

Robert Lee Eskridge (American, 1891–1975)

Hilo Wharf, c. 1940

Oil on canvas

Gift of Charlotte and Henry B. Clark, Jr., 1995
(7952.1)

Painter and book illustrator Robert Lee Eskridge arrived in Honolulu in 1932, after having spent four years traveling in Tahiti, Mangareva, and other parts of the South Seas locales. In Hawai'i he brought a modernist and decorative sensibility to Hawai'i's art scene he developed a body of genre scenes, whose graphically sophisticated compositions and subordination of narrative content to lyrical ornamentation brought a modernist sensibility to the local art scene when he arrived and developed a varied body of Hawai'i genre subjects during his first and subsequent visits to the islands. In addition to depicting Eskridge painted many pictures of the traditional Hawaiian means of net-casting fishing by

net casting or a and *hukilau*, Eskridge but he also selected to address captured Hawai'i's developing modern fishing industry in *Hilo Wharf*. In this painting of dockworkers at Hilo wharf, he has rendered the laborious task of preparing the daily catch for dispersal to local ports as a lively medley of brushwork and vibrant color, balanced and organized by the thick demarcation of the fish that dominate the foreground and the human figures behind them. colorful composition of arbitrary bright color, bold contour lines, stylized shapes, rhythmic curvilinear patterns, and compressed, illogical space, Eskridge depicted two bare-chested fishermen preparing several large tuna for shipment, two already tied up in bags labeled with their destination: Honolulu.
