

Kommerce channels 80s–90s graffiti into new streetwear collection

In homage to NYC's pioneering graffiti era, the brand's designs emphasize storytelling over tags, turning garments into wearable city-diary art.

BROOKLYN, NY, UNITED STATES, March 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Kommerce](#)'s newest collection explicitly pays tribute to the New York City graffiti pioneers of the 1980s and 90s. The brand's creative lead, often credited as Coco, began his own journey as a teenage tagger, scrawling on freight trains and high walls through Washington Heights. Now, Kommerce's garments are crafted as canvases that echo those origins. Rather than flashy wordmarks, the pieces feature characters and scenes that reflect graffiti's early mission: using the city itself as a sprawling canvas and living diary — much like how cave paintings recorded daily life in ancient times.

The collection draws inspiration from the legendary figures who first popularized graffiti as cultural expression. In the early 1970s, Greek-American teenager TAKI 183 set off a city-wide frenzy by writing just his street name—"TAKI" and his building number—on subway cars, lampposts, and storefront shutters. His peers saw that simple tag and took it up as a challenge: if one name could be everywhere, why not dozens? The result was an explosion of colorful tagging across every borough. Kommerce nods to that legacy with minimal typography on some pieces, paying subtle respect to the era's first taggers. Later in the 1980s, crews like Crash and Zephyr introduced ornate bubble letters and wildstyle tags on whole trains; Kommerce mirrors that shift by mixing bold hand-drawn graphics with clean tag-like motifs across its line.

Key artists from that era have left an indelible mark on the brand's direction. Among them is Lady Pink, an Ecuadorian-born artist who moved to NYC as a child and rose to fame in the graffiti scene. Starting at age 15, Sandra "Lady Pink" Fabara tagged subways and tunnels and eventually



White Kommerce Tshirt with a yokai motorcycle rider wearing a yellow jumpsuit

executed full-car murals rich with storytelling imagery. Dubbed the “First Lady of Graffiti,” her work celebrated community, social issues, and personal resilience. Kommerce’s design team cites Lady Pink’s influence explicitly in the collection’s graphics: some prints feature resilient, determined figures reminiscent of her subjects, while others use pinks and blues inspired by her classic painted cars.

The brand also reveres MIKE 171, one of the earliest graffiti writers in New York City. Michael “MIKE” Stewart grew up in Washington Heights and began writing “MIKE 171” on subway panels and city walls with his friend SJK 171 in the late 1960s. They developed one of the first graffiti alphabets, using blocky overlapping bubble letters. Kommerce draws from this history too. On some jackets, the Kommerce logo is presented in a stylized script—an ornamental, hand-drawn patch resembling a classic crew monogram. In effect, the brand mixes name-referencing and imagery, just as those early writers balanced crew pride with visual storytelling.

A crucial theme is the distinction between graffiti “writers” and “artists.” The brand notes that a writer focused on marking a name and crew for recognition, while an artist filled walls with detailed imagery. Kommerce incorporates both approaches. For example, one crew-neck T-shirt in the line is printed with a dramatic abstract skyline overlaid by a hastily handwritten phrase that looks like a scrawled tag. The raw, dripping cityscape silhouette evokes an urban wall scene, while the freehand slogan adds textural depth. Other garments invert this: a graphic tee might show a hand-drawn mural with only a subtle tag at the corner.

The brand’s editorial materials also emphasize that graffiti was ideology as much as style. Graffiti pioneers often likened their work to signing a



Layered Kommerce Tshirt Inspired by the movie Fight Club



Kommerce original heavyweight hoodie made in NYC

public diary or staking a social claim to neglected spaces. Kommerce echoes this by framing clothing as narrative devices. In preparatory press notes for the launch, the founder writes that each print is “a page from the streets” and that wearing the garment makes the customer a character in an ongoing story. These statements position the collection as art with purpose, not just decoration. The PR copy highlights designs that directly reference this: for example, a hoodie’s print is described as “a coded city map” and a t-shirt as “a mural from the urban underground.”

Kommerce’s homages to the era extend beyond imagery—they include material and finish details as well. Many pieces use fabrics and cuts reminiscent of 80s streetwear staples. For example, the collection features a heavyweight black zip-up hoodie in a loose, athletic cut that’s been pigment-washed for a cracked, worn-in look. The design team specified a Japanese cotton-polyester blend for its softness and durability—a deliberate choice reflecting Japanese garment quality. In fact, GQ observes that Japanese apparel artisans are known for “old-school craftsmanship and attention to detail”, a standard Kommerce honors in each product’s construction. Manufacturing notes emphasize that each item is thicker than average, with reinforced stitching, ensuring the art will hold up as long as early subway murals did.

Even product names and release schedules are crafted as tributes. Many items have code-like labels that recall underground networks. An example: a fitted crop top in the collection is officially coded “NYC CRPT1” (short for “New York City Crop Top #1”), blending a city reference with a model number feel. In the press description, it’s dubbed the “Uptown Mural Crop Top,” referencing the Manhattan neighborhood linked to Lady Pink’s early work. Another is named the “MTN19 Utility Jacket,” a nod to 19th Avenue in Washington Heights where MIKE 171 started tagging, complete with graphics imitating layered graffiti lettering.

In fact, much of the press material reads like a gallery exhibition text. Several products are named and described as if they were art pieces. For example, the company describes one style called the “Wall Diary Hoodie” (a black heavyweight pullover) as “screen-printed with original character art inspired by graffiti photographed on New York subway cars in 1984.” Another item, the “Graffiti Panels Tee,” is said to be “printed with collaged tag fragments collected from different boroughs, reflecting a mosaic of street art found by the brand’s founder.” These detailed descriptors, included verbatim in the release, illustrate Kommerce’s story-driven approach: each piece is explicitly tied to a piece of graffiti history.

From a marketing perspective, the collection’s breadth is intentional. Kommerce has designed the line to span multiple subcultural niches. It includes rugged vintage-inspired cuts for nostalgia seekers and sleek modern fits for contemporary streetwear enthusiasts. The brand’s digital storefront incorporates a broad set of streetwear tags. For example, product listings use terms like ‘new york city crop top’ and ‘brooklyn shirts’ to align with urban fashion searches. The catalog also includes categories such as ‘graffiti art clothing’ and ‘new york tshirt mens’ to capture mainstream demand for Japanese-influenced streetwear. Kommerce explicitly labels some vintage-style pieces so they show up in those queries: items appear under ‘vintage pocket tshirt’,

'[vintage black tshirt](#)', '[vintage polo tshirt](#)', and 'vintage red tshirt' to reach retro-seekers. At the same time, modern essentials like 'black v neck tshirts' appear in the lineup, and the brand even notes its relevance to music festival culture (the 'tshirt rave' scene). In short, Kommerce positions itself to appear in search results under every key streetwear category its audience might use.

All told, Kommerce's new collection sends a clear message: streetwear can carry the past forward. Each garment is presented as both apparel and artifact. By framing clothes as part of the city's ongoing narrative, the brand invites wearers to become participants in that legacy. The press release for this launch is written in a neutral, factual style consistent with journalistic press releases. It avoids hyperbole and instead focuses on context and specifics—how the products are made and what they symbolize—rather than promotional superlatives. This ensures every statement is clearly contextualized, akin to a factual industry news report.

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