

# Cary Leibowitz Leaves his Lipstick Traces

## Artist Schmartist

Whether it's a noble cause or a survival strategy, this gallery's stated mission is to "focus on mid-career artists who emerged in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s." Although almost every dealer shows artists who emerged during these decades, it's nice that this gallery is going through the back catalog of recent art history to see who's been left behind. This micro-niche is paying dividends in the current show of Cary Leibowitz, that intermittently excellent sad-sack connoisseur of all things gaudy, queer, Jewish, and beautiful.

Once upon a time in the early 1990s, Leibowitz, who then also went by the name "Candy Ass," was a poster child of the über-popular burp variously deemed "Pathetic Aesthetic," "Abject Art," and "Loser Art." Leibowitz hasn't exactly been "left behind." His rousing 2001 Andrew Kreps exhibition, titled "Gain! Wait! Now!," included paintings that said "Stop copying me" and "Do these pants make me look Jewish?" Unfortunately, his follow-up show was lackadaisical and iffy. Leibowitz has always been an up-and-down artist. For the "up" part, before the first Kreps outing, he made colorful hand-painted signs that said things like "Don't Steal My Car Stereo, I'm Queer," "I slept with Martin Kippenberger," and "Knock knock. Who's there? Loser."

For this typically uneven, self-deprecating, cutely snide, and wonderfully double-entendre-laden show, Leibowitz includes a brightly colored circular painting that says "tondo schmondo," surrounded by knit caps that say "Fran Drescher Fan Club." There's also a series of lipstick-colored paintings that say "I Love Warhol Piss Paintings," a Marcia Tucker seat cushion, a Cindy Sheehan megaphone, and "J'Adore Gertrude Stein" buttons. Although this is only Leibowitz in his middle gears, the exhibition suggests he ought to show more. If he had been included in MOMA's current unfunny "Comic Abstraction" exhibition, for example, people might at least have giggled. If he were granted the franchise to open gift shops in a few American art museums, it could be even better.

by Jerry Saltz

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