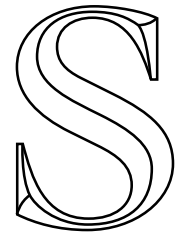


*Not Old Not New*  
 Charles Benjamin  
 Curated by Samuel Leuenberger and Elise Lammer  
 30 November–19 January 2018  
 Opening Reception: Thursday 29 November, 6pm



*Not Old Not New* is the title of Charles Benjamin's first solo exhibition in Switzerland. The name of the show is inspired from a 1991 interview Martin Kippenberger had with Jutta Koether, where he said: "An artist doesn't have to be old, he/she doesn't have to be new. An artist has to be good." The same approach could be applied to the medium of painting, its structure and language, and how it's experienced today. Kippenberger's signature process, which consists in combining unrelated image and text, his fondness for challenging style, good taste, and social conventions, is what Benjamin takes inspiration from when approaching his work. At SALTS, the artist is presenting a series of awkwardly-shaped canvases inside a space carpeted with a light beige fabric, giving the exhibition a soft and dreamy appeal. Placed on the carpet, two self-built boxes serve as benches, and are painted in the typical red and white colours of Swedish countryside houses. The sort of clumsy-looking stretchers seem like they were probably made before painting became canonised. According to the artist, they bear a utilitarian feel, a lot like Lutheran furniture. There is an awkward tension between the obvious decorative nature of the paintings and the rough appearance of their making, as if meant to be exhibited outside. *Not Old Not New* also brings to mind a whole set of double-negations: Not paintings not sculptures, not abstract not figurative, not formal not naive, not flat not gestural and so on. One thing is certain, the anthropomorphic shapes of the canvases act like living and breathing annotations. Bringing to mind oversized notepads, they carry scribbles and text fragments rather than the typical painter's strokes, or signature. And yet they are full of painterly gesture, agitation and intensity. The sketching marks suggest they are in fact more about drawing and outlines than painting and forms. In fact, the notes and marks come from the artist's observations, amassed while working his day job, at the restaurant "Burrito Baby" in Berlin's Neukölln neighbourhood, from his rap songs, or and other findings he turns into do-to lists. The roughly assembled stretchers, made of 6 x 4 pine wood struts protrude through the stretchy cotton canvas, like a ribcage through the skin. But apart from all the physical attributes and sign functions, these works allow the artist to turn inwards and to contemplate his protestant upbringing. The absence of symbolism and figuration in religious imagery is favored for an oral and textual transmission of a belief system. The minimalist aesthetic not only represents Protestantism but also modernity and technological advancement. As such, contemplation or the idea of salvation becomes synonym with a work ethic where doing the chore; making the painting, is more important than assessing how good it is. The painting is doing its own work.

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Charles Benjamin (\*1989, Stockholm, Sweden) is a painter based in Berlin. He often uses his practice to explore personal problems, at once formally documenting and making fun of economical hardship, spiritual depletion, and disbelief in his own ability and the medium itself. His practice apart from painting sometimes branches out in periodical projects such as living without any basic comforts on a gallery floor for two weeks (*Being a better person (And Possibly Helping Others)*, 2016) or sitting under a tree for the time of an average working week (*Work/Work Balance*, 2017). His work has been shown at New Day Gallery and Mario Kreuzberg (bith in Berlin), Espacio Falso (Santiago, Chile) and St. Etienne Design Bienale.

From left to right:	<i>Semi-Circle</i> , 2018 36 x 33 x 7,5 cm Oil stick on canvas	<i>Kalle Stropp</i> , 2018 (big box), 2018 37 x 210 x 82 cm Wood and housepaint
<i>Nytt Schema På Templet</i> ( <i>New Schedule At The Temple</i> ), 2018 67 x 45 x 7,5 cm Charcoal, acrylic, and oil on canvas	<i>Väldigt Låg Väldigt Hög (Very Low Very High)</i> , 2018 133 x 34 x 7,5 cm Oil stick on canvas	<i>Grodan Boll</i> , 2018 (small box), 2018 71 x 75 x 75 cm Wood and housepaint
<i>Gult Är Fult (Yellow Is Ugly)</i> , 2018 260 x 169,5 x 7,5 cm Acrylic on canvas	<i>Jämna Janne (Even Steven)</i> , 2018 149 x 107 x 7,5 cm Charcoal on canvas	Corridor: <i>Läderlappen (The Batman)</i> , 2018 200 x 240 x 7,5 cm Oil and oil stick on canvas
<i>Tipp Tapp Tipp Tapp</i> <i>Tippi Tippi Tipp Tapp</i> , 2018 151 x 155 x 7,5 cm Oil stick on canvas	<i>Något Blått (Something Blue)</i> , 2018 40,5 x 44 x 7,5 Oil stick on canvas	<i>Naturligt (naturally)</i> , 2018 61 x 84 x 7,5 cm Oil and oil stick on canvas
<i>Djupt Blått (Deep Blue)</i> , 2018 260 x 169,5 x 7,5 cm Acrylic on canvas		<i>A41; A42; A43</i> 21 x 30 cm, each Oil and pencil on canvas

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