



OVER THE INFLUENCE
Darren Romanelli

Mushrooms in Paris
9 July to 20 August 2022



Darren Romanelli, *Not Alone in Our Dreams*, 2022, Mixed media with dyed fabric and embroidery on panel by Murmaid, 91 by 100 by 2.2 cm, 35 7/8 by 39 3/8 by 7/8 in, Photo courtesy of the Artist and Over the Influence.

Over the Influence is excited to announce the unveiling of a new Parisian gallery with a revolutionary exhibition titled *Mushrooms in Paris* created by the dynamic pairing of Darren Romanelli and Murmaid. The exhibition is a subversive “hijacking” of the art space during the summer months that invites viewers to experience creative expression in its most surreal and psychedelic forms.

Mushrooms in Paris, an exhibit born from the collaboration of Parisian designer Murmaid and Los Angeles-based creative multihyphenate DRx a.k.a. Darren Romanelli, is an ode to the ethereal wonders of the fungal kingdom.

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With only a finite amount of matter in this world, we create and we dispose—from waste follows creation. And the cycle continues. Decay breeds rebirth. Nothing ever goes anywhere; it just changes shape.

We see this in nature all the time—plants grow, animals eat them, and in the form of waste and decay, new life comes to be, replenishing the soil and the earth, continuing the cycle all over again. Positioned at the heart of this cycle of life are fungi, which grow from mycelial networks beneath the ground. This network of spores and threads, from which mushrooms grow, acts as nature's internet, transferring nutrients among plantlife and helping living organisms to correspond with each other. Through chemical signaling, mycelium are able to carry vital messages, such as about disease or other threats, that aid in survival of plants and other life forms.

Indeed, the magic of mushrooms (and the mycelium that spawn them) doesn't only make the natural world go round, but also sparks healing and wellness in our own bodies: In the form of psilocybin, for instance, this powerful psychedelic compound can stimulate neurogenesis—the creation of new brain cells; in the form of non-psychoactive varieties like lion's mane or reishi, these fungi can optimize the function of our nervous systems and reduce inflammation; and in the form of varieties like amanitas, they can poison us. And the world goes round.

We see the regenerative life cycle reflected everywhere, not only in nature, but even in our daily urban lives—the cycle of resurrection present even in the furniture we use, or the clothes we wear. In a stylish ode to this cycle and to the inspiring magic of the fungal kingdom, comes an exhibit like never before: *Mushrooms in Paris*, the brainchild of creators DRx and Murmaid, gives new life and new purpose to recycled textiles, offering a fresh spin on sustainability in the world of fashion. From the old comes something new.

The project began during the pandemic, a collaboration between Paris-based designer Murmaid—whose focus includes upcycling and channeling sustainable practices into fashion—and DRx, a Los Angeles-based creative multi-hyphenate, instrumental in bridging the gap between art, culture, and commerce in joint efforts among everyone from Fortune 100 companies to museum level artists.

"Our goal is to help lessen the waste in the fashion industry," says DRx, who himself has been "upcycling since day one" for more than two decades now. "I've always had an affinity for taking something old and bringing it back to life."

The thrust of the work took place in Murmaid's female-driven atelier in the heart of Paris, where, as the project's creative director, she turned old jeans, zippers, hoodies, buttons, and other

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warehouse throw-aways into fresh new items—quilted coats, capes, fabric displays, lounge furniture, and more. "We were adamant, we don't want to add extra waste into the fashion industry," says DRx. "We want to work on lessening what's happening out there."



Darren Romanelli, *Weaving Chair 2*, 2022, Braided found textiles on cotton canvas on foam chair by Murmaid, 78.7 x 99.1 x 104.1 cm, 31 x 39 x 41 in. Photo courtesy of the artist and OTI Gallery.



Darren Romanelli, *Mushroom 4*, 2022, Recycled textiles and wool/acrylic yarns by Murmaid 48 x 40 cm, 18 7/8 x 15 3/4 in. Photo courtesy of the artist and OTI Gallery.

Waste is widespread in fashion. The industry produces an estimated 92 million tons of textile waste every year, and that amount is projected to increase by 60 percent between 2015 and 2030. Why the waste? Manufacturers and retailers overproduce, failing to sell a solid 30 percent of the clothes they make. What's more, with fashion designers aiming to keep up with the fast pace of trends and market turnover, they're churning out new styles as quickly as possible to

keep consumers coming back more frequently to stay on top of the newest, hottest trends—only to discard the items as quickly. According to the nonprofit Fashion Revolution, which advocates for accountability in the fashion industry, twice as many garments are made now as there were at

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the turn of the millennium more than 20 years ago. Often fashion waste gets burned, adding toxicity to the planet.

And yet, by leaning into vintage as a trend unto itself, there's an opportunity for regeneration and reclamation, rather than creating more debris. Old trends from decades past come back to life, resurrected from the dead in a cycle of discard and reuse.

Mushrooms in Paris exhibits this rhythm of upcycling to a tee, while reflecting and mimicking the order of the natural world and the role of fungi in the circle of life. "I think I saw a lot of similarities with things dying in the forest or fungi growing from these older growths," says DRx, whose project includes reworking old materials and scraps into fresh weavings, one-of-a-kind fashion items consisting of a quilted collage.

The aesthetic inherent in DRx and Murmaid's creations is a nod to the ritualistic side of mushrooms too, an homage to their role in spirituality, healing, shamanism, and the interconnectedness of all things on earth (and in the case of psychedelic mushrooms, even in amongst the cosmos).

Through the use of earthy colors, blended with psychedelic hues that pop, the exhibit blends visual elements from both mundane and ethereal realms in a composition that conveys the noetic truth that there's unity even in things that seem disparate—in a cycle of regeneration and reuse, life becomes death and death becomes life, it's all one and the same trip. Indeed, this is the message of the mushrooms—and the visual component of this concept is found in DRx and Murmaid's creations, themselves. The shaman cape, for instance, piques curiosity about the ritual use of medicinal or magic mushrooms, and the lessons contained within them. And the threading that binds separate pieces of fabric together stands in for the threads of mycelium bringing together different parts of the natural world.

With the work of DRx and Murmaid accompanied by the music of singer-songwriter and producer James Faunterloy—who's worked on tracks with those like Chris Brown and Rihanna, to name a few—the soundscapes add a cosmic, ethereal dimension complementing the mundane, earthy aspects to the mushroom motif. There's something alien about it all, and at the

same time, the fungal theme reminds us that we need not leave this very realm on earth to experience an otherworldly trip full of wonder, magic, and inspiration.

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Perusing the exhibit, we invite you to take a journey—set to Fauntleroy's meditative, analog and instrumental melodies, that help transport us into a world where our assumptions are turned inside out: Threads, colors, and patterns, all with a gnomey flair, transform the old into new, as we consider the relationship between two seemingly different worlds of fashion and fungi, and why the theme of sustainability conjoins them both. *Mushrooms in Paris* isn't the only project bringing environmental awareness into what we wear; conscious consumers more than ever are re-evaluating not only what we put in our bodies, but also on our bodies, exploring everything from upcycling old textiles to using compostable materials like pineapple rinds and recyclable items to to piece together a work of art that is as practical as it is innovative.

Through today's psychedelic renaissance, we are undergoing a paradigm shift, and a revolution of thought consciousness, examining the systems that govern the most basic parts of existence—our food, our medicine, our clothing, and the cycles defining their existence—and through art, we're able to imagine and engage with a better world. One that values connection, sustainability, creativity—and which honors the key components at the center of it all. In this case... mushrooms.

Text by Madison Margolin, journalist & cofounder of DoubleBlind Magazine

About Darren Romanelli

Darren Romanelli is a Los Angeles-based creative multi-hyphenate. Over the last twenty years, Romanelli has been instrumental in bridging the gap between art, culture, and commerce in ways that have revolutionized how artists and brands collaborate to create moments that inspire on a global scale.

Unique in his positioning at these intersections of culture, Romanelli has expertly navigated collaborations between Fortune 100 companies and museum-level artists, amplifying each project to leave the whole much greater than the sum of its parts. Applying his core philosophy of upcycling to everything from fashion to watches to furniture and many other products, Romanelli has created unique one-of-a-kind hybrid creations that make an unforgettable visual impact on pop culture.

Recent shows include *Dog Days* at The Pit Palm Springs and *Built In* at the Neutra VDL House (2021) California, USA and *Mickey's birthday* at Parco Museum Tokyo (2021) in Tokyo, Japan. The artist's work is featured at Gagolian in collaboration with Richard Prince's Katz + Dogg brand (2022). Past exhibitions include a Levis installation at the MOCA Geffen in Los Angeles, a collaboration with artist Madsaki at the D museum in Seoul and a collective work with Neighborhood SRL, CRamics and Avant Arte for *Cactus Man Vessel*.

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Partners and collaborators include Kendrick Lamar, Janis Joplin Estate, Big Boi, Colette Paris, Maxfield, LNCC , GR8, Wilco, Jaeger-LeCoultre, Girard-Perregaux, Danny Brown & Carhartt, Adidas, Nike, Converse, Mickey, Rams, Neighborhood, Sophnet, Grateful Dead, Head Porter, Medicom, Coke, Modernica.

About Murmaid

Murmaid is a Paris-based artist and designer whose work focuses on up-cycling and channeling sustainable practices in fashion. After growing up between Brazil and the United States, Murmaid moved to Paris where she attended Parsons The New School of Design and developed her unique artistic universe. While in Paris, passionate about ethical fashion and sustainability, she started deconstructing vintage clothes and giving them another life.

She graduated with a BFA in 2020 and soon after she started a continuous conversation with DRx where multiple ideas and visions were developed. Several collaborations using vintage deadstock and fabrics have happened afterwards and the dialogue is continuing to grow into more mediums and spaces.

Her vision is the dream of a possible waste-free fashion industry, where artists and creatives express themselves through existing materials without following the pace of consumerism and material culture.

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