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Candice and Darren Romanelli Celebrate Their Wedding Anniversary with Friedman Benda Gallery Show

The couple's fourth artistic collaboration toasted to their own relationship milestone with a site-specific gallery installation in Los Angeles representing their lives at home together during lockdown and new explorations in their respective practices.

By Liza Mullett
Photography by Joshua White/JWPictures
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A first wedding anniversary is symbolized by paper, the second cotton—and typically, 15 years of marriage is celebrated with crystal. Husband-and-wife artists Candice and Darren Romanelli, however, are honoring their 15th anniversary a little differently: with a gallery show dedicated to their creative collaboration. On the evening of August 11 at Friedman Benda's Los Angeles outpost, the Romanellis toasted their marital milestone and the opening of "Wedding Anniversary," the gallery's first solo exhibition of the work of the two artists.

On view through August 27, "Wedding Anniversary" is the Romanellis' fourth collaboration and an examination of the couple's creative expression during the

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pandemic. Forced to convert their Los Feliz home into a shared studio space during the days of lockdown, ceramicist Candice and multidisciplinary artist Darren found their artistic practices expanding into new territory. “The exhibition is a natural extension of our world,” Darren explains of the site-specific installation, which displays his exploration of quilting and upcycled seating and Candice’s largest scale works to date to create a domestic-inspired setting within the gallery. “It feels really organic and authentic to our daily life.”



Candice and Darren Romanelli in "Wedding Anniversary" at Friedman Benda in Los Angeles. All photography courtesy of Friedman Benda and the artists.

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True to the intimate authenticity of “Wedding Anniversary,” the opening was a gathering of friends and artistic allies, aligned with Darren’s penchant for blending universes as a means of creation. Guests included fellow artists Sayre Gomez, Austyn Weiner, Alake Shilling and Caitlin Lonegan, as well as fashion creative KB Lee, curator Danielle Shang and *Cultured* editor-in-chief and founder Sarah Harrelson. Friedman Benda’s Thorsten Albertz, Marc Benda, Jennifer Olshin and Kate Vogel also joined the festivities.

Chef—and friend—Jess Damuck, along with producer Benny Blanco, aligned the menu and staging with the look and feel of Candice’s quilt-inspired ceramic plates and bowls, serving fresh summer dishes like watermelon salad with plums, shiso and Japanese chili. The meal was at once innovative and inviting: pizzas by Lupa Cotta were also on offer, topped with fennel and sausage or, for the more daring diner, peaches and cream. The wine list was curated by Helen’s Wines, the natural wine project by Helen Johannesen of local favorite restaurant Jon & Vinny’s.



Benny Blanco and Jess Damuck.

The gathering was an evening months in the making—the menu and atmosphere were a collaboration between the Romanellis, Damuck and Blanco. With sounds flowing from Syng speakers, custom Maya Yogev candles (in holders by Candice, of course) emitting both scent and light and Damuck’s warm and playful fare, every last detail of the

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evening ensured that the wedding anniversary/"Wedding Anniversary" opening was an invitation to all five senses.



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