

# A Guide to Museum Collections



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THE PAVLE BELJANSKI  
MEMORIAL COLLECTION



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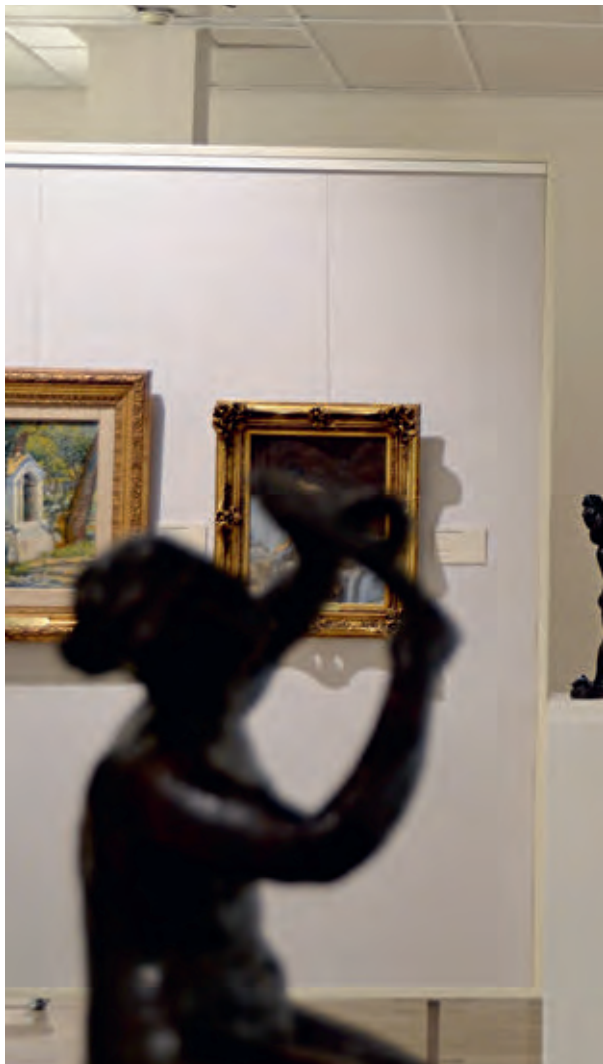
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# Explore the Collection

The ground and upper floors of The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection feature a permanent exhibition showcasing Serbian and Yugoslav Modern art from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It includes paintings, drawings, sculptures, and tapestries collected by Pavle Beljanski. Upstairs, there are two smaller exhibition spaces: The Pavle Beljanski Memorial, a room that is supposed to mirror the environment in which the donor lived, and 'The Artists' Memorial, a space that hosts chamber exhibitions about the artists from the collection and other thematic displays.

The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection's interior (2022)

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# About the Memorial Collection

The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection is a specialised museum named after the diplomat and collector, Pavle Beljanski, who donated his collection of 20<sup>th</sup>-century artworks to the Serbian people through a special Gift Agreement signed on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1957 with the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. In 1961, a modern, purpose-designed building was constructed to house the collection. It was opened to the public the same year, on 22<sup>nd</sup> October. In 1965, Beljanski donated the painting *La Grande Iza* (1882) by Vlaho Bukovac to the Memorial Collection. Together with Pavle Beljanski's collection, it forms the Essential Fund. This donation also established The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection Award for the best undergraduate thesis, and since 2017, for the best master's thesis in national art history defended at the Department of Art History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. Thanks to the donation from Pavle

The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection (2023)







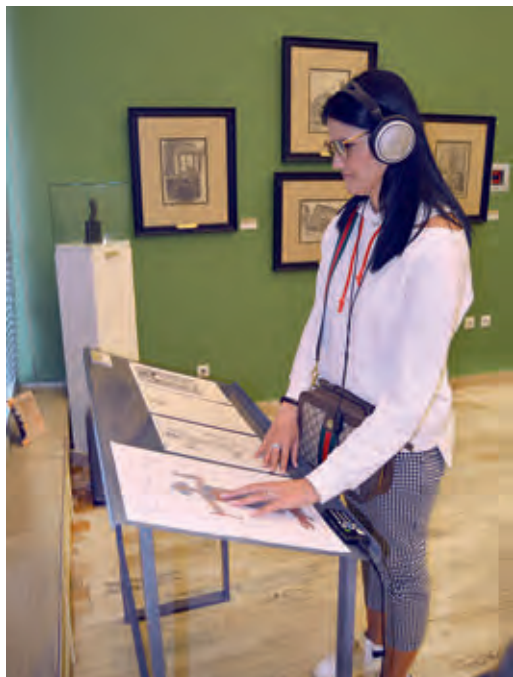
Beljanski's heirs in 1966, the legacy was enriched with items belonging to their famous ancestor. This donation includes documentary material, gramophone records, books, medals, works of fine and applied arts, and other items. All of these are arranged into eight collections, most of which have been carefully assembled. Some of these collections have continued to grow through ongoing acquisitions, and today they house over 4,500 items. Throughout its history, The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection has largely

focused on developing exhibitions, publishing, and educational initiatives. In recent years, there has been a special emphasis on educational programmes for youth and persons with disabilities, as well as international cooperation projects. In 2024, the museum changed its visual identity and completed the adaptation of its exhibition areas, thus improving general perception, imagination, creativity, and critical thinking through an enhanced display of the masterpieces from the collection.



Winners of The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection Award (2023)





Inclusive programmes (2019)

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Educational programmes (2019)

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# About the Donor

Pavle Beljanski (Veliko Gradište, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1892 – Belgrade, 14<sup>th</sup> July 1965), was a collector and diplomat. He attended grammar school in Belgrade and then enrolled in the Faculty of Law. After the First World War broke out, he pursued his studies at the Sorbonne in Paris, where he both obtained his undergraduate degree and commenced doctoral studies in diplomatic and consular affairs. He began his diplomatic career in Stockholm. He eventually continued his service in Berlin, Warsaw, Vienna, Paris, Rome, and Belgrade. During his stays in European capitals between the two World Wars, he encountered outstanding artworks as well as notable figures from the worlds of literature and science (Jovan Dučić, Ivo Andrić, Rastko Petrović, Milutin Milanković, Veljko Petrović, Isidora Sekulić), along with artists whose works would later feature in his collection (Marino Tartaglia, Milan Konjović, Kosta Hakman, Petar Lubarda, Milo Milunović, Sreten Stojanović, Jefto Perić, and others). During the Second World War, he was retired (1941–1945), and after the war, he returned to diplomacy. Firstly, he



Staff of Yugoslav missions in Italy  
and at the Holy See (Rome, 1937/38)

served as the Chief of Protocol at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (1945–1954), and subsequently as a Minister Plenipotentiary (1954–1958). By managing to turn his vision into a museum, he encouraged other benefactors, such as Milan Konjović, MD Branko Ilić, Rajko Mamuzić, Rodoljub Čolaković, and Milica Zorić, to transform their own art collections into legacies.



Marino Tartaglia, **Young Diplomat** (1923)

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Pavle Beljanski (Belgrade, 1926)

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Pavle Beljanski in his apartment (Belgrade, 1965)

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## Collecting as a Mission

Diplomat Pavle Beljanski began collecting art while living in the cities around Europe. It is possible he was inspired by contemporaries who were also building their own collections at the time, such as Prince Pavle Karađorđević, Prime Minister Milan Stojadinović, Minister Miroslav Spalajković, as well as diplomats and poets Milan Rakić and Jovan Dučić. In addition to his genuine passion for art, Beljanski eventually focused on creating a unique collection that he aimed to share with the public.

Although initially interested in European Renaissance art, after 1923, Beljanski shifted towards contemporary Yugoslav paintings, influenced by his artist friends from Serbia and Croatia. During the Second World War, he added sculptures to his collection, and later, drawings and tapestries. After seven members of his family were killed during the bombing of Svilajnac in 1944, his patriotic feelings and dedication to building his collection became even stronger.





Anonymous, **Portrait of Young Bogoboj Atanacković** (ca. 1837)

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# Modern Building for a Modern Collection

The construction of a dedicated building, specifically designed to house the collection, was one of the key conditions Pavle Beljanski stipulated during the signing of the Gift Agreement with the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The public call invited some of the most prominent architects in post-war Yugoslavia, such as Bogdan Bogdanović, Rata Bojčević, Milorad Macura, and Ivo Kurtović whose design served as a template for the future building. (1961). The architect's Mediterranean background is evident in the use of classic proportions, meander motifs, and various stone finishes. The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection is the first purpose-built museum building in Serbia. It was declared a cultural monument in 1992. Together with the collection, it forms a functional and harmonious whole.



Ivo Kurtović (1960/61)

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## About the Architect

Ivo Kurtović (Sutivan, 29<sup>th</sup> February 1910 – Belgrade, 5<sup>th</sup> August 1972) was an architect, university professor, and painter. He spent the end of the Second World War in Egyptian exile (1944–1945), where he lectured on architectural design. The themes of his sketches and drawings focused on the reconstruction of devastated Yugoslavia. He belonged to the second wave of Belgrade post-war architects who, after the liberation, undertook the most significant tasks of rebuilding the country while working in major

The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection's interior (1961)

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offices for architecture. In addition to designing The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection building, his most notable works include the buildings of the National Library of Serbia, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the “Dunav osiguranje” building in Belgrade. He began his career in education as an assistant to Professor Milan Zloković in 1954 and eventually became the head of the Department of Design at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade.



The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection (1961)

## Architecture

The two-storey building consists of two parts. The first part, with large glass windows on the ground floor, extends horizontally and is intended for exhibitions. The second part, the counterpoint to the first, is vertically oriented and externally lined with rustic stone. It is designated for offices and auxiliary rooms. The upper floor of this vertical section hosts the Artists' Memorial. After the donor's death, according to Katarina Babin's design (1966), the southeastern part of the building was extended adjacent to the existing vertical section, housing offices and a depot on the ground floor, and the Pavle Beljanski Memorial on the upper floor. The rows of columns divide the rectangular-shaped exhibition

space on the ground floor into two sections. The columns repeat in the same order in front of the glass windows facing Gallery Square. On the upper floor, there are five exhibition areas joined by a round path. The upper floor level is externally lined with a polished stone wall, while the entire space is illuminated by both artificial and natural zenithal light coming through horizontal ceiling windows. In addition to classic proportions, the aesthetic appeal of the architecture is enhanced by contrasting stones of differing finishes. The fence of the balcony doors consists of large stone slabs with shallow reliefs reminiscent of meanders and Mediterranean influences.



Ivo Kurtović, conceptual design of The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection's interior (1958–1961)

## Learn More:

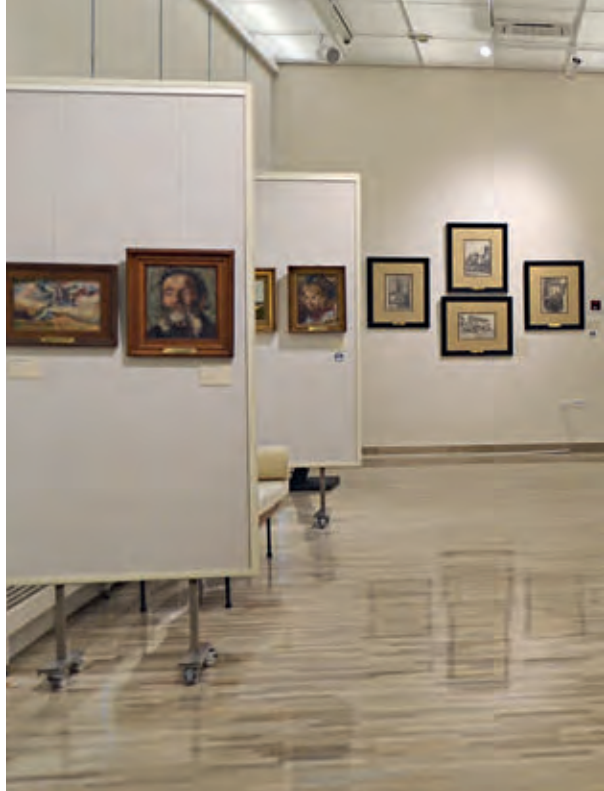
At the time when Pavle Beljanski was contemplating the future of his collection, Ivo Kurtović won awards for two projects involving modern museum buildings (1950, 1954) in public calls for museums, which were then a novelty both locally and worldwide. He was also a member of the jury for the Belgrade City Museum building (1954), to which Beljanski considered donating his collection at one

point. It is certain that these two excellent connoisseurs of art and gallery design collaborated during the project for The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection building, as well as in designing the panels for displaying artworks. Kurtović also had in mind Pavle Beljanski's concept for the permanent exhibition of his collection.



# The Pavle Beljanski Collection

The Pavle Beljanski Collection represents an exclusive anthology of Yugoslav Modern art 20<sup>th</sup>-century masterpieces, focusing on works from the first half of the century. Beljanski continued to build up and modify his collection throughout his life, and according to the inventory, it comprises 184 artworks by 36 artists, including the most significant representatives of Serbian Modern art: Nadežda Petrović, Petar Lubarda, Sava Šumanović, Milan Konjović, Nedeljko Gvozdenović, Jovan Bijelić, Risto Stijović, Ljubica Cuca Sokić, and others. At that time, Serbian society and culture were strongly oriented towards France, and the paintings in the collection, based on their themes, motifs, and art techniques, largely belonged to moderate modernism of the interwar Yugoslav painting. This was predominantly influenced by the Modern tendencies in the Parisian art scene, including Impressionism, Expressionism, Fauvism, Intimism, and Poetic and Colour Realism. Most artists in the collection can be considered members of the Paris School between



two World Wars. While staying in Paris, where they perfected their skills, some artists achieved notable success (such as Sava Šumanović, Milan Konjović, Milo Milunović, and Risto Stijović) integrating into French society (like Marko Čelebonović). When forming his collection, Beljanski sought artworks that represented contemporary European art tendencies while showcasing the artists' originality and distinctive national artistic expression.



The exhibition hall (2022)

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### Learn More:

The distinctiveness of Pavle Beljanski's collection is evident in that a quarter of the works are by seven female artists: Nadežda Petrović, Vidosava Kovačević, Leposava St. Pavlović, Zora Petrović, Ljubica Sokić, Liza Križanić, and Milica Zorić, making The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection a rare example both nationally and beyond.

# The First Generation of Serbian Modern Artists

The Pavle Beljanski Collection features artists who, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, laid the foundations of national Modern art: Nadežda Petrović, Kosta Miličević, Milan Milovanović, Mališa Glišić, Živojin Lukić, and others. Nadežda, an artist with a strong painterly drive, used Impressionism and Expressionism to create authentic, pioneering works of Serbian Modern art. Along with Zora Petrović, she is represented with fourteen paintings, which is the highest number in the collection. The developed plein-air painting and Impressionism of Nadežda Petrović, Milan Milovanović, and Kosta Miličević were profoundly influenced by their Belgrade training (Cyril Kutlik's Serbian Drawing and Painting School in Belgrade, the Rista and Beta Vukanović's Arts and Crafts School), and later in Munich (at the Academy of Fine Arts and the studio of Slovenian painter Anton Ažbe), which was considered an important European cultural centre for establishing contacts and collaborations among artists from Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. However, Paris was the most appealing to them as a metropolis of art. Nadežda Petrović and Milan Milovanović

used to reside there, bringing new impulses to the development of early Serbian modernism. The influences of sunfilled southern landscapes, adopted on the trips to Macedonia, southern Serbia, and especially the Mediterranean during travels and stays in Italy, Southern France, Corfu, and the Montenegrin coast, were crucial in freeing their brushstrokes and creating the light effects on the painted motif. Also, these artists share a connection based on their participation and experiences in the Balkan Wars and the First World War. The choice of themes, motifs, and painting techniques used by the first generation of Serbian Modern artists paved the way for the further development of national modernism. Instead of historical, religious, and mythological scenes, they depicted the simplicity of daily life. However, their works sometimes evoke a sense of myth and symbolism. They depict scenes not by using colour tones, but with bold strokes of pure colour, often short and dense. Serbian Modern art, often distinctly national, gradually caught up with contemporary trends in European art, becoming a level contributor to the international art scene between the two World Wars.



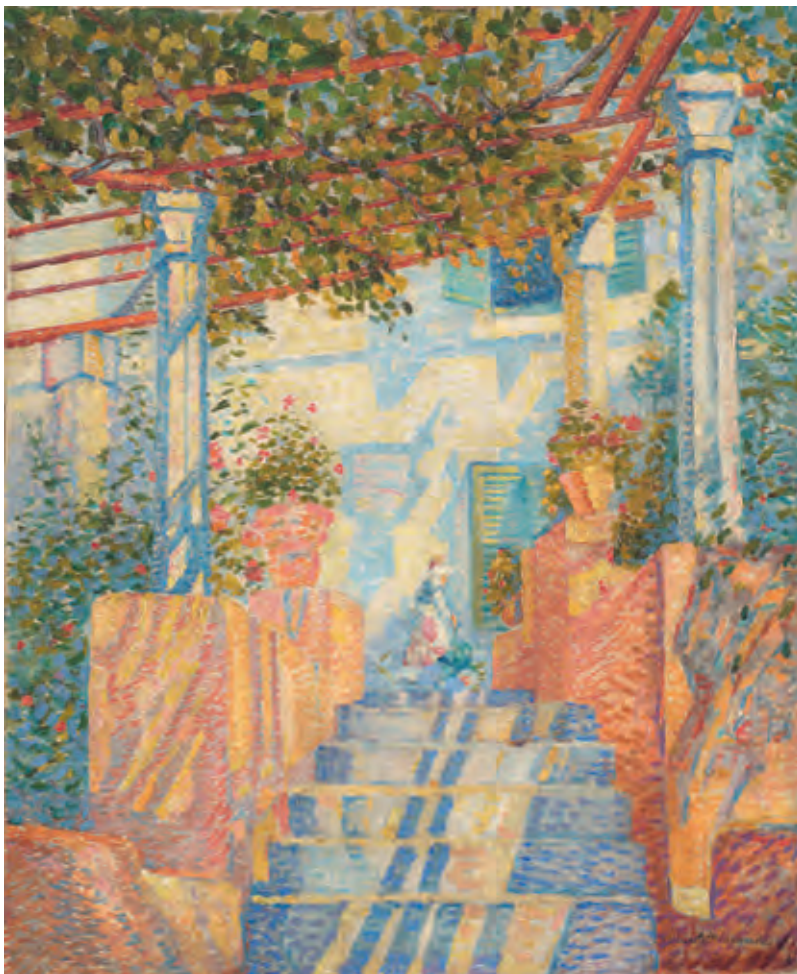


Nadežda Petrović, **Resnik** (1905)

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Kosta Miličević, **Potamos on Corfu** (1916)



Milan Milovanović, **Red Terrace** (1920)

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