

HERO

HERO X HATE

Market trading with London artist Joe Sweeney

TEXT LUISA LE VOGUER COUYET • 2ND SEPTEMBER 2016

We first introduced you to HERO x Hate – our collaboration with Hate zine founders Luisa Le Voguer Couyet and photographer Scarlett Carlos Clarke – through a profile on artist Tim Noble, where he discussed sex, death, and everything in between.

Today, our collaborative series continues with London-based artist Joe Sweeney taking centre-stage ahead of his latest exhibition, *Quality Produce*.

Perceptive, astute, appreciative of the things you may overlook; car boot sales, markets, cheap products, a sense of what it means to be British, artist Joe Sweeney is about to open the doors to *Quality Produce* – a month long pop-up bar-come-immersive installation in Dalston undertaken with artist and friend Byron Pritchard that began with the desire to explore the nature of market goods, the description of which often far outweighed the actual products.

It's this unique ability to view the mundane and translate it into humorous, intelligent and colourful works of art that sets Sweeney apart from the crowd. At only 25 years-old, Sweeney is has already made his mark, having shown his debut solo show at

the Cob Gallery Take Away in March this year, he and photographer Grace Pickering also began *Don't Get Culty*, an online platform for artists to showcase their practice.



Photo courtesy of Scarlett Carlos Clarke

Here, interviewed and photographed by Luisa and Scarlett exclusively for HERO, Sweeney gives us the lowdown on his new exhibition, *Quality Produce*.

Luisa Le Voguer Couyet: Are you influenced by living in Brixton, South London? Do you notice the area changing, and what does this mean for you?

Joe Sweeney: I've always lived near busy highroads as I'm from Kilburn. But there's something more community driven about Brixton, it's a bit of a London stronghold in that sense. I love people watching and I couldn't think of a better place to observe. It is changing in an almost unstoppable

fashion. But I suppose that's what happens when one company, such as Network Rail, owns a large majority of the spaces. It means that something so detached from the local community has a really big say in how the community should be run.

LLVC: Some of your work encompasses food, pop culture references and embodies a cheap or kitsch aesthetic, can you explain what draws you to these themes?

JS: I use a lot of my personal nostalgia to engage with what's going on now. I think that's why I like using over saturated, bright colours. And as for food, I think it describes people and their habits. So it's quite a good way to explore characteristics, idiosyncrasies and interaction.

LLVC: Food is incorporated into your work, both representations and real food, what is your favourite food to eat, and what is the best food to work with?

JS: I like fruit and veg, really. Maybe it's mostly it's presentation. Nature versus human interaction. I've been working in Dalston a lot recently so I've really got into having a daily Turkish. Salad, meat, wrap...balanced diet?

LLVC: Your studio is in the basement of your house, how do you manage a functional work ethic, and do you have any tips for others who work where they live?

JS: It varies to be honest. Some days I'm really at odds with it, travelling somewhere helps you to think and detach yourself. It's important to be working on multiple projects such as Quality Produce or Don't Get Culty so you don't lose momentum.

LLVC: What challenges do young artists face today, especially those living in London?

JS: Studio space, everything has been turned into desk space. And redevelopment has eaten up most of the big old buildings in Bermondsey and Hackney. If I didn't have my space at home I don't know how I'd do it, because I work in quite a large way. There's also a big sense of time slipping through your hands in London, which could be off putting in terms of dedicating a lot of time and money to your practice.

LLVC: What is Don't Get Culty all about?

JS: It's a web-based platform for creative projects. Me and Grace Pickering wanted to make something that showcased people's projects and their experiences whilst doing them.

LLVC: You just started a pop up bar – Quality Produce – with artist Byron Pritchard, what is the premise behind it?

JS: We started with a space in Dalston, and based an idea around Ridley Road market. I've always been drawn to markets as a starting point. The space changed but we evolved the idea. We got really interested in the idea of liberal use of the adjectives like 'royal,' 'luxury,' 'quality' on processed products that were far from it. The reality and the fantasy of these descriptions. Making something that's artificial seem quite human. It's a very contemporary comment on advertising and over saturation. We've made an immersive and surreal space with sculpture, furniture, image and lighting, all drawn from market ephemera such as cardboard boxes, meat and packaging. It opens this friday for a month.

LLVC: What work are you most proud of?

JS: Some really simple latex covered plastic bags, they're really slapstick, they just do it for me. Quick things are often the best.

LLVC: What do you hate, and why?

JS: The Sun, The Mirror, The Daily Express...need I say more.