



New York-based artist Cary Leibowitz creates comedic text-based works that address issues of identity, kitsch, modernist critique, and queer politics. As he stated in a 1994 issue of *Art in America*, “I do think some of my art embodies a certain kind of gay sensibility, even if it is the sensibility of an eight-year-old and hard to define. Maybe it’s camp.”

Born in 1963 in New York, New York and raised in suburban Connecticut, Leibowitz grew up surrounded by the trappings of the white middle class—American clipper ship paintings, faux wood, and homogeneity. At the age of ten, he had a subscription to *Architectural Digest*. Leibowitz’s early interest in architecture led him to enroll at Pratt Institute, New York, New York, in 1981, from which 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 then relocated to Lawrence, Kansas, spurred by a romantic notion of the Midwest. There 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. Undeterred, Leibowitz hosted his own show entitled *I Love You More than Michael Jackson* in an empty classroom on campus.

Emerging in the art world in the late 1980s, he used the alias “Candyass” (which he dropped in 1996). The “failures” of his career become content for his work. Currently the worldwide Co-Head of Editions at Phillips Auction House, Leibowitz is deeply familiar with the world of art and art history. Through his work, he brings high culture down to earth, both through his materials and content. In the words of Anastasia James,



curator of the exhibition, “Leibowitz is an artist who actively embraces complexity and contradiction, his palpable disdain for what is popular and his deep-rooted reverence for the ugly make him an artist who has been forever intentionally out of step with the traditional narrative.” As a result, Leibowitz has successfully sidestepped having a major museum exhibition for the past thirty years. *Cary Leibowitz: Museum Show* is the first career survey and solo museum show of his work to date. It features nearly 350 original artworks from 1987 to the present, including paintings, fabric works, multiples, installations, documentation, photography, and ephemera—much of which is in a pink taffy and sky blue gallery.

In both his cheeky multiples (mass-produced buttons, mugs, and more) and his irregular-format paintings, 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. With a preference for lowbrow aesthetics and threadbare materials, Leibowitz creates work with a bold, cartoon-like quality: pop colors are combined with a childish scrawl, proclaiming personal insecurities and exposing simplistic raw truths about contemporary society. He 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. The 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 also uses humble materials in his paintings—latex paint on wood panels or acrylic paint on cardboard. The work is accessible and Leibowitz’s honesty, vulnerability, and compassion are laid bare on the surface.

Suggested Resources

These resources are recommended for further exploration into the artwork of Cary Leibowitz and the relevant themes he explores.

Reading

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| Izenour, Steven; Denise Scott Brown; and Robert Venturi
– <i>Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form</i> , 1972 | O’Hara, Frank
– <i>Lunch Poems</i> , 1964 |
| Klemperer, Victor
– <i>The Lesser Evil: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1945–59</i> , 2003 | O’Hara, John
– <i>Appointment in Samarra</i> , 1934 |
| – <i>I Will Bear Witness, Volume 1: A Diary of the Nazi Years, 1933–1941</i> , 1998 | – <i>Selected Short Stories of John O’Hara</i> , 1956 |
| – <i>I Will Bear Witness, Volume 2: A Diary of the Nazi Years, 1942–1945</i> , 1998 | Toklas, Alice B.
– <i>The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book</i> , 1954 |
| | Venturi, Robert
– <i>Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture</i> , 1966 |
| | Warburg, Sandol Stoddard
– <i>I Like You</i> , 1965 |
| | – <i>The Thinking Book</i> , 2002 |

Viewing | Films

- | | |
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| <i>Cabaret</i>
– Bob Fosse, 1972 | <i>Rosemary’s Baby</i>
– Roman Polanski, 1968 |
| <i>Driving Miss Daisy</i>
– Bruce Beresford, 1989 | <i>The Stepford Wives</i>
– Bryan Forbes, 1975 |
| <i>Lore</i>
– Cate Shortland, 2013 | |

Viewing | Television

- | | |
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| <i>The Golden Girls</i>
– Susan Harris, 1985–92 | <i>Sister Wendy: The Complete Collection</i>
– Wendy Beckett, 1992–2002 |
| <i>The Nanny</i>
– Fran Drescher and Peter Marc Jacobson, 1993–99 | |

Public Programs

These events are free, open to the public, and take place at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, unless otherwise noted. Seating is limited. Please check camh.org for the most current information.

Opening Reception | *Cary Leibowitz: Museum Show*

Friday, May 11, 2018 | 6:30–9PM

In Conversation | Artist Cary Leibowitz; Anastasia James, Curator of Exhibitions and Programs at the Dorsky Museum, SUNY New Paltz; and CAMH Director Bill Arning

Saturday, May 12, 2018 | 2–3PM

Workshop | Words & Art

Saturday, May 19, 2018 | 12:30–1:30PM

Reading | *Camp Marmalade* with Wayne Koestenbaum

Thursday, May 31, 2018 | 6:30–7:30PM

Open Studio | Art Exchange

Saturday, June 2, 2018 | 2–4PM

Performance | Comedy Show

Thursday, July 12, 2018 | 6:30–7:30PM

Art at Noon | Tamarie Cooper, Founder and Associate Director of Catastrophic Theater

Friday, July 13, 2018 | 12–1PM

Family Day

Saturday, July 21, 2018 | 1–4PM

Screening | *Chisholm '72 Unbought & Unbossed*

Thursday, July 26, 2018 | 6:30–8PM

Reading | Words & Art

Thursday, August 2, 2018 | 6:30–7:30PM

Join us

“I try and be honest, and I try not to be mean. Sometimes I wish I could be more ‘forceful’ or ‘push’, but I prefer to embrace rather than repel.”

—Cary Leibowitz

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

5216 Montrose Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77006
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CAMH.ORG
[#atCAMH](https://twitter.com/atCAMH)
[#CaryLeibowitzCAMH](https://twitter.com/CaryLeibowitzCAMH)

HOURS

Mon.	Closed
Tue.	10AM–7PM
Wed.	10AM–7PM
Thu.	10AM–9PM
Fri.	10AM–7PM
Sat.	10AM–6PM
Sun.	12PM–6PM

IMAGES

All courtesy the artist and INVISIBLE-EXPORTS, NYC.

Cover: *Epiphany Please*, 1999. Latex paint on wood panel.

Inside left to right: *If U Try Really Hard...*, ca. 1995. Latex paint on wood panel. *Fat / Ugly*, ca. 1989–90. Latex paint on wood panel. *Please Don't Tell Anyone You Saw Me*, 2016. Latex paint on wood panel.

Cary Leibowitz: Museum Show is organized by The Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco and is curated by Anastasia James.

Cary Leibowitz: Museum Show presentation at CAMH is made possible in part by generous contributions from Rebecca and Ken Bruder, the Cardinal Four Foundation, INVISIBLE-EXPORTS, Richard Gerrig and Timothy Peterson, and Nancy and Fred Poses.

Support for CAMH is generously provided by the Museum's Board of Trustees and their families: Allison and David Ayers, Candace Baggett and Ron Restrepo, Vera and Andy Baker, James M. Bell, Jr., Jereann Chaney, Estela and David A. Cockrell, Margaret Vaughan Cox and Jonathan Cox, Ruth Dreessen and Tom Van Laan, Barbara and Michael Gamson, Dan and Eleanor Gilbane, Blakely and Trey Griggs, Melissa and Albert J. Grobmyer IV, Catherine Baen Hennessy and Matt Hennessy, Leslie and Mark Hull, Louise Jamail, Dillon Kyle and Sam Lasseter, Erica and Benjy Levit, Lucinda and Javier Loya, Catherine and George Masterson, Libbie Masterson, Greg

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Additional funding for CAMH's exhibitions, programming, and operations is provided by its dedicated patrons and donors: A Fare Extraordinaire, Chinhui Juhn and Eddie Allen, Art Market Productions, Mary and Marcel Barone, Bergner and Johnson Design, City of Houston through the Houston Museum District Association, George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, Houston Endowment, Jackson and Company, James M. Collins Foundation, Kavi Gupta Gallery, Mr. and Mrs. I.H. Kempner III, KPMG, LLP, Lehmann Maupin, Leticia Loya, M.D. Anderson Foundation, Mary Kathryn Lynch Kurtz Charitable Lead Trust, Elisabeth McCabe, Mid-America Arts Alliance, Faye Sarofim, Ms. Louisa Stude Sarofim, Leigh and Reggie Smith, Susan Vaughan Foundation, Targa Resources, Inc., Union Pacific Foundation,

The Wortham Foundation, Inc., and Michael Zilkha.



Exhibition catalogues and additional programming are made possible by a grant from The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston.

CAMH's operations are made possible in part by awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Texas Commission on the Arts.



CAMH also thanks its artist benefactors for their support, including Chris Beckman, Michael Bise, Bruce High Quality Foundation, Mel Chin, Julia Dault, James Drake, Mark Flood, Jeffrey Gibson, Wayne Gilbert, Roberta Harris, Camille Henrot, Oliver Herring, Joan Jonas, David Kelley, Julian Lorber, Marilyn Minter, Nic Nicosia, McKay Otto, Joyce Pensato, Gavin Perry, Susie Rosmarin, Jacolby Satterwhite, Shinique Smith, John Sparagana, Mary Weatherford, Carrie Mae Weems, Haegue Yang, and Brenna Youngblood.

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May 12–August 26, 2018

Cary Leibowitz: Museum Show

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston