

MUSEUM OF PRESERVED AESTHETICS: A SMALL MONUMENT TO OIL (OR: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE CRACKED WALLS & TINNED FISH)

(brought to you by your landlords most recent rental increase, late capitalism's death drive, and the leftover sardine oil stains on a copy of Žižek's 'The Sublime Object of Ideology')

LOCATION: A studio apartment. Not the kind with exposed brick and a \$3,000/month "loft feel," but the kind where the walls are cracking and the taps are constantly leaking like a funhouse designed by Kafka during a depressive episode. You've been here before—or at least in its sad, identical cousin.

THEORY?

Žižek's left sock (the one with the hole in it) whispers in lacanian French: capitalism runs on the 'objet petit a', the unattainable object of desire that keeps you buying, scrolling, leasing, and despairing. Here, the 'objet petit a' is affordable housing. Or a gallery that doesn't smell like mould. Or maybe just a single day where the algorithm doesn't whisper 'consume' directly into your amygdala. This exhibition? A shitty joke about chasing the impossible.

Deleuze mutters over cheap wine about 'deterritorialization', about lines of flight, about art that wriggles out of capital's grip like a fish too oily to hold. But frankly —this apartment 'is' the reterritorialization. The moment you try to slip free, the market repackages your rebellion as "authentic urban living" and triples the rent. The exhibition is a fugitive gesture. The landlord is the state. Your security deposit is funding someone else's influencer loft downtown. But at least we tried.

SARDINES: A TINNED MANIFESTO (OR: HOW TO EAT LIKE THE PROLETARIAT YOU ARE)

Ah, sardines. The fish of the people. The proletariat's protein. Crammed into a tin like commuters on the 6 o'clock train, glistening in their own oily despair. We paint them because they're beautiful. We serve them because they're cheap. Also because the gallery couldn't afford canapés.

Think of them as the *objet petit a* of the sea—forever just out of reach, preserved yet perishable, a tiny monument to both abundance and scarcity. Capitalism wants you to crave the unattainable: a hatted restaurant, a loft with natural light, a retirement plan. Sardines say: 'fuck it, eat straight from the can while standing over the sink like the animal you are.'

They are the perfect metaphor for art in late capitalism: packed tight, commodified, slightly fishy, but somehow still sustaining. Like the paintings on these sweating walls, they are both nourishment and a joke at your expense.

EAT THEM: Taste the brine of alienation. Feel the scales of exploitation between your teeth. Congratulate yourself on participating in this 'relational aesthetic experience' or just free snacks, depending on your credit card debt.

BONUS FISH THEORY: Deleuze called fish "the ultimate deterritorialized beings." Sardines, then, are the revolutionary vanguard—swarming, slippery, impossible to pin down. Unlike you, trapped in this apartment-turned-gallery, they are free.

(Unless they're in the tin. Then they're just like you: preserved, packaged, and sold back to yourself at a markup.)

KAFKA WAS HERE (AND LEFT A STAIN): 'The Trial' but make it rent-stabilized. You wake up guilty. Of what? Desiring. The walls are the judges. The lease is the sentence. The art? An inadmissible appeal.

VONNEGUT LAUGHS FROM THE GRAVE: "Poor Americans are urged to hate themselves." And you're probably Australian which is nearly as shit. Look around. The art is nice. The space is tragic. The sardines are free. The joke's on you —unless you're the one subletting this to us. Then the joke's on us.

BONG JOON-HO'S GHOST WRITER: 'Parasite' but without the Oscar. Just the damp. Just the creeping sense you're living in someone else's storage unit. Just the sardines.

SARDINE ETIQUETTE:

1. Open tin.
2. Consume
3. Wonder if this counts as "curatorial praxis."
4. Stare into the abyss.
5. Repeat until the revolution comes.

WHAT IS THIS?

An exhibition? A cry for help? A very small monument to the fact that oil (the kind in a can of sardines, the kind in the ground, the kind in your car, the kind in the "economy") is why we're all living like this?

DOES IT MATTER?

No. But come in anyway. Sit on the floor. Breathe in the mold. Stare at the paintings. Eat the sardines. Realize you don't like the paintings. Realize you can't afford the paintings. Realize you can't afford 'anything', congratulate the artists on the joke.

OPENING HOURS:

From 'is anyone even coming' to 'I guess we can start drinking now'

CLOSING DATE:

When the lease runs out. Or capitalism does. Or our technofeudal overlords destroy the planet. Whichever comes first.

(This roomsheet is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to actual critical theory, real estate despair, or your life is purely coincidental. Or not.)

P.P.S.

The sardines may contain traces of alienation. Consume at your own risk.

- S.L. Pratte

(clockwise from entrance)

bedroom/livingroom

S.L. Pratte, Sardine in Oil #1 (Or: The Landlord Will Use This as 'Evidence' When He Withholds My \$2,000 Security Deposit), 2025, Oil on canvas, 18 x 24cm

S.L. Pratte, Sardine in Oil #2 (Or: A Tiny Coffin for the Middle Class, Sealed with a Pop-Top Lid), 2025, Oil on canvas, 18 x 24cm

S.L. Pratte, Sardine in Oil #3 (Or: The Only Thing More Tragic Than Having an Exhibition in My Own Apartment Is That I'm Actually Proud of It), 2025, Oil on canvas, 18 x 24cm

S.L. Pratte, Sardine in Oil #4 (Or: This Painting Was Originally Titled 'Hope' but Then the Artist Remembered That The Cost of Living Crises Exists and So Does Climate Change and Technofuedalism and the Genocide in Palestine, Anyway Now It's Just called Sardine in Oil #4, Which Feels More Honest), 2025, Oil on canvas, 18 x 24cm

S.L. Pratte, Sardine in Oil #5 (Or: 'The Artist's Hand Is Palpable in the Brushwork, If You Ignore the Fact It Was Painted in Twenty Minutes In His Underwear'), 2025, Oil on canvas, 18 x 24cm

Alex Gawronksi, Substitute, 2017, Photographic print (framed), 53 x 73cm

kitchen

Blake Malone, Please play by the rules, 2025, Oil on canvas, 40 x 50.5cm

Blake Malone, Fish eating grin, 2025, Oil on canvas, 35 x 30cm

Blake Malone, First home ~~buyer~~/renter trophy, 2025, Oil on canvas, 20.5 x 25.5cm

Blake Malone, Opulence falling, 2025, Oil on canvas, 41 x 36cm

bathroom

S.L. Pratte, Sardine in Oil #6 (Or: A Small, Slightly Warped Fish That Judges Your Life Choices While You Sit on the Toilet in the Humidity of This Poorly Ventilated Bathroom), 2025, Oil on canvas, 13 x 18cm