

BOŽA HESSOVÁ / BEATRICE HESS



[Božena Šulcová]

born: 14 January 1886 in Dvůr Králové
died: 5 July 1981 in San Pedro

Artist and singer; a key player in Chicago's Czech cultural and social scene. Performed a similar role after moving to Los Angeles in the late 1920s. Prolific painter who was exhibiting dozens of her works at events in the 1940s. Now almost forgotten, and only a handful of her works being known to exist.

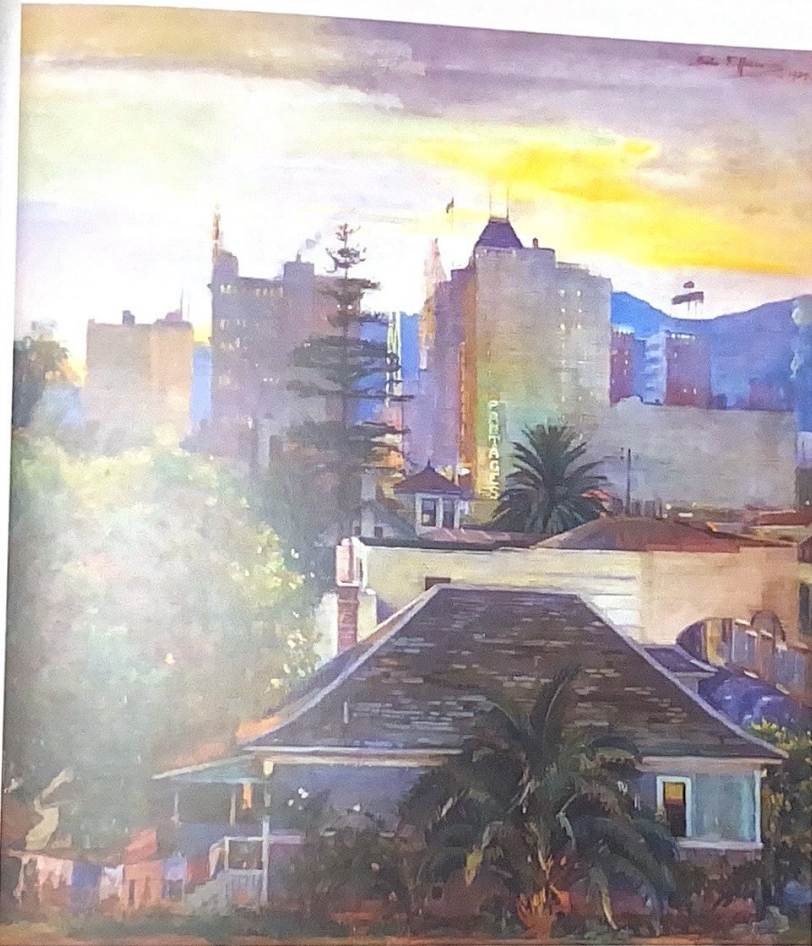


She studied at the School of Applied Arts in Prague from 1901 to 1906, evidently also attending private classes with painters Rudolf Vácha (1860-1939) and Alois Kalvoda (1875-1934). Upon graduating, she moved to Paris, setting off for the United States one year before the outbreak of the First World War. Settling in Chicago, she made a living painting murals for local churches while also working at two department stores. She began exhibiting her art in Chicago, which chiefly comprised works created while still in Europe. Period Czech-American publications described her as, "...the best and most productive Czech-American female painter working today." Along with husband Arno Maria Hess (1884-1949), a noted opera tenor singer and composer, Hessová was highly active – both as a painter and as an opera soprano herself – in the Czech-American scene in Chicago and its community of more than 100,000 Czechs.

Though she soon divorced, Hessová kept her husband's name. In 1928, she moved to California, settling in the city of Los Angeles. Here, she soon began to sign and paint again. One of her passions was to depict the old city that was gradually being swept away by intensive redevelopment. Her first major success in this respect came with a painting featuring the demolished old Los Angeles City Hall, the work being personally presented to Los Angeles mayor Frank L. Shaw (1877-1958).

Just as in Chicago, Hessová was an active player in the Czech scene in Los Angeles. She continued to paint, going under either Czech version of her name Božena Hessová or the anglicized form Beatrice Hess, or sometimes Beatrice Hessová. She made a living first as a landscape artist, portrait painter and interior decorator before, in 1934, going to work for the newly established Cabrillo Beach Marine Museum in San Pedro. During Second World War Hessová worked as a riveter in an aircraft factory, thereafter returning to her former craft. By 1948 she had returned to the museum and crafted beautiful depictions of Californian coastal fish populations along with several wall murals until her retirement. Hessová also frequently exhibited in San Pedro, where she had settled in the interim, presenting works both individually and as part of wider collections.

A SOPRANO WITH A PALETTE AND A CHISEL



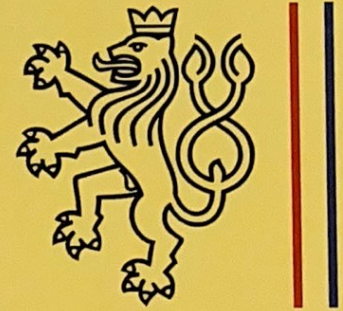
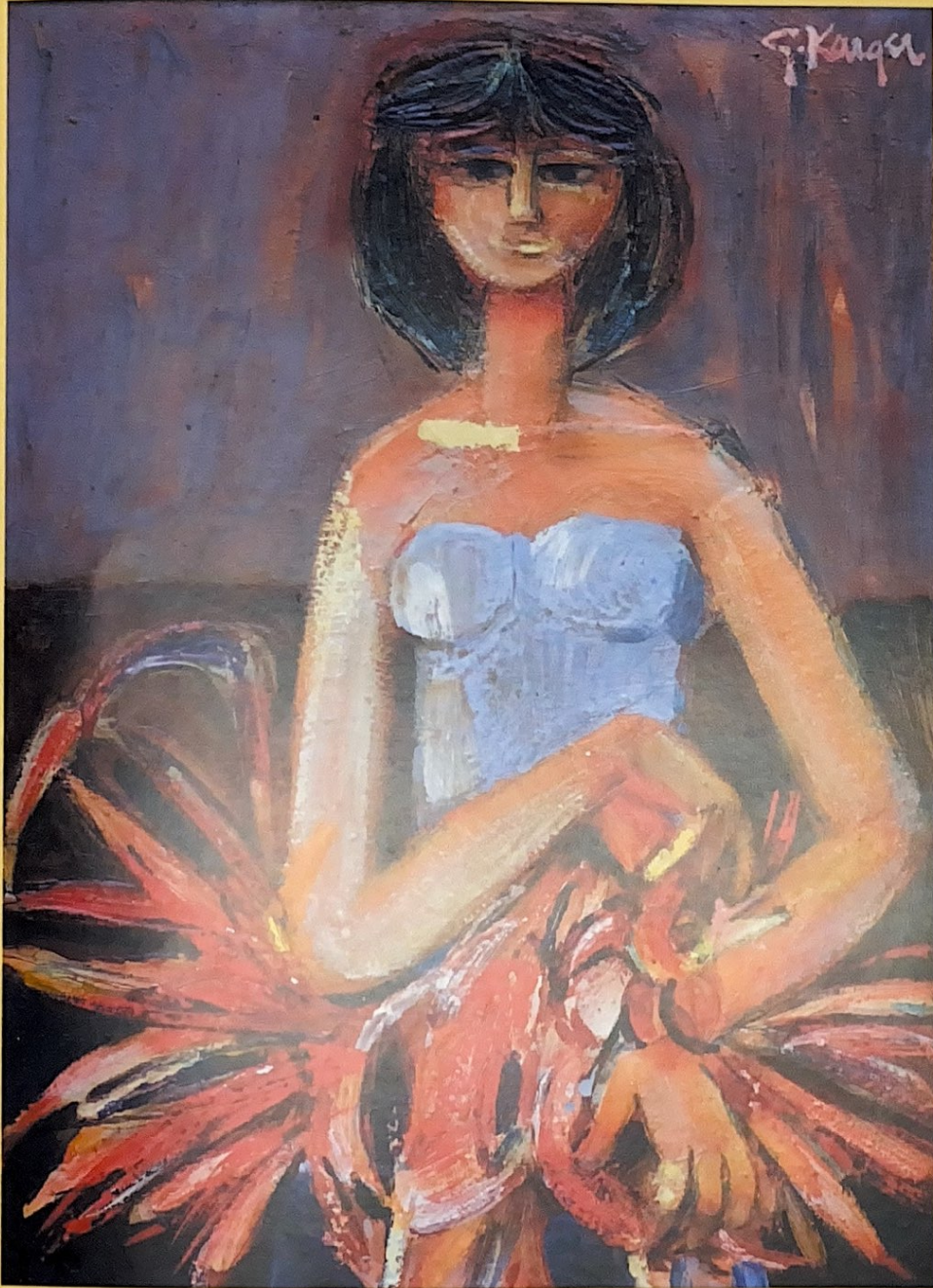
Rising and Vanishing Hollywood, ca. 1934
Oil on canvas

Kelley Gallery, Pasadena (?)



Old City Hall of Los Angeles, 1929
Oil on canvas
28 ³/₁₆ × 28 ³/₁₆ in

Courtesy of Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Los Angeles County Fund
Photo © Museum Associates/LACMA



Czech Painters of California

