

f a c e s **TO** w a t c h**Cary Leibowitz***artist*

That Cary Leibowitz uses "Candy Ass" as a pseudonym tells you something about the 26-year-old Boston-based artist's sensibility, which is antic, sometimes poignant and frankly gay. His startling installation at the Stux Gallery in New York last fall combined mundane and childish imagery: a yardstick suggested the idea of measuring up; pennants, like those a kid would hang in his room, read "Homo State. Go Fags!" New York critic Jon Nalley commented that Leibowitz's imagery "would leave Senator Jesse Helms comatose."

Leibowitz aims for much more than tweaking conservatives, though. He was part of the "Troubled in Paradise" show at MIT last fall, and his contribution was right in tune with the exhibition's theme of America as a materialistic, superficial and arrogant society. His writing-on-the-wall piece included the

tale of the ordinary girl who won the biggest lottery prize ever, bought new clothes, went on a cruise, met and married the world's richest man, and "lived happily ever after. The end." Adding to the wistfulness of the story is the handwriting Leibowitz uses — the awkward scribbling of a little kid. Leibowitz likes to assume the handwriting of different personae: A favorite is the curly scrawl of a fourth-grade girl, misspellings and all. He thinks his work "might not be more personal than anyone else's, but it might be more pathetic." He likes giving viewers little gifts. One is plastic bags, which visitors to his shows tear off a roll — just like in the supermarket — and take home.

A Connecticut native who earned a BFA from the University of Kansas, Leibowitz has been in Boston for three years. The first time he showed his work was in 1988, at the

Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, as part of "Boston Now: Works on Paper." Since that breakthrough, his career has taken off. His Stux show traveled to the Deichtorhallen Museum in Hamburg, where his work was sandwiched between that of Sol Lewitt and Ellsworth Kelly. Last month, he was in Paris for a show at Gallerie Antoine Candau; now he's in Berlin, making new work for a show in Dusseldorf. He'll show at the Thomas Segal Gallery in Boston this summer. And for the AIDS Action Committee art auction in the fall, he's doing wallpaper featuring the names of the \$500 ticket buyers. In an unsubtle world, he thinks he's successful partly because "I usually try to hit the viewer over the head with whatever I'm attempting."