

Mala Muter - Maria Melania Mutermilch (née Klingsland), one of the most prominent painters of the 20th century, known under the pseudonym Mela Muter. She was born in 1876 in Warsaw and came from a wealthy Jewish family. She considered herself to be Polish. She converted to Catholicism in 1922. The artist's father, Fabian Klingsland, was a wealthy Warsaw merchant who supported many artists and writers, including L. Staff, J. Kasproicz, and W. Reymont. In 1899, she married Michał Mutermilch, a writer, literary and art critic, and socialist activist. A year later, their son Andrzej was born. From 1901, she settled permanently in the international colony of Paris. She was one of the oldest creators of the École de Paris. She repeatedly undertook studies at art schools, but never graduated from any of them. She insisted that she was self-taught as a painter. In 1902, she made her debut at the Paris Salon of the National Society of Fine Arts, and from then on she continuously presented her works at the annual Paris Salons, and also exhibited in Poland. Her artistic personality was formed under the influence of the Parisian artistic and intellectual elite, with whom she maintained very extensive contacts. Her work was highly praised by Henri Matisse, she was friends with the poet R.M.Rilk, and the most eminent Parisian artists attended parties organised by her. She became famous as a portraitist (she portrayed, among others, Vollard, Kramsztyk, Barbuss, Károlyi, Żeromski, Reymont). While maintaining close ties with the Polish community, she grew into the French milieu and became involved in social movements. She became a member of the Parisian Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. She collaborated with Parisian newspapers, producing drawings and engravings (together with Picasso, Lhot, Orloff and Fujita), and illustrated the magazine *Clarté* - published by H. Barbusse. In 1917, she became involved with a prominent intellectual, a left-wing politician - Raymond Lefebvre. Between the two world wars, her career was at its peak and the artist achieved financial success. One of France's most prominent architects, Auguste Perret, built her a villa with a studio and garden at 114 bis rue de Vaugirard. The artist travelled extensively (Brittany, Côte d'Azur, Provence, Spain, Switzerland), her material prosperity coming to an end with the Great World Crisis (1929) and then the Second World War, during which Muter moved to Avignon, working as a drawing teacher at school. After the war, she returned to Paris. She suffered from cataracts, which almost deprived her of her sight and prevented her from working as an artist; thanks to an operation (1965), she regained her sight and returned to painting. She was considered, along with Olga Boznańska, to be the most respected representative of the artistic community. She was an extremely prolific painter, producing over a thousand works in 70 years in various techniques. She had a predilection for genre scenes, still lifes, portrait and landscape, and maternity subjects. She often painted on both sides of the canvas. The innovativeness of her painting, shows the links with the artistic path of Olga Boznańska and Władysław Ślewiński. The artist discovered her passion for working outdoors in France and was influenced by France. Several stages can be distinguished in Mela Muter's painting. The initial one - until around 1904 - is associated with Symbolism. The second - until around 1910 - with the syntheticism of the École de Pont-Aven. After 1910, two currents can be distinguished in her work: one of them - portraits, studies of children and figural compositions (on the subject of motherhood), in which she created an individual style, distinguishing her work in the Parisian and Polish environment. At the same time, her landscape paintings showed brief periods of inspiration from Fauvism, the mild formations of Expressionism, the art of Cézanne and early Cubism. In the 1920s, her works can be included in the post-Impressionist movement of the École de Paris. The evolution of her mature work led from the École de Pont-Aven to the École de Paris.

She died in 1967, surrounded for the last years of her life by the care of Bolesław Nawrocki, who amassed an impressive collection of her works and collected documentation concerning her life. Mela Muter's paintings can be found in major art collections around the world.

The works on show are a deposit of the TPAAE