

JULES DE BALINCOURT

Bushwick's Picasso.

BY GABRIELLE LANGHOLTZ



Critics say artist Jules de Balincourt's candy-colored takes on Americana simultaneously critique and embrace our superpower culture, and collectors are snapping up his works at six-figure prices. Of his 2007 show, "Unknowing Man's Nature," the Times noted: "Mr. de Balincourt's stenciled slogans exhort us to 'think globally and act locally,'" a sentiment he expresses in his art, and a practice he incorporates into his own life. Between exhibiting at the Armory Show, Arndt and Partner (Germany), Thaddeus Ropac (Paris) and Zach Feuer in Manhattan, de Balincourt founded Starr Space near his home in Bushwick, which opens its doors to the community to make music, practice yoga, host local church parties and hold film screenings. We stopped in to see what, other than media, he's eating up.

I own the building, I bought it two years ago. I also own another building down the street, Starr Space. I call it my rec center. We host performances, movies, yoga, figure drawing, Mexican church

parties. It's a mix of artsy hipsters and Mexican families. It's important to me that it's not only hipster artsy fartsy.

There are only two places to eat out in the neighborhood: Northeast Kingdom or the Mexican Tortillaria—real mission-style Mexican food, which is hard to find on the East Coast. I always end up living in the Mexican neighborhoods, probably for financial reasons. In Oakland I lived in Fruitville, in San Fran I lived in the Mission. That's definitely influenced my eating habits—I end up not cooking Mexican because it's available all around me.

I grew up in France and California. Both my parents were great simple European cooks and we had great home-cooked meals every night. I'm a product of the collision of the hippie-juicing-macrobiotic thing with the salami-cheese thing.

Food is a big part of my life but I'm so busy, I don't really have time to go to the grocery store. I love Angel's—a little Italian market on Knickerbocker Park, right around the corner. It has really good sopressata and imported Italian olives. I'm really into juicing so I get a lot of beets, carrots, oranges, celery and ginger. I may not always eat the best but I always try to get at least one juicing in a day.

For some reason I surround myself with ex-girlfriends. Sometimes Stacey cooks or Jane cooks, we're all friends. I sort of have this Californian commune mentality. I used to live in Oakland with 13 other people where once a week we each made a meal for 14. We each had \$70 a month to spend. I'd like to start that up here in the neighborhood. A lot of people from the neighborhood come here a couple times a week. We mostly eat salads and pastas, rice, fish, squash, not garnished with much, simple and pure. I really don't like cooking meat, although I make the best burgers—that's

Photographs: Erin Gleeson



the extent of my meat cooking. I try to eat organic as much as possible but sometimes the neighborhood options are pretty limited.

Sometimes I wish there was a supplemental pill for food. It's a horrible thing to say but sometimes I just don't have time, I'm running around doing the "important" things. It's the sad truth that no one in New York has time to cook at home, but my friends are trying to reinvigorate that. Food can be one of those few communal bonding social moments in New York when you aren't just running around in this perpetual rat race. It's important to do the "less productive" things, so-called trivial things like eating and cooking. The New York phenomenon is that everything looks great, all the right appliances, but what do people cook? A Pop-Tart in the toaster.

Ginger and Garlic

Ginger is a critical component to the juicing. The garlic is more for cooking, but I want to get more into strictly salad juice, strictly greens.

Anchovies

I'm not really a big anchovy person but my Italian friend Flavia taught me how to make a really good puttanesca. My anchovies are next to miso and Jewish rye bread—it's like the United Nations in here.

Mugs

I made these a long time ago, like, 10 years ago. Here's a KFC mug.

Skillet

This is my favorite little pan. It gets a lot of use—huevos rancheros, omelettes.

Herbs

I grew this rosemary and sage on my roof garden last summer. I like making ratatouille or chili. It's either the southwest of France or the southwest of America. Bay leaves for chili, thyme is for burgers or fish, rosemary for Provençal chicken.

Beets

I love them every way. Juiced, steamed, belched—belched? What's that called when you drop them in boiling water?

Bonito Flakes

These enhance miso soup. I'm not sure I'm really gifted at making miso.

Sea Vegetables

These are for miso too. I love Japanese food. My pantry is a mix of Asian, French-Italian and Californian.

Goji Berries

I just pop 'em in my mouth. I just had 'em yesterday for the first time. It's like sweetened bird food.

Kitchen

I made and designed my whole kitchen. It's the power triangle, a very utilitarian approach to cooking and food, no nonsense. I don't like fluffy pretentious cooking or food. I don't like much garnish or aestheticizing. It should present itself honestly, without pretensions.

Stove

My stove was kind of a big splurge, probably \$2,500. I'll have it forever so why not? I'm kind of embarrassed about the indulgence. I didn't need to buy such a big fridge. I just kind of went overboard. It has aspects of a commercial stove but it's for residential use. I couldn't get a commercial stove because I would lose my fire insurance.

MREs

This was my art project a while ago. I made this Personal Survival Dune Buggy. It was kind of a spoof on the mandating of fear after September 11. I jokingly made this real functioning can that had everything you'd need in case of apocalypse, including food. This one's beef ravioli in meat sauce. I tried it on a camping trip. ☺