

# The New York Times

Friday, December 14, 2001

## **Cary Leibowitz** **'Gain! Wait! Now!'**

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516-A West 20th Street, Chelsea  
Through Dec. 22

Cary Leibowitz, you might say, is a child of Andy Warhol and a brother of Sean Landers. He turns a persona of self-abasing narcissism into art, and art into a stand-up comedy routine. In the past he has filled galleries with text-paintings of one-line jokes written in a child-like script and multiples produced in preposterously large editions. He was often on hand to make sales, and he accepted pretty much any price offered for a work. Art just wasn't worth a confrontation.

In a change of pace, his first New York solo in six years is a minimalist, subdued, unchatty affair. Fourteen small pink panel paintings line one wall. A dozen carry the phrase "Stop copying me," and the remaining two read "Do these pants make me look Jewish?" Questions about appearance and identity are a running gag. Dozens of cylindrical metal umbrella stands — also identified as garbage cans — at the center of the gallery are decorated with a bar mitzvah photograph of Mr. Leibowitz looking plump, stunned and very 1970's in a bulky all-white suit. The show's large monochromatic paintings convey a similarly grave geekishness. "Painting With Something Missing" is all purple with a big square hole at its center; "Painting Without a Heart" has a small heart cut out of its left side. There's also a diptych: "Painting With No Way Out" is an unbroken field of baby blue, while "Painting With a Way Out" is identical but equipped with a doorknob.

This is perhaps a deliberately waffling response to the perennial question "Where does art go from here?" Mr. Leibowitz takes a passive-aggressive jab at a whole range of similar art-world nonissues in work that is post-beauty, post-theory, post-cool, post-mature and possibly — this has been his consuming worry for over a decade — post-success. But he needn't fear failure. He never "arrived" on the scene in any conventional sense, so he has never left it either. Being perpetually out of step is a career move that makes him an artist for all seasons.

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