



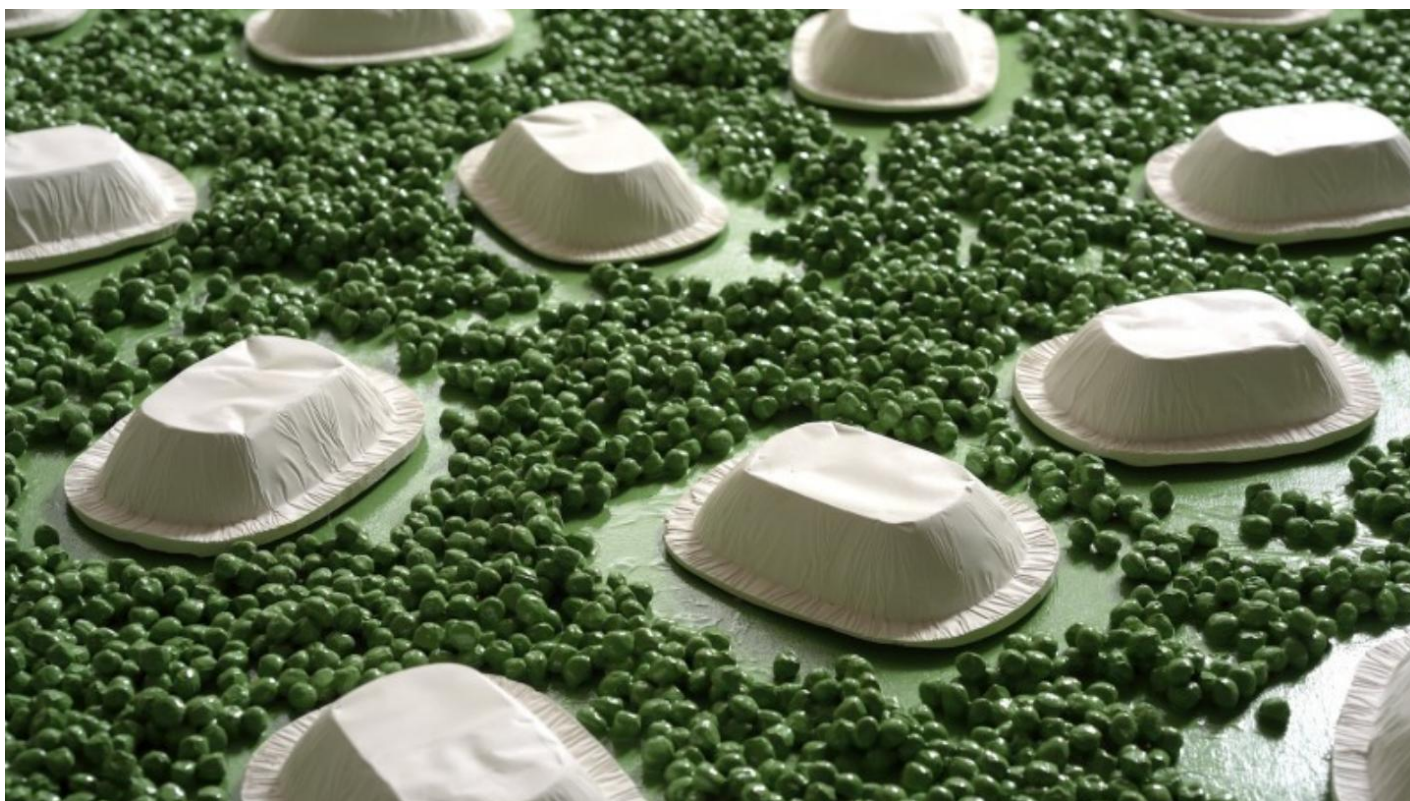
ART

talking trash with young london artist joe sweeney

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As the doors to his first solo show open tomorrow, curator Jessica Draper catches up with the artist who's turning trash into high art.

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Take Away is the first solo show from young London artist, Joe Sweeney. Drawn from Sweeney's impression of his home in Brixton, the exhibition displays the everyday happenings, disruptions and dialogues that are both familiar and strange within the ever-changing neighbourhood. Turning transient ephemera - pie boxes, milk cartons, chicken bones and laundry bags - into bold, sculptural and sometimes shiny statements, Sweeney acts as a sort of archeologist of the present.

Having curated the show alongside the artist, we wanted Sweeney's first solo show to be an immersive experience, as if drawing the viewer into the heart of the market scene. In doing so we wanted to question its value systems, and therefore create a parody of the art market itself. In the words of British artist, Henry Hudson, "Some of the best art work is made from junk...Joe Sweeney takes his chalice and dips it in the colon of Britain's large intestine - the gutter."



Tell me about the themes you explore in your work

Honestly, it's a show born out of my love of people watching. A lot of what I have made is inspired by snippets or conversation and interaction in a busy place. A lot of sculptural interpretations of everyday objects in the show take on quite a human persona, in that kind of 'all dogs end up looking like their owners' way. The title "Take Away", in a sense, comes from the way the work comes from something gestural or spoken and has been transformed into something sculptural.

Why do you find rubbish a useful medium for your work?

I live on a main road in Brixton, it's hard not to get a runaway plastic bag blown in your face when you leave the house! Maybe I've just summed it up, quite slapstick really isn't it? Fried chicken bones for example, leading me like a trail of breadcrumbs down to the station, are the remains of someone's journey, they're from a living thing yet they're rubbish, there's something very true about life in that but I can't quite formulate it. But they're also very sculptural and maybe in 500 years time they'll be prized in an archaeological dig.



Why is the market so inspiring to you?

It's a very busy, loud and over saturated place, it's very human. But it's the kind of space where things stand still, aesthetically. Unlike supermarkets which are a clean/solitary place for an 'in/out' job. You won't catch me in the Sainsbury's café that's for sure, although it might be a good place to do some eavesdropping in.

Why has London/ Brixton been so inspiring to you?

It's where I'm from, Kilburn to be precise. It's got a big highroad but not much going on. I moved to Brixton 5 years I was just in awe of the repetition of everything in the market, so much colour, so much interaction, the pattern of shops goes like this MEAT FISH VEG MEAT FISH VEG MEAT FISH VEG, I suppose that repetition is reflected in some of my pieces in the show.



There is a kind of nostalgia for the present in your work, is that accurate? Are you more interested in the future or past?

I'm obviously fascinated and kept awake at night by the future. What will become of me etc! But I must say I've always felt like I was born in the wrong era, I would've loved to have been this age in the late 70's/early 80's. My dad's always said how great it was. I have massive soft spot for *Carry On* films, they're really low budget; so camp and corny, the gags and play on words are 24carat gold. There's something about making things from not much which makes you think outside the box and use your natural talent/intuition, it's honest. Nowadays we just have access to everything but I'm not saying that's necessarily a bad thing.

Tell me about your favorite piece in the show.

same time quite monolithic and morbid. It resonates with the jaded space of the market.

Where do you get the inspiration for your titles?

I don't title all of my work, well not right now anyway, it's quite final and I'm just getting started! But for the ones I do it's the bits of conversation I associate them with.



Your choice of materials is often food-based, why do you think this is a significant material for your artwork?

I think that's quite a current thing for me, food is funny and how humans act around food is even funnier, it reveals a lot about a person. We're all just animals with our bags for life really!

Which artists have you been most inspired by?

Francis Bacon, I'm not sure if it's him or his work I'm drawn to more, they are so true to one another. And Martin Parr, he really celebrates that 'put up and shut up' quality about life. I've got this wonderful book on his seaside postcard collection. A highly coloured photo of people eating chips by a bin whilst a seagull waits for the leftovers, the circle of life, what's not to love!

Take Away opens tomorrow at London's Cob Gallery, curated by Jessica Draper and Alexander Glover

Credits
