

EARLY WORKS

Piotrek Kowalski
Pavle Nikolić

13 December 2025 — 23 January 2026

Early Works brings together a selection of pieces by the artists Piotrek Kowalski and Pavle Nikolić across two locations in Belgrade (Čubra in Gradić Pejton and Autokomanda in Tikveška 1).

The title plays with institutional language, imagining the premise of a future retrospective, while the logistical setup challenges ideas of value and grandiosity through para-institutional formats and the deliberate positioning of the exhibition in two places. The show stays honest to its concept: the artworks are not newly made, so they are truly shown in retrospect; and the intimacy they propose pushes against the formality inscribed in the language of the medium.

A traditional view on sculpture suggests a monumental dispositif of a skilled hand, which Piotrek challenges through a distinctive application of familiar shapes: droplets, bowling pins, footprints, keyholes. At Autokomanda, the installation plays with the associations evoked by these shapes, creating a dioramic experience in which the viewer is invited to jump between scales and perspectives. This setting of almost-belonging to the scene strongly holds a ghostly presence of time: a paper surrounded by trees from which it is made spins on the shutter blind, accompanied by a pair of keys and a functional digital watch that runs one hour ahead.

In the spirit of shifting viewpoints, the seemingly vast photographic landscapes in Pavle's series "False Friends" actually reveal the secluded, shallow spaces beneath beds. The photographs are placed one after the other in the room, as if they are following the dance of the image scaling itself down to minimal dimensions which, in order to be seen, require the viewer to take the same position as Pavle did when he took the photos (lying on the floor).

At Čubra, the setup acts as an extension of the space — a combination of a meeting place, office and workshop, transitional in itself, located in a former pharmacy — and builds on the architectural elements already in place. The conditioned environment presupposes the intention of the works' placements and considers the idea of sentience within them.

Piotrek's sculptures derive from objects (usually found or reworked), suggesting a relation to the human experience, such as perception or utility, but devoid of actual utilitarian logic — almost self-contained in their inanimacy. Meanwhile, the rest of Pavle's "False Friends" photographs are, similarly, actively subverting both the space they occupy and the spaces they depict, playing with the idea of perception and relativity. The photographer's reflection in one image reveals the assumed plane of reference at that moment. In context, it hints back at Autokomanda, where the viewer recreates that same position, looking at the mini print.

Vanja Žunić and Natalija Paunić

About

Piotrek Kowalski (b. 1997, Warsaw) explores the intersection of nature and the city. He works with objects and sculpture, examining the impact of space and its infrastructure on human behavior — testing the possibility of building a shelter, while working with elements of waste that surround us. Piotrek is a graduate of the Media Arts department at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. His works were shown in Poland and abroad in venues such as the Turnus Gallery, the Zodiak Pavilion, the Wola Museum, Narracje 2025 festival and at art fairs such as Warsaw Gallery Weekend and Paris Internationale.

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Pavle Nikolić (b. 2001, Niš, Serbia) works with photography and video, examining fundamental human tensions — authority and powerlessness, dominance and submission, aggression and passivity. He investigates how these opposing forces interact, using the constructive and transformative capacities of his chosen mediums to find the threshold at which they begin to turn into one another. Pavle studied applied photography at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and fine art at the Beaux-Arts de Paris. He now lives and works in Paris.

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