

## **Zama Vanessa Helder - Portrait of Edmund Giles Tennant (1937)**

This is a portrait of one of the artist's best friends from her time in NYC and hung in the artist's studio throughout her life. Mr Tennant was from a wealthy family and worked as a window designer for Bonwit Teller. He is dressed in high fashion, and the detailed painting style shows the fine quality of his clothing. The painting's subject and color palette are more consistent with NYC than PNW. Helder's style is classified as Precisionist although artists included in this group did not consider themselves to be working in a separate movement.

Vanessa Helder was born and educated in Lynden, WA near Bellingham. Her mother, as an art instructor at Bellingham School of Art and Music, was one of her early teachers and after graduation she attended UW.

1934 - won a scholarship to the Art Student League in NYC where she studied under and with some of the leading artists of the day.  
Several forms of realism were developing including Precisionism

1935-36 Became a member of National Association of Women Painters and American Watercolor Society was able to show her work in shows on the east coast and began selling art through NY galleries

1936-37 Returned to Seattle and continued to work, joining the Women Painters of WA. Developed close friendships with Dorothy Dolph Jensen, Blanche Losey and Ebba Rapp (the latter two were faculty at Cornish)

Began work with WPA in Seattle

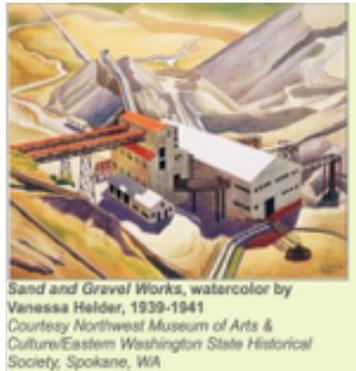
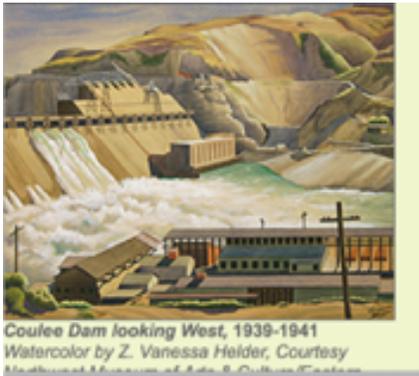


Portrait of Blanche Luzader Morgan (Losey) by Vanessa Helder, oil on masonite, ca. 1939  
Private Collection, Courtesy Martin-Zambito Fine Art, Archive of Northwest Artists



1938 - Became Faculty member at Spokane Art Center (Guy Anderson also on faculty)

1939-41 Produced her most famous work, a series of 22 watercolors documenting the building of the Grand Coulee Dam - Artist kept the collection intact and it is currently in the Tacoma Art Museum



1941 - Returned to Seattle and began working for the Federal Arts Projects  
Became member of NW Watercolor Society  
Married Jack Patterson (industrial architect)  
After the attack on Pearl Harbor, she joined WA State Artist Council  
Defense and produced war posters, camouflage patterns

1943 - Exhibited at MoMA in show of American realists including Audubon, Winslow Homer, Thomas Eakins, Edward Hopper, Sheeler and A. Wyeth



Sheeler



Wyeth



1943 - Moved to LA due to her husbands career. Joined California Watercolor Society.

Vanessa Helder continue to show art on the west coast and in NYC, but with the rise of Abstract Expressionism her work fell out of favor. She died in 1968, 8 days after the death of her husband. She had no children and her entire body of work was left to a Jewish Community Center. Her works were sold, but no records were kept of the sales.