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# In Conversation with Murmure

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**In their latest show now open at Galerie LJ in Paris, French street art duo Murmure uses black garbage bags as a medium to illustrate waste's impact on the environment. Garbage birds flying south, an oil rig in an inky sea, and a trashbag lovers' embrace are just a few of the powerful images forwarning a threatening dark future. We spoke to Murmure ahead of the show and learned more about their project as they traverse Europe, from Vladivostok and Rotterdam, and back to Paris.**

**Sasha Bogojev: What draws you to almost exclusively black and white imagery?**

*Murmure:* For this project, the main idea was to play with the colors of a regular black garbage bag as much as possible. Not only for dramatic appeal, but also for the depth of shades and, somehow, the elegance of its texture and reaction to light. That's why we use graphite pencil, to achieve this texture. Black and white drawings allow, in a way, going straight to the point, to focus on the drawing for what it is, without any artifice. We use tiny touches of color—mostly red—as the red 'thread' of the garbage bag's handle and a narrative 'thread' (it's a word game in French, "le fil rouge", literally translated as "red thread." In English, it's an expression that means "general subject matter").

**How do you feel about your work being compared to names like Banksy and Pejac, to name a couple?**

Well, it is flattering, for sure. We do not wish to do street art just to bring illustration or graphics to the street. We want to work on subjects that matter to us, to bring something personal and share our vision, as artists, of the world around us. In that sense, we like the work of artists such as Banksy or Pejac, but also many others, such as Ernest Pignon-Ernest.

**What type of work have you prepared for this presentation and what techniques are employed?**

We are showcasing a year of work on the subject Garbage, which we spell "*Garb-age*," as in, the rise of a new era. For this exhibition, we present this theme in its full extent, from nature and its various elements, to man, flora and fauna. We made about 20 drawings on paper, ranging from medium size (50 x 70 cm for the smallest) to large scale (up to 210 x 270 cm for *Mauvaises Graines/Bad Seeds*, or 135 x 210 cm for *Garbage Whale Tail*). The main medium used is a graphite pencil on paper, a bit of colored pencil and acrylic painting for the touches of color. The whole idea of this show is to warn of the current state of our planet, due to a dramatic spiral of over-consumerism. The garbage bags become birds, whale or oil spills, all symbols of a planet reaching an era of unreason.

**Did you create an installation for the exhibition, or simply introduce the studio works in a "white cube" space?**

The exhibition at Galerie LJ showcases studio work but also highlights work made for the street. We present life-size drawings so visitors can understand the link between our vision of studio work and street art. We are also giving away a newspaper we made as a catalog for each work in *Garb-age*, showing all the means of expression used this past year (studio, paste-ups, murals and screen prints). This publication, like a fanzine, was made with recycled paper and is a statement for action on this ecological emergency.

**What emotions do you hope to evoke from the viewer?**

The main goal of this exhibition is to show how art, and how street art can be singular, meaningful, and personal. We hope visitors will appreciate the technique used, but also the poetry and elegance we attempt to convey through pictures and narratives. To us, *Garb-age* is a meaningful project that allows us to raise awareness of important environmental issues. We hope visitors understand our message, but again, everyone is free to interpret our work the way they see it. Some of the work can be "shocking" at first sight, but each is, in our opinion, a powerful image reflecting the choices everyone faces daily, between our knowledge of the issues at stake and what we can do about them but don't. We would love it if visitors could pass this first impression and understand there's hope behind every picture created.

*Murmure's Garb-age is on view at Galerie LJ through April 18, 2020.*