

Teacher Guide

Cary Leibowitz: Museum Show

May 12–August 26, 2018



Installation view of Cary Leibowitz: *Museum Show* at The Contemporary Jewish Museum. Image courtesy The Contemporary Jewish Museum. Photo: JKA Photography.

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Exhibition Overview

- *Cary Leibowitz: Museum Show* is the first career survey and solo museum show of Leibowitz's work. It features nearly 350 original artworks from 1987 to present, including paintings, fabric works, multiples, installations, documentation, photography, and ephemera.
- Cary Leibowitz was born in New York, New York in 1963 and was raised in suburban Connecticut.
- At the age of ten Leibowitz had a subscription to *Architectural Digest*. This early interest in architecture led him to enroll at Pratt Institute, New York, New York, in 1981, but he dropped out due to disillusionment with the program and professors.
- In 1983 he enrolled in the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, New York, to study interior design and again became disenchanted with the educational system.
- Leibowitz relocated to Lawrence, Kansas where he began to develop his signature text-based style of painting and he completed his BFA with a focus on painting at the University of Kansas. He graduated in 1987, but his professors refused to allow him to take part in the senior graduation exhibition because they didn't like his work.
- Leibowitz emerged in the art world in the late 1980s using the alias "Candyass," which he later dropped in 1996.
- Currently Leibowitz works as the worldwide Co-Head of Editions at Philips Auction House, New York, New York.
- Leibowitz mixes his obsession with popular culture, fine art, and his Jewish identity with elements of therapy and self-loathing, interrogation, institutional critique, social commentary, and stand-up comedy.



I Love...., 1990. Latex paint on wood panel, 12 panels. Courtesy of the artist and INVISIBLE-EXPORTS, NYC.

- Leibowitz celebrates mundane objects and everyday materials including commemorative plates, coffee cups, wine goblets, and belt buckles that memorialize friends' birthdays, unions, and special occasions mixed in with faux historical events.
- His work and themes often play with repetition—either in mass-produced objects or with paintings that follow a theme (*I Love . . . or 5 cents*).
- Leibowitz uses humble materials in his paintings—examples include latex paint on wood panels or acrylic paint on cardboard.
- This exhibition does contain content including words and imagery that may not be appropriate for all viewers. Please read our Family Review for details.

Key Questions

- What role can humor play in artwork? Do you think it is effective?
- How do the curatorial and installation choices impact how you view the artwork?
- How does the artwork change if you were just looking at one work in the series instead of the full series?
- How does an understanding of art history, pop culture, Judaism, and queer issues impact how you view the artwork? Did you have questions regarding any of the references made within the artwork?
- What do you learn about the artist through viewing this much of his artwork? What do you imagine it would be like to meet him? What do people learn about you through viewing your artwork?
- How do the choices that the artist makes regarding materials impact your thoughts and opinions about the artwork?

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts Cary Leibowitz creates art about how he feels, what he loves, what he hates, his insecurities, worries, and passions. Many of his artworks contain text—can you write or create an artwork that expresses your emotions and how you are feeling? How does it feel to be so honest through your art? How does it feel to get to know your classmates through their artwork?

Visual Arts Cary Leibowitz makes reference to many of his favorite artists in his work. Can you create a work of art that is an homage to your favorite artist(s)? How do you express your admiration without directly copying an artist?

Leibowitz also plays with repetition in his artwork, both through many different series of paintings and also having objects mass-produced. Can you design a series of everyday objects that you would have mass-produced and stamped with your own design, pattern, or image? (Look at Leibowitz's hats, mugs, plates, pennants, umbrellas, knit hats, and trash cans for inspiration.)

Leibowitz has created many works of art that are part of a series. Can you create a series of work that explore one idea? What did you learn through this process? How did the work change throughout the series? What does it look like to display the series together?



Applaud, Appalled...., 1990/1. Latex paint on two wood panels. Courtesy of the artist and INVISIBLE-EXPORTS, NYC.