The legacy of Jean Charlot

The door at the Charlot home was always open to friends and students from many cultures. A prolific artist, Charlot also had a playful side. Seated at the cantilever table with the sliding window that joins inside with outside seating, son Peter turned to see his father poised to pounce on him. “I’m practicing haunting you,” said the artist, who was also known to slide down the banister with his grand-children.

Tiles by Charlot appear in both kitchen and bath and a ceramic mural adorns an exterior wall. A devout Catholic, Charlot did a number of works depicting St. Francis of Assisi. Like the saint, he had an affinity for birds. His family often found him sitting outside drinking coffee, a stray bird perched on his shoulder.

Early portraits of Jean and Zohmah Charlot by Edward Weston. Photos of their house by P.E. Guerrero.
A mural in unmistakable Jean Charlot style greeted the artist as he rose each morning in his balcony bedroom and graced gatherings in the family living room below. The home is now a UH property (page 14). Other murals, paintings and sculpture by the famed artist, who taught at UH Mānoa from 1949 to 1966 and lived in Hawai‘i until his death in 1979, appear in churches, schools and other buildings throughout the islands and across the United States.