



## Domek restaurant in downtown Eugene hangs work from internationally known Serbian-American artist Vesna Pavlović

BY WILL KENNEDY

One day, not long ago, Vesna Pavlović, a photographer and Vanderbilt University associate professor of art, got a notification that someone she didn't know from Eugene, Oregon, had followed her on Instagram.

On her feed, Pavlović shares examples of her work, which has been shown at prestigious institutions all around the world, including a solo show at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., group exhibitions at the Metropolitan Arts Center in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and in the public collection at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, also in Washington. Pavlović's photograph *Krajina Hotel, Negotin* is in the collection at the National Gallery of Art.

Now, in part from that social media encounter, two of Pavlović's photographs called *Inside the Federal Executive Council Building, Belgrade, Serbia, 2003-2005*, hang at Domek, the recently opened Eastern European cuisine restaurant in downtown Eugene.

town Eugene.

On the other end of that Instagram follow was Domek's co-owner, Sarah Oliver, who was introduced to Pavlović's work through Sarah Finlay, who lives in Eugene but once owned Fusebox, an art gallery in Washington, D.C.

Finlay, friends with Oliver, linked to Pavlović through the art world, brokered the Domek deal, and has opened RecRoom, a small, high-end art gallery in her own home in south Eugene.

Pavlović was born in Serbia in southeastern Europe, a cultural and geographic connection to the food Oliver and her husband, and Domek co-owner, Chef Andrew Hroza's menu explores.

The two pieces on permanent display at Domek are from Pavlović's *Kolekcija* collection, photographed at the Palace of Federation, also known as the Palace of Serbia in New Belgrade, putting Pavlović's formalist lens on architecture with her eye for spaces humans inhabit.

Built in the 1950s, the Palace of Federation, a government building, stands today as a monument to Serbia's socialist past,

but also, divorced from politics, a time capsule for mid-century modern design. In Pavlović's work, the scenes are absent of people, but with the haunting sense they just left, a mood Pavlović's photographs often convey.

When introduced to Pavlović's work through Finlay, Oliver knew right away that the clean lines, geometric abstraction, and a restrained but warm color palette would supplement the restaurant's minimalist interior.

Most importantly, though, the Palace of Federation, as photographed by Pavlović, was a "place for the people, which is also how we look at Domek," Oliver says.

The pieces, Oliver tells *Eugene Weekly*, "speak to a certain time, and a certain place. And that's what we want to do," she says, with Domek's menu and aesthetic.

Oliver continues, "The thing about Vesna's pieces, and the thing that connects them to this restaurant, is that one of our main missions was, if you walk into Domek, you're instantly taken from out there, and you're here. Vesna's pieces also do that."

Pavlović, in a phone call from Nashville, where Vanderbilt is located, says that her larger *Kolekcija* collection, from which the pieces were chosen, compares and contrasts the Palace of Federation, which is also a landmark of socialism, with the Chase One Plaza in Manhattan, built by David Rockefeller, a titan of American-style capitalism.

In choosing those two photographs, Pavlović says Domek "wanted to engage with that narrative." Art can be a reminder of ways to "transcend struggle," she says. "And certainly we are in times of struggle."

Through facilitating artists finding space in Eugene, such as Pavlović, and in her RecRoom, gallerist Finlay hopes to provide more opportunities for mid-career and emerging artists like Pavlović to show

their work in Eugene. Finlay and Pavlović are in talks to host a show at RecRoom.

RecRoom's inaugural show, *The Beautiful Room is Empty*, runs through August 31. Presented alongside guest curator Steven Stewart, it's a sister show to a *Freight+Volume* gallery installation in New York, with the same artists presented in Eugene at a smaller scale. It focuses on abstract expressionism and features work from the Pacific Northwest, Los Angeles, New York and North Carolina.

Among them is Terry Haggerty, a University of Oregon art instructor who shows all over the world and works from a studio in Eugene. "I want people to know that these artists are here in the community," Finlay says.

With RecRoom, and in brokering art like Pavlović, Finlay says she wants to bring higher-end art to Eugene and put artists, whether based here or elsewhere, in dialogue with the community. "Set expectations a little higher," she says. "You can see a world-class artist here. You can have access to that."

Referring to the Pavlović photos at

Domek, she says it was Pavlović's interest in what she calls "non-places" or liminal space — in this case, beautifully designed but empty government offices — that made her think it was the perfect fit.

Finlay says, "I love the juxtaposition of these fascinating places, but devoid of people," contrasted, she says,

"with the scene in the restaurant, which is warm, with people talking and interacting."



Domek is at 454 Willamette Street. Hours are 5 pm to 11 pm Wednesday through Saturday. Make reservations at [DomekEugene.com](http://DomekEugene.com), or call 458-544-1312. RecRoom Gallery is at 4415 Hilyard Street. Hours are noon to 4 pm Sunday or by appointment. Go to [RecRoomEugene.com](mailto:RecRoomEugene.com) or email [Sarah@RecRoomEugene.com](mailto:Sarah@RecRoomEugene.com) for more information. For more information about Vesna Pavlović, go to [Vesna-Pavlovic.com](http://Vesna-Pavlovic.com) or search Vesna Pavlović on social media.

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