A MONOCLE GUIDE TO UNKNOWN CREATIVE CITIES

The Belgrade Issue

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Monocle Picks - The best bars and restaurants to unwind and end a perfect day
With this issue, we are introducing *A Monocle Guide to Unknown Creative Cities*. Twice a year, we will take you on a creative tour through an underrated place, a city you’ve never expected to be so interesting. We will introduce you to people, companies and places that are most typical for this area. From fashion designers and photographers to the place where you can get the best cup of coffee, we’ve made a selection of the very best things to do, to see and to know. We hope to inspire you through our eight steps. We begin with a short briefing on things you simply need to know. We then start in the creative district of the town, followed by an introduction to the creatives who make this industry. In between we take a coffee break and we show you a selection of the finest product from the area. We then get ready for the next part: an introduction to the creative businesses. After, we talk to creatives who left, about their relationship with the city and finally, we return to where we started. Ending the tour in the creative district, we unwind and enjoy the rest of the night in the finest restaurants and bars. This issue will revolve completely about Belgrade, a city that is still being rebuilt. After the last bombing only fifteen years ago, the people and places here have changed, and that is why we feel like it is time for an introduction.
The Briefing

We are introducing Belgrade. We are welcoming you into the industry of this beautiful city, which is developing so fast. With this briefing, we quickly want to give you the information you need for the rest of the tour.

Fifteen years ago, in 1999, the last bombing in Belgrade took place. During the Kosovo War, the NATO decided to interfere by attacking many parts of Serbia to go against Milosevic’s government. In Belgrade, most bridges were ruined to the ground, and many buildings in the city centre are still shattered.

In Serbia most newspapers and street signs use the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet to communicate. Vuk Karadžić developed the alphabet in 1818, but the traditional writing style is still in use in almost all facets of the culture. From old bakeries to cool, new cafés, Cyrillic is still the main script.

The political landscape of Serbia is changing completely. This year, the Serbian Progressive has won the elections, and it seems as if Serbia will finally have a brighter view on the future. The new government has a larger focus on the creative side of Belgrade, with plans to invest in museums again.

In Serbia most newspapers and street signs use the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet to communicate. Vuk Karadžić developed the alphabet in 1818, but the traditional writing style is still in use in almost all facets of the culture. From old bakeries to cool, new cafés, Cyrillic is still the main script.

Before the Yugoslav Wars, Belgrade was the home of many revolutionary creators. Important artists are Marina Abramović and Emir Kusturica, and the country has one Nobel prize for literature: the one for Ivo Andrić.

Serbia is quite well known in the Balkans as the country that can turn anything into a festival. Every year, countless festivals are held mainly in Belgrade and Novi Sad. The largest and most recognised is Exit, which started out in the year 2000 as a protest against the regime. Now, Belgrade has its own official Fashion Week, Design Week, and many other creative events. Some say that Belgrade is the creative capital of the Balkans, and therefore people from all over Eastern Europe come together here to create and rebuild the industry.
The District: Savamala
Савамала

Located around the east side of the Brankov bridge, you can find Belgrade’s up and coming creative district called Savamala. From high end, well designed restaurants to hidden gems, it’s that part of the city that is most worth exploring.

BELGRADE’S BERLIN

By many locals, Savamala is called the Berlin of Belgrade. It is an old part of Belgrade that was left out, with many abandoned buildings. Like in any large and relatively expensive city, artists and young creatives tend to head to this area and turn it into a vibrant place again.

When you take a walk through Savamala, you will come across many old and shattered buildings, where people have opened new, conceptual galleries and restaurants. A five minute walk from the bridge will, for example, take you to Basta, a small and hidden jazz café which seems to be run out of someone’s apartment. There is always something new to see, so just walk in and see where you will end up.

1. Abandoned buildings are used for many events around the district
2. Creative street advertisement for Savamala based companies
3. Mikser House, which can be visited at Karadjordjeva 46
4. The still abandoned part of Beton Hala

MIKSER HOUSE

One of Savamala’s most important supporters is the team behind Mikser House, the home of the Mikser organisation. The past few years, they have been the ones to put Savamala, a forgotten district, back on the map. Every year they organise the Mikser Festival, which is now known as one of Belgrade’s best design festivals. When there aren’t any big happenings, the multi-purpose space located on the Karadjordjeva street can be visited for a drink, or to browse their shop filled with a selection of Serbian products.

mikser.rs

BETON HALA

On the north side of the district, overlooking the Sava river, there is the Beton Hala. Literally a concrete hall, where high end restaurants have been opening their doors in the past few years. Beton Hala used to be an abandoned boulevard, and since a few years it has been part of a project to revitalise Savamala. You can enjoy great food in very well designed restaurants like Toro (a Latin gastro bar) or Iguana (a Jazzy wine bar), or simply enjoy the sunset over the Sava river.
Ivana Ristić
Ивана Ристић
Fashion Designer

Ivana Ristic finished art academy in 2004. From the beginning on, she wasn’t focused on doing fashion design. She was interested in various fields of art, and this is the one she ended up doing.

Is Belgrade in any way an inspiration to you?
“Honestly, Belgrade isn’t my greatest inspiration. This is the city I live in, and this is where I work. The greatest influence on my work has actually been from abroad. I have done two internships in New York, at Isaac Mizrahi and threeASFOUR. I feel like that is where I have developed the most, and that is where I found my biggest inspiration. I would love to make more avant garde work like the things that inspired me so much at threeASFOUR, but I have to keep other aspects in mind. In creative capitals like New York, they do have a bit more freedom in concept and design then we do here. People there are more used to these extreme designs, and appreciate the art more. Not that I don’t like working in this way, because when I work on a collection, I let the materials and forms move and inspire me. I do follow my own mind, and don’t really focus on concepts too much.”

Does that create some kind of restrictions for you? Can you change your style a bit?
“I never change things drastically, but of course I change. I have to say that is mostly in the details. I used lots of black and other dark colours for my previous collections, but now I am experimenting more with colour. I do not know if that has to do with my personal development, that I have grown or that I just became sick of black, but it is a natural transition.”

How did you get the idea to open a store in the Belgrade Design District?
“The Belgrade Design District used to be an abandoned shopping mall, which we wanted to bring back to life. The city offered us low rents, so this could be the home of Serbian designers. Many people think it is only for young designers, but it is not. Even though I consider myself to be a young designer still, I feel like I have grown a lot over the past few years. I’ve had two stores before with some of my friends, but now I’m happy I have this one here. It gives me the freedom to create my own brand, from the clothing to the interior of the store, the lighting and the entire atmosphere.”

How do you look at your future here in Belgrade, and outside of it?
“I would love to sell in Scandinavia, and eventually in the United States. I don’t have any plans for the near future, but those are my dreams. I am already very happy that I can do this for a living, and being part of this growing industry makes it so exciting. Doing this as a career is very new here, so I’ll just take it as it comes.”

Why is it harder here to create the freedom for yourself?
“Here, we have to think a bit more about our clientele, which is small. We cannot just design whatever we want, in a way it has to be wearable and a bit commercial. I personally do not even stick to a certain concept or style, I design with myself and my client in mind. I cannot create a piece of clothing as a piece of art, and sit and wait until it gets sold. If I don’t design for my client, I cannot even afford it to design at all. I think I can say it is like that for most designers here, on the Balkans. Of course we have our own concepts of design, but we need to think of ways to make it profitable.”
How did it all start?
“We all graduated from art school and we were looking for something to do and a place where we could show ourselves. We wanted to give each other and also other artists the chance to show their work. Four years ago, in 2010, we collected works of art that all had something to do with bears. The main theme has always been bears, together with the idea of honouring spring.”

Why specifically bears?
“There are a few things about the bear that make it the perfect theme for our exhibitions. First of all, the bear is quite a popular animal. Modern and contemporary art can be quite intimidating, and most (especially young) people do not really know what to think about it. Bears are a great way to introduce people to art, because you can come here with a child and just look for the bears everywhere. Our other idea behind the bear has to do with spring. We all love it when winter is over and spring has sprung. Bears are a bit afraid of coming out into the sun, so it takes them a while. For us, it is the same with young artists. When you’re finished with art school, you simply do not know what to do and where to go. Having an exhibition for yourself can be terrifying, and you don’t know how to sell your art. We want to give those artists a platform to start selling their art.”

How were the reactions in Belgrade?
“People always come by and often bring their kids. It was our goal to show them that art is something you can buy, a thing you can own. In Serbia, most people think art is only worth something if it’s an old oil painting. Luckily, people are interested in these new, multimedia art forms.”

The exhibition is not the only thing you do, what is your goal behind organising all these events?
“We want everyone to participate! One of the workshops which are given that same week, is a film workshop for children. A friend of ours is a film-maker, and he is busy opening a film school for kids. This workshop is like a tryout, for him - and the kids - to see how it goes. They are making a one-minute film about bears. We also want others to participate in our exhibit. Not everyone is an artist or owns art, but we want to show them that they can be. Next to the main exhibition, we have a room full of bears, where everyone can put something themselves.”

You guys are almost trying to help people in a way, are there any organisations supporting you?
“Starting something like this in Belgrade is quite difficult. The budgets are small and art is still a difficult topic, even our national museum has been closed for years. We are lucky that the people behind Parabrod (the exhibition space) let us in. The rest of the things, we organize ourselves. We don’t get any support from the government or the city, but hopefully that may change in the future!”

How do you hope to develop?
“We hope to simply just continue doing this. We need to get some official things sorted so we can grow and earn a bit more money. When we do that, it will hopefully be easier for us to keep going.”

The exhibition can only be visited every year in spring.

1 The Medvedi Logo
2 The team behind Medvedi: Marko Ulic, Manja Lekic and Milica Mrvic
3 Bear rings “I’m All Ears” by Aurea Praga, a part of the Medvedi exhibit of 2014.

Medvedi
Медведи
Curators

They almost became curators by accident. What started as an idea to show their work to the world, ended up being a recurring week filled with events focused on arts in Belgrade.
In an industry where the multimedia arts are highly developing, Marija Seman chooses to do something more traditional. In her atelier in Belgrade she makes ceramics by hand, to showcase in her own store.

How did you discover your love for ceramics?
“I went to the high school for design, but I had chosen textiles as a direction. I had fun there, but I felt like it was not something that I wanted to do for the rest of my life. Choosing ceramics after went quite naturally, I think I saw a nice cup someone had made or something, and I wanted to try it too. Later on, I graduated in sculpture art, so actually unique ceramic pieces. Doing that is what I love most about ceramics, but the gallery we’re holding is too small to showcase these large pieces, and they are also less commercial.”

How did your style develop throughout the years?
“I believe that there are two types of ceramics. The first is porcelain, which is very delicate and elegant. With the second type, you work with more unpredictable glazing. That way of working is a bit more experimental and you cannot know how it will exactly turn out. When I make jewellery, I like it to have a perfect finish and be very elegant, but when I make cups and other things that you use, I prefer having something that feels strong. The same goes for my free work. For that, I’m inspired by the waters in Belgrade, and I make boats in different colours, because that is where my fascination lies.”

The waters of Belgrade inspire you, is there something else from here that you find inspiration in?
“When I’m creating, I always look at my own life here in Belgrade. I look at what I miss and what I need, and then I start creating. I also make small cups for Rakija for example, that is such a Serbian thing. Those details of our culture inspire me.”

What is it that is keeping you in Belgrade?
“I’ve thought a lot about leaving, but the one thing that is keeping me from leaving is the lack of things. There are barely any concept stores and galleries in Belgrade, even our national art museum is closed. I can see the possibilities, and that is why I wanted to open Gallery 1250°. The love for art and craftsmanship is growing in Belgrade, and it is amazing to be a part of that development. Even though Belgrade’s industry is mostly developing in multimedia and these young creatives are less interested in classical arts like ceramics, I do feel at home here. My roots are here, and I want to change things here.”

What’s it like to be in the Belgrade Design District?
“The Belgrade Design District has a nice atmosphere, and the rents are very low. It has made it possible for us to be able to produce and sell, without having to worry too much. A downside is that the district is quite hard to find, but we are working on that. It’s funny, sometimes people come by and you wonder how they even found you. One time, this doctor from London came by. I just didn’t understand how he had wandered off into our gallery.”

What would you still want to do?
“Here, I would like to do more free work. It’s hard to find the time to create what I want, and it is also hard to find a proper space to exhibit my work. I would also love to go to Japan, they are the best when it comes to ceramics. They even have a school specifically for that, where you get so specialised, that for five years the only thing you do is for example work on the wheel. I would love to go to experiment and learn.”
How did you get into photography?
“There is always things you want to do, and during high school I always wanted to try photography. In that period I was always busy with other things, so I did not have the time, but once I tried it I got hooked. I started photographing with a cheap, two megapixel camera, and throughout the years I’ve gotten better gear and more experience. I didn’t study photography, I learnt photography by making many mistakes.”

Where do you find your biggest inspiration?
“It is important to me to get inspired by the things around me. I don’t want to go looking for inspiration, but it is the small things in daily life that intrigue me. I have always loved walking around the city and photographing the things that I found to be interesting, and that is what I always will do.”

That is what you do with Belgrade Raw, how did you get into that?
“There is a group of photographers in Belgrade that have always been busy with capturing Belgrade as it is. A few years ago, Darko Stanimirovic (photographer) asked us to create a photo collective and to go out in the streets and shoot the raw side of Belgrade. We decided to create a website where we could show a collection of these photographs, because this was the thing that kept us busy and inspired. The site really took off, and last year, a Slovenian publisher named RostFrei came up to us and asked us to be their curators for a year. That was the first time they asked a group of people instead of one individual, and that was a great experience.”

How come most of your exhibitions were outside of Serbia?
“This type of photography is a lot more popular in other countries. That contemporary way of looking at art is not yet a part of Serbian culture. There is some kind of academic structure, where people here focus on the classical way of thinking and the way things used to be. On the other side you have people who do something different. Both are important to create some kind of balance, but it is good for people to be more open.”

What do you find most important in your own work?
“I find it important that people look at a series of photographs, rather than a single shot. It is like watching films by the same director; sometimes you think he made a small mistake, but if you’ve seen more of his work, you realize that this is something he does, his style. I cannot really describe own style, but something specific for me is that I shoot mostly on film. That process is so much more interesting to me, and gives me much more satisfaction.”

Do you have any big plans or goals?
“I used to. Now, I let things go naturally and I’ll see what will happen.”

For a larger selection of Nemanja’s work, take a look at his own website nk.rs

For snapshots of the daily life in Belgrade, and unexpected beauty visit belgraderaw.com

1 Nemanja Knezevic
2 Nemanja’s work
Marija studied architecture in Belgrade, but ended up focusing on a million other things. Whether it’s her work, life or inspiration, Marija probably just needs that little bit of chaos to keep her going.

How did you develop into this field as a multidisciplinary artist?

“Everything I have ever done, went quite naturally actually. Even architecture, which I have studied. All those things I tried to do, just came to me in a way. I’ve been doing all these things (interior design, photography, video, drawing) so much and they are so intertwined, that I don’t even know how I started doing it all, and what is most important to me. That is what being a multidisciplinary artist means to me, not focussing on one thing. I guess that after so many years, you don’t even have to.”

What is your philosophy? Or what is the story you want to tell with your work?

“I do not have a specific philosophy when it comes to my work. There is no story that I want to put in every project that I do. The thing that I want to put in every project, is some kind of truth. The most honest way of working. I want to completely get all my emotions out, and somehow implement them into a project that is in front of me, whether it’s a video, a photograph or a space.”

Is that what is most important in your way of working?

“Yes, it is. That, and the openness of intimacy.”

Is there something that you would call your greatest inspiration? Anything that keeps you going?

“It is impossible to me to pinpoint what it is exactly that inspires and intrigues me the most. Inspiration comes and goes and I just take it as it is. Everything in my environment has some kind of influence on my work, whether I look for it or it just appears. It’s in everything I do. From the music I listen to, the films that I watch, to the people I love and admire, everything comes by naturally. The thing that gives them some kind of coherency, or something like that, is that they all appear to me. I can then combine them, take something from a piece of music and another from a beautiful film, and that will give me the motivation to create something new.”

In what way is Belgrade an inspiration to you?

“There is not a specific thing I can name about Belgrade that inspires me so much. I guess it is the same with all those other things. I live here and there are always small things that inspire me, and sometimes they pile up. I love to travel and I travel a lot, but I always come back. Always.”

How has this city influenced your development as an artist?

“I grew up here, so it has probably influenced me most by being my starting point for everything. It has always given me the context I needed, and I think that is the greatest influence you can have. Being the foundation of something, you know? Even while I’m traveling actually. If that is your point of reference and your context, you keep comparing things to that place. So when you see something that inspires you, the reason it does that is because you don’t see that at home. That means this city is always in me, and influences everything constantly. Everything that I have been through has been here; my family, my friends, my loves, going out, going to university; everything.”

You are always busy, and always trying out new things with all of your projects. Is there still anything you want to try in the near future?

“I would actually like to try to take things slow for once! I am always busy with a hundred things at the same time, and it would be very nice to just take a breath and take one thing at a time. I don’t know if I’ll ever manage to do that though.”
The Creative Coffee Culture

Coffee has always been a large part of many cultures, especially the Mediterranean ones. It has only been a few years ago that coffee actually became fashion; the quality of our coffee needed to be higher and our beloved cafes needed to be designed better.

We invite you to the Dorcol area of Belgrade, an up and coming neighbourhood that is known for its proper coffee roasters. Don’t go anywhere else for a cup of perfectly roasted and ground shot of your favourite single origin.

Przionica

Right outside of the lively city centre, Przionica has opened its first shop. Walking through a quiet street that feels rather industrial, you’ll find some of Belgrade’s finest artisanal food stores. In between high end restaurant Holesterol and Šarlo (a bakery doing traditional pastry differently) you will find Przionica, for the finest coffee in town. In this micro roastery you can choose between a few single origin beans or the house blend, after which the friendly staff will grind the beans just right.

Visit at Dobraccina 59b

Kafeterija

Kafeterija is a bit further away from the city, a bit harder to find and a tad more difficult to understand. Almost all of the communication in the café is in traditional cyrillic writing, so having a local to accompany you would be the best choice when visiting. If you do not have that luxury, the crew of Kafeterija is there to help you with all your decisions. There are many options to get your coffee exactly how you want it, starting with a choice of ten single origin beans, next to their house blend. For an experience that is a bit more lavish, this café even serves Kopi Luwak, known to be the most expensive coffee in the world.

Stop by at Zorza Klemansoa 10

Koffein

There is no harm in saying that Koffein is the most accessible of the selection we have made. It is the easiest café to find, and the coffee menu is a bit less intimidating too. Nevertheless, the quality of the drinks Koffein serves is sublime. The atmosphere is low key and creative at the same time, with many different groups of people often visiting. Simply following Francuska Street upwards, you will come across many other cosy cafés and bars, all the way back to the crowded city centre.

Find them on the corner of Francuska Street and Cara Dusana
MADE IN BELGRADE

Things that will make your life easier, more beautiful or both. Monocle selected Belgrade’s finest products, for you to ponder on.

This lamp will bring both lightness and aesthetics to your workspace, with its functional simplicity.

*Lamp by lampemm*

If you are looking for something different for under your suit, Ivana Lazarevic has the answer.

*Shoes by Ivana Lazarevic*
Who doesn’t want to enjoy some perfectly brewed coffee in a perfect, handmade espresso cup?
*Cups by Marija Seman*

The perfect finishing and details of this jacket will almost turn dressing into indulging.
*Jacket by Zorana Stojanovic*
Freshly roasted and finely ground coffee from Ethiopia, with a subtle evening aroma. 

*Coffee by Prztonica*

A combination of high quality leather and simple design, makes these bracelets a typical Klasa item. 

*Bracelets by Klasa*
**SideEffects**

They are breaking the rules without actually breaking them. SideEffects is one of the first proper online shops in Serbia, working their way through loopholes to sell affordable art. All of that for the design geeks among us.

SideEffects almost started as a spinoff of an earlier project. In 2009, Marko Radenkovic started the *International Summit of Cheap Laser Graphics* with a group of friends. The goal was to organize an art exhibit with the works of a hundred artists, all showing their talent on one piece of A4 paper. During the exhibition, visitors could print their favourite artwork on one of the laser printers in the room, only for one euro.

*The International Summit of Cheap Laser Graphics* is where their adventure to make art affordable and accessible in Serbia started. The summit turned out to be a great success, and has returned every year since then. The same team decided to start SideEffects, as a side project.

To get the finance sorted for this project, Marko and the rest of the team decided to do crowd funding. “We wanted to produce a thousand graphics, which meant that we needed an investment of six to seven thousand euros to start. We created a presentation for thirty people, to show them the work and offer them a special pre-sale.”

The crowd funding eventually turned out to be a great idea, because luckily enough people in Belgrade and Zagreb were interested in investing and the project took off.

SideEffects is mostly focussed on selling abroad, to create some kind of platform for the artists they represent. It was an experiment to see how it would be possible to sell online in Serbia, where the rules are very complicated. “The law is quite complex when it comes to selling things online and paying. Because of this, you can for example only use PayPal to pay, but not to be paid. We’ve found some loopholes to be able to do what we do,” Marko says.

For the future, the team is planning on investing in marketing. “In the beginning, we profiled ourselves as a Serbian art company, but that is not something that gets a lot of media attention. We did notice that the influence of the internet is impeccable. When a lifestyle blogger wrote about our work, we saw many people coming onto our website, and directly buying a specific piece of art. They did not even look around on the website first, it was very strange to see. Now, we want to put more money and effort into getting the website out there. People need to know about us, and see what we do.”

sideeffectsprint.com
Klasa
Kласа
FASHION

Teaming up with classmates can sometimes be a great success. Klasa proves that you don’t need to have your own brand to do what you love.

After graduating at the art academy in Belgrade, ten classmates decided to join forces and start Klasa. They have only started two years ago, but they have already gained popularity with Serbian and international customers. Everything is handmade in Belgrade, all pieces are unique and some of them can even be made to measure.

The team behind Klasa saw an opportunity to do what they wanted to do, simply in a different way. It was impossible for them all to create their own brand and open up stores around Belgrade, so they decided to join forces. They started out with a shop in the Belgrade Design District, but that did not end up being very successful.

After they had found a space in the up and coming Dorcol area, they moved their shop and got quite a bit more attention.

In the last couple of months, the team of Klasa has won many awards. One of those prizes was the Boris Nikolic Award, which gave them the opportunity to organise a fashion show at Belgrade’s Fashion Week this year. Because of this sponsorship and show, they have received three more awards for best collection and best show. It’s these awards that keep getting them more media attention and therefore make it easier to sell and keep Klasa going. About their start, one of the girls says; “we were lucky with the Belgrade Design District, it made it easier to get started. Starting there, opened other doors.”

In Serbian Klasa means class, which refers to the girls being classmates at the academy. They were friends, and wanted to give each other and themselves the opportunity to do something creative. It is hard to be a designer in Belgrade, because people aren’t used to buying unique pieces like these.

“We all have jobs next to Klasa and we can just make enough to pay the rent and the materials, but we’re doing what we love. We’re educated in this field, and being able to work in it is amazing,” Sanja says, one of the girls behind Klasa.

“We would love to sell more abroad and open up an online shop. It is just really hard with Serbian law when it comes to paying online and being paid. We are still trying to figure out ways to do what we want, and to continue working as Klasa, we really want to develop. And the largest part of our clientele is from abroad too. It’s always the people who come here for some kind of design festival that are attracted to our clothes the most.”

Every Klasa member develops her style in a different way, but it is also very important to them that the entire look and feel of the brand has some kind of coherency. For every collection, they work with a theme or some kind of guidelines to keep that Klasa feel. For them, effortless style and high quality are most important, and you notice that in every detail.

If you would like to visit their store in the Dorcol area, you can find them at Višnjiceva number 2, or at klasa.co.rs

All pieces by Klasa are unique and handmade in Belgrade
In February 2012 Nova Iskra opened its doors for the first time. Focussing on creative developments in modern Belgrade, it was the first company to celebrate the growth of the industry.

The home of the company is located in the city centre of Belgrade. A nice detail is that everything is designed by young, Serbian designers. The interior is primarily done by the studio Petokraka, a graphic and interior design studio. Along with works by this team, you can find lamps by Ana Kras and others. The concrete floors and glass walls give the rooms the open and modern feel they need, connecting every room with the other. The well-designed workspaces can be used as offices by freelance creatives. Tables and conference rooms can be rented daily, weekly and monthly, making it easy for creatives in the city to work together. Next to this, Nova Iskra hosts their ‘Ask Me Anything’ event. A few times per year, artists can come by with their idea, concept or project to get feedback from experienced professionals from the field. By doing this, Nova Iskra stimulates the young creators and the growth of the creative industry of Belgrade.

Another thing that makes Nova Iskra such a unique workspace, is their impressive network, which they call the creative hub. Serbian artists who have found worldwide success, are all part of the Nova Iskra family, and often collaborate on projects.

Different from any other company in Belgrade, is Nova Iskra’s openness for innovation and forward-thinking business. It is a company that genuinely wants to push Serbia and their industry forward, to get it to a point where other (more developed) cities have maybe been for years. All the different aspects together make one thing clear about Nova Iskra: it is all about going forward together.

This way of working together and helping each other out is typical for Belgrade and Serbia in general.

The interior design of Nova Iskra exists mainly out of furniture by Serbian designers; tables by Petokraka and lamps by Ana Kras
The Ones That Got Away

They left Belgrade for their education or work, but we wondered about their relationship with their hometown. Monocle asks the ones that got away about what they miss about Belgrade.

Ana Rajcevic
& Boba Stanic

Why did you leave Belgrade?
“I finished architecture in Belgrade and got the opportunity to do my masters in London, at the University of Arts. It was because I received an International MA scholarship, and I felt like I should grab this opportunity with open arms.”

What do you miss about home when you are in London or traveling elsewhere?
“Mostly, I miss the laid back vibe. London can be a lot more hectic, and in Belgrade people take their time to enjoy a moment with friends and they enjoy doing nothing.”

Why did you leave Belgrade?
“I left Belgrade to do my masters in Amsterdam. I was in a program where I was studying and working at the same time, so when I finished, I just kept working.”

One of the projects you are doing is based in Belgrade, isn’t it?
“Yes, that project is called ‘A Model For Savamala’. The Goethe-Insitut, a German instute which helps creatives in Belgrade, had a contest that revolved around the Savamala district. Savamala is such an up and coming district, that it’s getting all the attention. It is also quite unclear as a district, people often do not really know what Savamala is, where it begins and where it ends. We created a model for this area, to map out what Savamala is and what is happening.”

How did you do that?
“The proposal was a 3D model of the area. We wanted as many people as possible to participate, so we worked with people from the faculty of architecture and people from the area. It was hard to get people to participate, because they are mostly busy with their own lives and not interested in these things, but in the end it was a successful project. It is nice to see how Belgrade is rebuilding, and all these different people are working together.”

Is that something you miss about Belgrade?
“It is. Being together, helping each other out. But also the Kafana (the typical, Serbian cafe) with good food and great drinks.”
To end a perfect day, we have to return to where we started: the Savamala district. As we have mentioned before, a few of the best bars and restaurants are located in this vibrant area. Monocle has made a selection of the three finest places to enjoy a good drink and unwind.

Comunale is the perfect place for any kind of meeting. With a relatively broad menu of Italian food and wine, the people behind Comunale make it very easy for you to unwind and enjoy the sunset over the Sava river. This restaurant only serves the best and most fresh ingredients they can find, which turns a simple pizza into a work of art. When the weather is a bit under the weather, there are plenty of spots in the spacious but still inviting dining area.

Located in the Brankov bridge, BRANKOW was opened in 2011, but it is one of those clubs that simply keeps its spark. With a terrace overlooking the vibrant Savamala district, spending your summer night here is a guaranteed success. BRANKOW only invites the best DJ’s and musicians to play during its many events, which fit right into the flawless interior design that is done by Fluid:Architects, one of the best design companies in the city.

If you are more interested in a low key, intimate space to have some drinks and relax, you will probably prefer Prohibicija. This bar is open all day, but it is the perfect place to go in between your restaurant visit and your night out in a club. The combination of industrial design and interesting details turns this spot into a hangout where you would want to spend hours with your friends.