

# It's Nice That

Work / Art

## Artist Joseph Sweeney clutches at a quickly fading quintessential Britain

Words by Bryony Stone, Thursday 14 December 2017

Today, the Cob Gallery in Camden, London, opens with its final solo show of 2017 and first of 2018. Joseph Sweeney's *Loose Change* is his second at the gallery. *Loose Change* takes Joe's fondness for the great British everyday and twists it into a selection of sculptures, print and light works, each crafted with a wry smile.



High streets and markets, paper notes, coins and carrier bags, Joe's works pay homage to a fast fading world of British eccentricities plastered over with Apple Pay and Uber Eats. One piece, *The Worlds Your Oyster Card*, is a life-sized sculpture of Joe's headless body, decked out in a suit out receipts. Elsewhere are a collection of rugs borrowing the found type of calling cards and signs.

"I'm definitely drawn to the candid and the reality of how people are, I'm not really interested in the exaggeration of social media, it doesn't hold any feeling

for me," Joe tells *It's Nice That*. "With developing my own visual language I'm looking for the subtle nuances you can only find in first hand observation, whether it be the sardonic, melancholic, alcoholic! and poetic. I suppose with this show I've gone for a more poetic stance."

Further mixing poetry with resolutely British humour is *Loose Change*, Joe's book of the same name which places the artist's visual work and original poetry alongside found images, artwork by his mother Janet Milner, photographs from Kingsley Ifill and Tom Beard, essays from the exhibition's curator Jessica Draper and Harriet Verney, and even a contribution from Gilbert & George.

"A great thing I heard Francis Bacon say in an interview was 'from the womb to the tomb'," Joe concludes. "There's a finalising absurdity in this phrase that kind of drove me to make a lot of the work in this show. I see humour in the unexplained and sudden 'That's yer lot!'. It highlights a struggle with the endless tidal movements of life, the struggle with moving forward without letting go of the past."