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View of “Charles Benjamin: P for Everything,” 2019.

rendered in ocher oil stick, his works are sometimes figurative, as in *New day opening* (all works 2019), where the outlines of several glass bottles hint at wine-soaked festivities, and sometimes abstract, as in *Diagonals for Manuela*, with its five parallel stripes agitatedly slicing across the canvas’s surface. Benjamin’s forms resemble trivial doodles scribbled in the margins of a grocery list, but at the same time they contain faint traces of art history. Those nonchalant bottles echo Impressionist café scenes, the assured hand-drawn stripes gesture toward Sol LeWitt, and the heavy canvases stretched over the frames’ unusual bulges suggests the lumpen materiality of Arte Povera.

Contradictory ambitions come to mind. Benjamin is casual in his handling of materials, but his works—which he often trades for a month’s rent or various services—are monumental in scale. The paintings overtake the gallery’s exhibition space, basement, office, and entrance. The last is covered with *Área metropolitana de Lisboa*, a hole-punctured canvas painted with oil-stick lettering stating the exhibition’s title (“P For Everything”), the venue’s hours of operation, and the name SALTS, the Swiss institution invited to curate the exhibition. Snaking through the upstairs office and downstairs gallery, the wooden construction *Installation view with Microwave* appears to be a footbridge, though it in fact obstructs visitors’ movements. Notably, Benjamin also performs anguished rap songs in the space, where his affably disheveled paintings deflate the preciousness of the medium in favor of sharing the pleasures and privations of life as an artist under the hold of daily economics.

— Cristina Sanchez-Kozyreva

LISBON

Charles Benjamin

KUNSTHALLE LISSABON
Rua José Sobral Cid 9E
September 12–November 2, 2019

Swedish-born painter Charles Benjamin’s cumbersome canvases balance on squat little legs, lined up against the walls of the gallery like pieces of oversize furniture. Minimally



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