

= Decorating of the Bride =

Decorating of the Bride is an oil painting by the Serbian artist Paja Jovanović . It shows a young Albanian bride in traditional attire being prepared for her upcoming marriage by the female members of her household . It is one of two compositions Jovanović painted on the subject , the other of which is considered lost .

The painting was done between 1885 and 1888 on one of Jovanović 's trips to the Balkans . It was painted for the French Gallery , with which Jovanović was under contract , and was well received by art critics and members of the public alike . It remained in the French Gallery 's possession until 1893 , when it was purchased by a London buyer . In 1935 , the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs purchased the work and bestowed it to the National Museum of Serbia , in whose possession it remains . In 2009 , the painting began undergoing restoration .

= = Description = =

Decorating of the Bride (Serbian Latin : Kićenje neveste ; Serbian Cyrillic : ?????? ??????) measures 96 @.@ 5 by 136 centimetres (38 @.@ 0 in × 53 @.@ 5 in) . The painting is set in an impoverished 19th @-@ century ethnic Albanian household . It shows the women of the family adorning a young bride . The jewelry that the bride is supposed to wear at her wedding is taken from an old wooden chest that can be seen in the left @-@ hand corner and is temporarily set against a copper tray beside her . Immediately next to the chest , a little girl holds another copper tray , which also contains several items of jewelry . Two elderly women attend to the bride . To the far right , young maidens fashion a garland of fresh flowers and joyfully whisper to one another . The room in which the women have gathered is sparsely furnished , with a low ceiling , well worn carpet and plain plastered walls . The bride wears traditional garb , with a gold necklace around her neck and delicately embroidered slippers on her feet . The artist 's signature , Germanicized as P. Joanowitch , can be seen at the bottom right .

The painting has also been referred to as Nevesta (" The Bride ") , Kite mladu (" The Bride is Being Decorated ") and Oprema mlade (" Bridal Trousseau ") . The artist did not assign titles to his works , as he felt that if a painting was well composed viewers would be able to deduce the title themselves . As such , the majority of his paintings are referred to by a number of different titles .

= = History = =

Paja Jovanović (1859 ? 1957) was one of the most famous Serbian realists of the late 19th century . From 1877 to 1882 , he attended Vienna 's Academy of Fine Arts , studying under Christian Griepenkerl and Leopold Müller , among others . In the early part of his career , he composed mostly Orientalist paintings , which were in high demand at the time . The paintings were based on his own experiences in the Balkans , the Middle East and North Africa , and assured his fame among art connoisseurs in the West .

Decorating of the Bride is one of Jovanović 's Orientalist works , notable examples of which include The Wounded Montenegrin (1882) , Fencing Lesson (1883) and Cockfight (1897) . The painting is undated , and it remains unknown exactly when it was composed . Petar Petrović , the curator of the National Museum of Serbia , dates it to ca . 1885 ? 86 . Art historian Lilien Filipovitch @-@ Robinson writes that it was painted in 1888 . What is known for certain is that Jovanović painted it in the mid @-@ 1880s on one of his travels through the Balkans . One source contends that it was composed while the artist was visiting the Ottoman town of Shkodër , in present @-@ day Albania . Another version of the painting is said to have been created by the artist not long after the original , but is considered lost . An 1891 journal article describes this version as depicting two women decorating the bride , while to her left the bride 's mother clasps her hands and cries with joy . This version is said to have shown a girl on the verge of tears standing by a door to the far left . On the right , a woman and young girl could be seen offering gifts to the bride . During conservatory examinations in 2009 , it was discovered that Decorating of the Bride had been painted over a

similar , earlier work . The artist appears to have shortened the right side of the canvas by about 7 centimetres (2 @. @ 8 in) , altered the appearance of the interior , and slightly modified the left side of the painting . Save for the shortened canvas length , the right side of the painting is identical to that in the final version .

Reproductive rights to the painting were acquired by Zagreb merchant Petar Nikolić shortly after its creation , and lithographic prints were published soon thereafter . The painting was owned by the French Gallery until 1893 , when it was purchased by a London buyer . In 1935 , the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs purchased the work and gave it to the National Museum of Serbia , in whose possession it remains . It is classified under inventory number 31 ? 115 . The museum has been closed to the public since the early 2000s , pending renovation . This has not kept Jovanović 's works , including *Decorating of the Bride* , from being displayed at other venues , including the National Museum 's foyer , which is sometimes open to the public .

= = Analysis = =

Warm tonalities dominate the composition , which is painted in a series of long and short strokes and with even distribution of lighting . Filipovitch @-@ Robinson notes the intimate feel of the painting , which she attributes to Jovanović 's familiarity with Balkan life . " He was not a stranger to the scene , " she states . " He knew his cast of village characters , their interactions , attitudes and consequent expressions and body language . " The composition itself , she continues , depicts both " preparation and celebration " . The gold coins the bride is wearing , Filipovitch @-@ Robinson observes , are part of the dowry , and signal " familial obligation and pride as well as contractual expectations even among villagers of modest means " . She goes on to contrast the bride 's elaborate garb with the impoverished plainness of her surroundings .

Filipovitch @-@ Robinson asserts that the heart of Jovanović 's appeal as an Orientalist lay in his " positive characterization of Balkan life " . Modern scholars , she writes , have criticized the artist for overlooking the hardships of rural Balkan life . Filipovitch @-@ Robinson believes that such criticism is unfounded , and draws parallels between Jovanović 's Orientalist works and those of contemporary popular realists in France , whose works rarely had political connotations and yet were never criticized for neglecting social issues .

= = Reception and legacy = =

The painting received praise from critics , collectors and the general public . It is widely considered one of Jovanović 's finest works . According to Petrović and art restorer Sofija Kajtez , it is also one of his most famous . The two describe *Decorating of the Bride* as " artistically perfect " , and argue that it played a critical role in the development of Serbian realism in the late 19th century , as did Jovanović 's other Orientalist works .