



*P for Everything* is an exhibition by Swedish artist Charles Benjamin devised for Kunsthalle Lissabon. The result of an ongoing exchange between KL directors João Mourão and Luís Silva and SALTS director Samuel Leuenberger, the exhibition marks an evolution of ideas that began with *Not Old Not New*, Benjamin's solo exhibition at SALTS in Birsfelden, Switzerland in November 2018.

Mourão and Silva approach Kunsthalle Lissabon as a social catalyst for emergent and evolving conversations. For the gallery's ten-year anniversary, the directors have invited four co-hosts to the space: SALTS, PIVÔ, CURA, and ICA Philadelphia. Shaped by the directors' interest in the structural re-orientation of collaboration, each organisation was invited to execute a project, as well as temporarily take over operations at the gallery. More than the common practice of guest curating, the gallery takeover has meant that KL, its staff and operations, will forfeit 'business as usual' and instead report to the host's own staff, adopting their operational logics for the length of each collaboration.

For our invitation, it was clear that SALTS's social structure would be central to the exhibition. Approaching Mourão and Silva's brief – that of a *carte blanche* opportunity – required trust and understanding. Where inviting an artist of no prior relation could create something singular, it didn't suit this invitation. It made more sense to think about how SALTS conducts itself, how it extends into the world and is, energetically speaking, received by its collaborators, friends and audiences. The collaboration with KL thus prompted a self-reflexive turn: a careful look at how our networks are cultivated and sustained.

Speaking to Charles Benjamin about the value of things launches a catalogue of images and sensations. He has many ideas about the concept of worth and its attendant materialistic challenges, of the stakes of exposure and of selling out. Post-conceptual in his principles, Benjamin speaks about art as a process of internalisation: where a sunset isn't only a sunset, but a coveted minibreak: a vinyl image pasted onto the wall of a basement hotel room covering for the fact that there's no window. It is one of a system of visual appropriation not unlike advertising, where the integrity of an image must serve a fast fantasy or a lifestyle. Last year, the artist wrote a poetry book entitled *The New Testament Two*, offering, as the title infers, mock prophetic aphorisms such as: 'if there was a poem for everything, there wouldn't be anything out there anymore'. Some things are better left to the imagination.

Samuel Leuenberger: What do you value the most and why?

Charles Benjamin: I think I have a very hard time denominating value. I'm very much looking for something that I can deem unambiguously valuable.

SL: You love watching Spanish news channels and telenovelas, you lived in Barcelona for over ten years and are dating a woman from Chile. What does it mean to you to have your first show in Portugal?

CB: I don't have anything to say about Portugal, It's my first time here. That being said, I have a terrible affinity for southern Europe, and every time I'm here I get the feeling I'm living in the wrong place, which is probably also the reason I watch Spanish TV. If anyone has a job I could do anywhere south of Marseille Please call +491773319883.

SL: You write, you draw, you paint, you collect things (not art) and you sing but your CV says you are a painter. Why?

CB: I stupidly decided when I was 19 that I would be a painter, just to not have to question myself. Now I sort of just lug it along with me. I think it's better to just pick something to have a practice and move from there. I don't think I particularly like painting as a genre, and I think that's probably a good thing.

SL: Your work is often based on being easily assembled and easily disassembled. What does it mean for your future works?

CB: It's more a question of right now for me. The dream is obviously for someone to see how wonderful the things I do are, and take care of them. If that doesn't happen it might mean that they are not wonderful at all and deserve to disappear in time. Not exactly sure if that answers your question. If it's purely a question of restoration and such I don't think I'm in terrible shape. I once carved the word PUTA into a rock along the catalan coast, and that will stay way past my lifetime and probably that of a few generations after me. These are the geographical coordinates for anyone who'd care to see it: 41°53'21.2 "N 3°11'28.2 „E

SL: You speak a lot about energy and being interested in the process of the work. Why is it more important than the work itself?

CB: The main reason I do anything is because I want to have something to do. There's very little time that we have to be active in the way we are active now, but it still feels infinite and boring. It's a question of filling time in a way that feels meaningful. As for work it's clearly visible if something is done in the right spirit. I don't think energy and interest are separate, I think they are integral qualities to a good work.