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**Nadežda Petrović**

**Liza Križanić**

**Zora Petrović**

**Leposava St. Pavlović**

**Ljubica Sokić**

**Vidosava Kovačević**

**Milica Zorić**

# HEROINES

of The Pavle Beljanski  
Memorial Collection



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**Catalogue**

# Pavle Beljanski's Heroines

Milana Kvas

"It's a very interesting occurrence in our country - this rising number of women who paint. Today, when we look more closely, there are lots of talented female painters."

Ljubica Cuca Sokić, 1988.

The project *Heroines of The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection*, which coincides with the program of the Foundation "Novi Sad – European Capital of Culture", is an excellent opportunity to show another special feature of the legacy created by the diplomat and collector Pavle Beljanski. There are not many collections, both national and international, that possess a quarter of the artworks created by women. Out of 184 artworks in total, the Beljanski's collection keeps 46 artworks by seven female artists: Nadežda Petrović, Vidosava Kovačević, Zora Petrović, Ljubica Sokić, Leposava St. Pavlović, Liza Križanić and Milica Zorić. This selection shows the collector's affinities, but also points out the features of Serbian modern art which Ljubica Cuca Sokić emphasized in a conversation with Milja Milosavljević in 1988. While recollecting the period between the two world wars and discussing the creative work of women in national art history, she stated: "There have always been quite many female painters in our country, almost like in no

other country in the West! The French, who carried the European painting for so long – there you have Vigée Le Brun, Suzanne Valadon, Laurencin, who is also an outstanding painter – but that's a small number for such a nation. And here, it's more like plethora!"<sup>1</sup> With similar enthusiasm but from the collector's point of view, Pavle Beljanski wrote about the heroines of modern art and their artworks from his collection: about Nadežda Petrović, a visionary of the new era, in whose landscapes the sun has to be scorching; about the strong existential tensions in the paintings of Zora Petrović; about the tapestries of Milica Zorić, as the most authentic examples of Serbian fine art.<sup>2</sup>

By carefully selecting art for more than four decades, Pavle Beljanski created a collection that confirms the statement of Ljubica Sokić on the importance of female creativity for further assessment of national art history. From the current perspective, when women's equality is still in question, its evaluation and the selection of female artists for the anthology of national and Yugoslav modern art represent a major undertaking. Beljanski picked their works between the two world wars and in the period of socialist Yugoslavia, when they were not only revolutionaries in painting, but took part in the social struggle of women for emancipation and the right to professional identity, sometimes actively and sometimes only through their respected authority. It is safe to say that his endeavour is heroic and the female artists whose artworks he chose for the collection are truly his heroines.

The new and the contemporary is what the seven artists from the collection of Pavle Beljanski brought to the culture and art of their time. This served as an idea to present seven contemporary female artists whose biographies are closely related to Novi Sad, the European capital of culture: Monika Sigeti, Jelena Vladušić, Jelena Janev, Jelena Kovačević Vorgučin, Milica Dukić, Bojana Knežević and Dragana B. Stevanović. Their engagement in different forms of visual art earned them a prominent place on the local and international art scene. A special video presentation and accompanying exhibition programmes aim to compare the position of female artists now and then by opening a dialogue between the works from the Memorial Collection and the contemporary artists. For the purpose of establishing these relations, photographs from the museum fund analysed both as artworks and documents, have been used in addition to the paintings and tapestries from the diplomat's legacy. This also involved a significant number of artworks, done in different techniques, created by the seven female artists from the collection that were procured through acquisitions, which increased the Memorial Collection's capacity to observe and assess their art.

This special feature of the legacy, which in 2022 celebrates the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pavle Beljanski's birth, becomes particularly visible in the year when Novi Sad is at the same time the European capital of culture. *Heroines of The Pavle Beljanski Memorial Collection* project equally emphasizes the importance of both the artists and the collector who selected their works for his collection.

<sup>1</sup> "Љубица Цуца Сокић", *Код два бела голуба* (ed. Тамара Крстић), Радио Београд 1, available at <https://www.rts.rs/page/radio/sr/story/23/radio-beograd-1/2553145/kod-dva-bela-goluba.html>

<sup>2</sup> П. Бељански, "Дела трајне вредности", in: Ј. Јованов (ed.), *Спомен-збирка Павла Бељанског*, Спомен-збирка Павла Бељанског, Нови Сад 2009, p. 12–13.



## The Presence of Female Artists in the Pavle Beljanski Collection in Comparison with the European Legacies

Valentina Vuković

The domain of visual arts in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was predominantly masculine. Popular and acclaimed artists, gallerists, art dealers, art critics, collectors and donors were mostly men in male-dominated professions.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, even the women who had a considerable artistic talent were most commonly muses, assistants, aid and support of male artists.

During this period, women increasingly pursued successful careers in art but, due to the dominant social norms, this pursuit involved more energy, risk, sacrifice, and often required exiting the art world and seeking affirmation elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Such position of women in resulted from the persistence of a traditional, patriarchal society in which

1) Among the collectors in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is a significant number of women (mostly in America and Scandinavia) who collected artworks, independently or with their partners, and created some of the most important modern art collections: Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Aldrich Rockefeller, Peggy Guggenheim, Gertrude Stein, Helene Kröller-Müller and others. For these women, collecting artworks was possible because of the wealth they inherited or acquired through marriage. It was not uncommon for women to be gallerists, especially in Paris. G. Pery, *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde*, Manchester UP, New York 1995.

2) The most obvious example is Nadežda Petrović, who was known for her involvement in numerous social activities. L. Merenik,

The Pavle Beljanski  
Memorial Collection, 1961.