

Belgrade Raw

Bolj ko gledam,
bolj neumno je.

The longer I look,
the dumber it gets.

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PHOTON



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Fotografski kolektiv Belgrade Raw, ustanovljen leta 2009, se z razstavo v Galeriji Photon predstavlja s svojim dolgo pričakovanim slovenskim debijem. Kolektiv, ki ga trenutno sestavlja enajst članov in članic – Andrej Filev, Jelena Mijić, Aleksandra Mihajlović, Jelena Nikolić, Milovan Milenković, Nemanja Knežević, Luka Knežević-Strika, Mane Radmanović, Dušan Rajić, Darko Stanimirović in Saša Trifunović – je postal prepoznaven po svojem surovem, neposrednem pristopu k upodabljanju vsakdanjega mestnega življenja, s katerim presega tradicijo klasičnega dokumentarizma. V galeriji predstavljajo razstavo *Bolj ko gledam, bolj neumno je*, ki povzema petnajst let njihovega skupnega raziskovanja fotografije in mesta Beograda.

Njihov pristop je od vsega začetka kolektiven. Fotografija ni razumljena kot samostojni izraz posameznika, temveč kot produkt dialoga, izmenjave in kolaborativnega procesa med člani_cami. V svojih deli Belgrade Raw ne iščejo tradicionalnega »odločilnega trenutka« v fotografiji, ampak se osredotočajo na trenutke, ki se kopičijo in prekrivajo. Njihov način dela je počasen, pogosto v nasprotju z naglico sodobne vizualne produkcije: upočasniti, opazovati, razpravljati, dvomiti. Za skupino kolektivnost ni zgolj metoda, temveč tudi vsebina, saj fotografije Njihov način dela je počasen, pogosto v nasprotju z naglico sodobne vizualne produkcije: upočasniti, opazovati, razpravljati, dvomiti. Kolektivnost ni zgolj metoda, temveč tudi vsebina – saj fotografije v sebi nosijo duh skupne izkušnje, občutka, da je življenje v mestu deljeno, včasih konfliktno, pogosto banalno, a vedno polno pomenov.

Na razstavi v Ljubljani kolektiv pogled obrača navznoter in pod vprašaj postavlja lasten ustvarjalni proces. Namesto zaokroženih fotografskih ciklov obiskovalce pričakajo fragmenti, osnutki, arhivsko gradivo in skice. Razstavljeni dela ne ponujajo zaključenih pripovedi, temveč delujejo kot odprti zapisi – včasih kot bežne opombe, drugič kot navidez naključni posnetki. V dialogu z besedili Jelene Nikolić, ki se je kolektivu pridružila leta 2025, te podobe dobivajo dodatne plasti pomena. Njena besedila, pogosto zasnovana v slogu toka zavesti, tvorijo vzporedno pripoved, ki fotografijam daje občutek

intimnosti. Skupaj vizualno in besedno tvorita jezik, v katerem eno dopolnjuje drugo, hkrati pa obe preizkušata meje izražanja, ter hkrati odpirata vprašanje, kaj je mogoče povedati s fotografijo in česa ne – in obratno. Takšna predstavitev poudarja ključno lastnost njihove prakse: eksperimentalnost, ki je vedno v središču njihovega procesa.

Poleg eksperimentiranja že samo ime kolektiva »Belgrade Raw« izraža surovost, ki je temeljna za njihovo estetiko. Ta surovost ni izraz brutalnosti, temveč neposrednosti: razkrivanja tistega, kar pogosto ostane spregledano, marginalnih prostorov, bežnih interakcij, vsakdanjih opravil in prizorov, ki se v mestnem vrvežu zlahka izgubijo. Njihov pristop je v nasprotju s konvencionalnimi upodobitvami Beograda. Medtem ko turistične in medijske reprezentacije mesto večinoma predstavljajo kot idealizirano kuliso, kolektiv išče resnično podobo, sprejemajoč protislovja in včasih celo groteskno lepoto urbanega okolja.

Kljub navidezni spontanosti fotografskega stila kolektiva so njihove razstave vedno zasnovane na skrbno premišljenih prostorskih postavitvah, kot tudi v Galeriji Photon. V teh skrbno oblikovanih kontekstih fotografije niso razumljene kot samostojni objekti, temveč kot sestavni elementi prostora. V celovitih postavitvah se prepletajo z drugimi podobami, besedili in samim razstavnim prostorom ter skupaj ustvarjajo enotno sporočilo. Tako nastajajo prostorsko specifične instalacije, ki presegajo tradicionalne meje fotografije in medij odpirajo proti obliki prostorskega kolaža. Vsaka razstava obenem ponuja samosvojo interpretacijo upodobljene »resničnosti«, saj ista dela in besedila v različnih prostorskih konstelacijah in načinih predstavitve vedno znova pridobivajo nove pomene.

Fotografije in besedila na razstavi Belgrade Raw tako predstavljajo dve dopolnjujoči se razsežnosti mestnega življenja in vsakdanjih izkušenj. Fotografije nastopajo kot zunanost – ulice, mesto in njegovi obrobni prostori, medtem ko besedila razkrivajo notranjost: misli, občutja in razmisleke posameznika, kot jih je zapisala Jelena Nikolić. Naslov

razstave *Bolj ko gledam, bolj neumno je*, ni mišljen kot provokacija, temveč kot povabilo k upočasnitvi in vztrajnemu opazovanju. Prav skozi to vztrajanje se razkriva absurdna in včasih nelogična narava resničnosti. Razkrita »neumnost« ni žaljiva, temveč osvobajajoča, saj razbremenjuje tako fotografijo kot gledalca potrebe po pomenu, pravilnosti ali dokončni razlagi. Naslov tako povzema bistvo pristopa kolektiva: eksperimentiranje brez pravil, dokumentiranje brez olepšav in lepota, ki obstaja preprosto zato, ker je resničnost takšna, kakršna je.

Razstava v Galeriji Photon je zato več kot zgolj predstavitev kolektiva slovenskemu občinstvu temveč povabilo k počasnemu in pozornemu načinu gledanja na svet okoli nas. Je hkrati način gledanja, ki sliko razume kot približek in ne kot celoto, ki lepoto išče ne v estetizaciji, temveč v sami resničnosti, ter ki svobodo prepozna v »neumnosti«, v zavrnitvi enodimenzionalnega pomena.

Belgrade Raw so svoje delo večkrat predstavili tako na samostojnih razstavah v galerijah kot v okviru lokalnih in mednarodnih festivalov, med drugim v Londonu, Sarajevu, na Dunaju, v Splitu in Pittsburgu. Kolektiv je pet let zapored organiziral fotografski sejem, štiri leta pa je vodil serijo delavnic, posvečenih izključno dokumentarni fotografiji, pod naslovom Serbia Raw. Izdali so tudi istoimensko fotografsko knjigo, v kateri so zbrana dela udeležencev iz 13 srbskih mest.





The Belgrade Raw photography collective, founded in 2009, is making its long-awaited Slovenian debut at Photon Gallery. Currently composed of eleven members—Andrej Filev, Jelena Mijić, Aleksandra Mihajlović, Jelena Nikolić, Milovan Milenković, Nemanja Knežević, Luka Knežević-Strika, Mane Radmanović, Dušan Rajić, Darko Stanimirović, and Saša Trifunović—the collective has become known for its raw, direct approach to capturing everyday urban life, pushing beyond the conventions of classic documentary photography. At the gallery, they present the exhibition *The Longer I Look, the Dumber It Seems*, which encapsulates fifteen years of their collaborative exploration of photography and the city of Belgrade.

From the very beginning, their approach has been inherently collective. Photography is not seen as an individual pursuit, but as the product of dialogue, exchange, and collaborative process among the members. In their work, Belgrade Raw does not seek the traditional “decisive moment” in photography; instead, they focus on moments that accumulate, overlap, and evolve over time. Their pace is deliberately slow, often standing in contrast to the rapid tempo of contemporary visual production. For the group, collectivity is not only a method, it is also a central element of the work itself. The photographs carry the spirit of shared experience and convey the sense that life in the city is communal, sometimes conflictual, often banal, yet always imbued with meaning.

At the exhibition in Ljubljana, the collective turns its focus inward, questioning its own creative process. Rather than presenting complete photographic cycles, visitors encounter fragments, drafts, archival materials, and sketches. The works on display do not convey finished narratives; instead, they function as open records, sometimes notes, at times seemingly random snapshots. In dialogue with the texts of Jelena Nikolić, who joined the collective in 2025, these images acquire additional layers of meaning. Her writings, often composed in a stream-of-consciousness style, create a parallel narrative that brings intimacy to the photographs. Together, the visual and the verbal form

a language in which each complements the other while also probing the limits of expression—what can be conveyed through photography and what cannot, and vice versa. This presentation highlights a defining aspect of their practice: experimentation, a principle that has been central to Belgrade Raw from the very beginning.

In addition to experimentation, the very name of the collective »Belgrade Raw« evokes a rawness that is central to their aesthetic. This rawness is not about brutality, but about directness: revealing what is often overlooked like marginal spaces, fleeting interactions, mundane tasks, and scenes easily lost in the city’s hustle and bustle. Their approach stands in stark contrast to conventional depictions of Belgrade. While tourist and media images often present the city as an idealized backdrop, the collective seeks its true image, embracing contradictions and, at times, the grotesque beauty of the urban environment.

Despite the apparent spontaneity of the collective’s photographic style, their exhibitions are always underpinned by carefully considered spatial arrangements, as is the case at the Photon Gallery. In these thoughtfully designed contexts, photographs are not seen as isolated objects but as elements of space. Within comprehensive installations, they combine with other images, texts, and the exhibition space itself to convey a cohesive message. The result is a series of site-specific installations that transcend the traditional boundaries of photography, opening the medium toward a form of spatial collage. Each exhibition also presents a distinct interpretation of the depicted “reality,” where the same works and texts can generate new meanings through different spatial constellations and modes of presentation.

The photographs and texts in the Belgrade Raw exhibition present two complementary dimensions of city life and everyday experience. The photographs serve as the exterior, representing the streets, the city, and its marginal spaces, while the texts reveal the interior—the thoughts, feelings, and reflections of the individual, as

written by Jelena Nikolić. The exhibition title, *The longer I look the dumber it seems* is not meant as provocation but as an invitation to slow down and observe with persistence. Through this sustained observation, the absurd and sometimes illogical nature of reality comes to light. The “dumbness” revealed is not derogatory; it is liberating, freeing both photography and the viewer from the need for meaning, correctness, or definitive interpretation. In this way, the title encapsulates the essence of the collective’s approach: experimentation without rules, documentation without embellishment, and beauty that exists simply because reality is what it is.

The exhibition at Photon Gallery is therefore more than a presentation of the collective to a Slovenian audience, it is an invitation to slow, attentive way of seeing the world around us. Also, a way of seeing that acknowledges an image as an approximation rather than a whole, that finds beauty not in aestheticization but in reality itself, and that recognizes freedom in “dumbness” in the refusal of one dimensional meaning, allowing each visitor to generate their own interpretation.

Belgrade Raw exhibited its work on numerous occasions, both through solo exhibitions in galleries and as part of local and international festivals in London, Sarajevo, Vienna, Split, Pittsburg. For five consecutive years, the collective organized a photo fair, and for four years in a row, it ran a series of workshops dedicated exclusively to documentary photography, titled *Serbia Raw*. The collective also published the *Serbia Raw* photo book, compiling work produced by participants in 13 Serbian cities.











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Andrej Filev, Jelena Mijić, Aleksandra Mihajlović, Jelena Nikolić, Milovan Milenković, Nemanja Knežević, Luka Knežević – Strika, Mane Radmanović, Dušan Rajič, Darko Stanimirović in Saša Trifunović

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