Contreras, Mexico, D.F. (1997).
 - 9 Mike Weaver, "Jean Charlot's Repertory of Motifs," in *Jean Charlot: A Retrospective* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Art Gallery, 1990), 84-85.
 - 10 Anita Brenner, "Jean Charlot," in *Idols Behind Altars* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1929), 303-313.
 - 11 Earl and Ann Axtell Morris and Jean Charlot, *The Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itzá, Volume I* (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1931), 231-346.
 - 12 Karen Thompson, 16.
 - 13 Jeffery Brown, "Jean Charlot in the World and Colorado," (master's of fine arts thesis, San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico, Instituto Allende, 2003).
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 - 15 Bronwen Solyom, (curator of the Jean Charlot Collection at the University of Hawai'i) in discussions with the author, 2005-present.
 - 16 Fray Angélico Chávez.
 - 17 Fray Angélico Chávez, *Our Lady of the Conquest* (Santa Fe: The Historical Society of New Mexico, 1948), 1-5.
 - 18 Glenda L. Carne, "Jean Charlot in Colorado Springs," *Cheyenne Mountain Kiva: The Journal of the Cheyenne Mountain Heritage Center*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (Summer 1999): 18-25. Note: At the time of writing this piece, the location of the moved fresco is unknown.
 - 19 John Charlot, "A Note on Jean Charlot's View of Diego Rivera," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, Vol. 60, No. 1, (1997): 115-118.
 - 20 John Charlot, "The Writings of Jean Charlot," *The Jean Charlot Foundation, Derniers Poèmes 1949-1979*, accessed on May 5, 2014, <http://www.jeancharlot.org/writings/poetry/LATE-poetry.html>. From an audiotape recorded in Colorado Springs, May 6, 1949, of Jean Charlot reciting the poem first in Náhuatl and then in his own prose translation into English. Charlot's transcribed the poem in a modern orthography in all likelihood learned from Robert Barlow, with whom he studied Náhuatl starting in 1945:

Nonantzin ixkwak nimiki
 Motlikwilpan xinechtoka
 Iwan ixkwak titlaxkalmánaz
 Nopampa tichoka [xichoka on tape]
 Tla aka nichtlaxtlániz [mitz- on tape]
 'Nonantzin tlika tichoka'
 Xikilwi 'Xoxoki in kwawitl
 Iwan ikaion popoka'

Joseph Campbell e-mailed Dr. John Charlot on November 4, 1997 an alternative version of the poem. For additional information please see the aforementioned web site.

- 21 Jesús Villanueva Hernández, Tecualnezyolehua: La que sublima cosas bellas a la gente, in *Luz Jiménez, Símbolo de un pueblo milenario*, 2000), 19-36. Pamphlet: Luz Jiménez, Symbol of a Millennial People], Pamphlet, 2000; digital images, (<http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph304475/>, accessed April 22, 2014), University of North Texas Li-

- braries, The Portal to Texas History, <http://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Mexic-Arte Museum, Austin, Texas.
- 22 John Charlot, "Jean Charlot and Luz Jiménez," English original, Published in Spanish as Charlot, John "Jean Charlot y Luz Jiménez," *Parteaguas: Revista del Instituto Cultural de Aguascalientes*, Vol. 2 No. 8, (2007), 83-100.
 - 23 Martha Tilley (Colorado Springs artist, Mrs. Lewis Tilley, Owner of the first "modern" style home in Colorado Springs and the "Maria" fresco) and Dr. John Charlot (son of artist) in discussion with the author, 2003.
 - 24 Jean Charlot, "Personal, Unpublished Diaries" (University of Hawai'i 1947-1949). Also, information provided by Hunter Frost, William Glass, Tom Tierney, and Martha Tilley (Charlot's Colorado students) in discussions with the author, 1997-Present.
 - 25 Hunter Frost, William Glass, Tom Tierney, and Martha Tilley (Charlot's Colorado students) in discussions with the author, 2000-2003.
 - 26 John Charlot (son of artist), Alfredo Zalce interview, 1971.
 - 27 John Charlot, Jean Charlot y Luz Jiménez. *Parteaguas, Revista del Instituto Cultural de Aguascalientes* 2, No 8, (Spring, 2007), 83-100.
 - 28 Aurora W. Lea, "More about the Matachines," *New Mexico Folklore Record*, Vol. 20 (1963-64), 7-10.
 - 29 Flavia W. Champe, "Origins of the Magical Matachines Dance," *El Palacio* 86, No. 4 (1980-81), 35-39.
 - 30 Claude D. Stevenson III, "A Comparative Analysis of Matachines Music and its History and Dispersion in the American Southwest," (PhD Dissertation, University of New Mexico, 2001), 216.
 - 31 Joseph Moreno, "The Tradition Continues: Los Matachines Dance of Bernalillo" (formerly of Colorado College and the City of Bernalillo, New Mexico, 2008), 17-33. Mr. Moreno received a research grant to research Los Matachines during his senior year in Southwest Studies at Colorado College.
 - 32 AAA is the American Association of Artists. Formed in the 1930s to make high quality, fine art lithographs available to average households. Many other American artists such as Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton also produced these affordable prints.
 - 33 Jean Charlot, "Letters in the Jean Charlot Collection" (The University of Hawai'i, 1951).
 - 34 Peter Morse, *Jean Charlot's Prints: A Catalogue Raisonné*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press and the Jean Charlot Foundation, 1976), 284-292.
 - 35 Rosemary Gipson, "Los Voladores, the Flyers of Mexico," *Western Folklore* Vol. 30 No .4 (1971), 269-278.
 - 36 Peter Morse, 292.
 - 37 Larry Frank, *New Kingdom of the Saints: Religious Art of New Mexico 1780 - 1907* (Santa Fe: Red Crane Books, 1992), 3-19.
 - 38 Jean Charlot, *An Artist on Art: Collected Essays, 2 vols.* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1972), Vol. 1, 266.
 - 39 Ibid.
 - 40 William Wroth, *Christian Images in Hispanic New Mexico* (Colorado Springs: The Taylor Museum of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, 1982), 172.
 - 41 Jean Charlot, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920-1925* (New Haven and London: Yale Uni-

- versity Press, 1963).
- 42 John Charlot, "Jean Charlot and Local Cultures," *Jean Charlot, Paintings, Drawings, and Prints, Georgia Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fall 1976): 26–35.
- 43 Bill Belknap and Fred Kabotie, *Fred Kabotie: Hopi Indian Artist* (Flagstaff: Northland Press, 1977).
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Herbert L. Stahnke, *The Treatment of Venomous Bites and Stings* (Tempe: Bureau of Publications, Arizona State University, 1966).
- 46 Jean Charlot, "Letters in the Charlot Collection," (University of Hawai'i, Charlot Collection, 1951).
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Peter Morse, *Jean Charlot's Prints: A Catalogue Raisonné* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press and the Jean Charlot Foundation, 1976), 157. Frances Toor was the editor of an early twentieth century Mexican Folkways magazine. Anita Brenner was an important Mexican author/folklorist/anthropologist. Charlot illustrated several of Brenner's works. Luz Jimenez was a linguist, artists' model, and life-long friend of Charlot and his family.
- 49 Helen Rand Parish, (illustrated by Jean Charlot), *Our Lady of Guadalupe* (New York: Viking Press, 1955).
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Photo courtesy Abbot Barnabus Senecal, Saint Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kansas.
- 52 Peter Morse, "Jean Charlot's Technique in Children's Book Illustration." *University of Hawai'i, The Jean Charlot Collection*, accessed May 6, 2014, http://libweb.hawaii.edu/libdept/charlotcoll/J_Charlot/charlotmorse.html. Peter Morse was a consultant to the Jean Charlot Collection, University of Hawai'i, Associate Curator of Graphic Arts, Smithsonian Institution and Research Associate, Honolulu Academy of Arts.
- 53 Meléndez, A. Gabriel. "Who Are the Salt of the Earth?" Competing Images of Mexican Americans in *Salt of the Earth* and *And Now, Miguel*," in *Expressing New Mexico*, Phillip Gonzales, ed., (New Mexico, 2008), 115–138.
- 54 Joseph Krumgold, *And Now Miguel* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1953).
- 55 Jean Charlot, "Village Fiesta: The Mural Program at Syracuse University," (New York: Syracuse University, 1960).
- 56 Mike Weaver, "Jean Charlot's Repertory of Motifs," in *Jean Charlot: A Retrospective* (Honolulu: The University of Hawai'i Art Gallery, 1990), 82.
- 57 John Charlot, "Jean Charlot Interview 2, 1970, September 15," *Hawai'i, The Jean Charlot Foundation*, accessed on May 6, 2014, <http://www.jeancharlot.org/writings/interviews/JohnCharlot/interview2.html>.
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- 62 James W Lane, "Jean Charlot," in *Masters in Modern Art* (Boston: Chapman and Grimes,

1936), 105-114.

63 Gilberto Cárdenas, "Jean Charlot: Artist and Visionary," in *Face to Face* (Notre Dame: Smite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame, 2003), 78-81.

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Letters from Arizona written by Jean Charlot to Zohmah Charlot from the University of Hawai'i, Charlot Collection, used by permission of the Jean Charlot Estate LLC .

Jean Charlot Collection, University of Hawai'i-Hamilton Library, 2550, The Mall, Hamilton 112, Honolulu, HI 96822-2233, <http://libweb.hawaii.edu/libdept/charlotcoll/charlot.html#AboutCollection>

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