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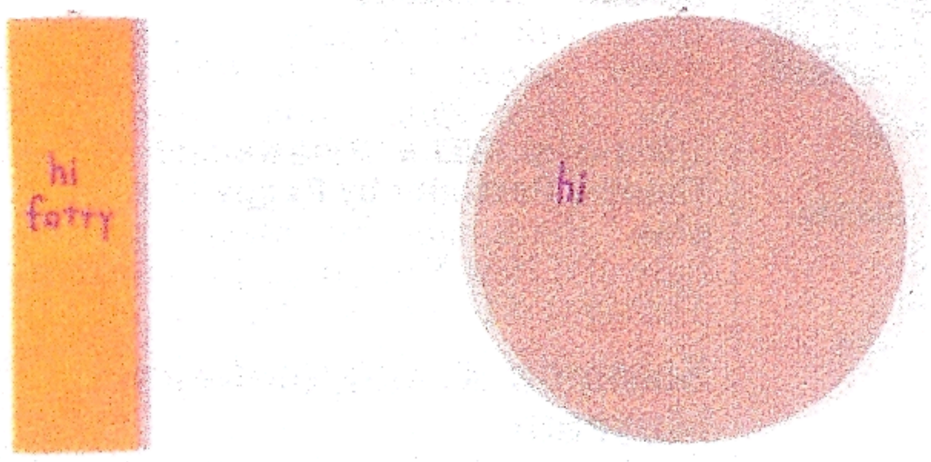
Cary Leibowitz, "Gain! Wait! Now!"

Andrew Kreps Gallery, through Sat 22 (see Chelsea).

In the early 1990s, Cary Leibowitz was one of a number of artists (Karen Kilimnick and the collaborative team of Pruitt and Early also come to mind) who continually crossed the line between fine art and thrift-shop allure to explore the plight of art in a distracted, kitsch-filled culture. Leibowitz's self-deprecating approach was always funny, even if his pose—as a kind of gay shnook—sometimes seemed literally pathetic.

It's odd how things come back into fashion. Leibowitz, who's left behind the "Candy Ass" tag he used when he first got started, fits perfectly in Andrew Krep's stable of artists (many of whom are in their twenties). His paintings here recall fellow Krepsian Ruth Root's in particular, as his abstractions, like hers, often make sly comments on themselves. They share a similiar smart-ass aesthetic and irreverent opticality; in this sense, his art seems to be continually looking over its shoulder, as many of the young folk at Kreps's openings often do.



Cary Leibowitz, *Hi Fatty Hi*, 2001.

A series of small pink canvases running along one wall features bits of language; the funniest one cries out that familiar mantra used by kids to fend off mocking mimicry, STOP COPYING ME! On the one hand, Leibowitz here is bringing back the bygone era of anxiety about the uniqueness of paintings in the age of mechanical reproduction, while on the other, their pink and playful sassiness gives them up-to-date attitude. Also fun is a stacked pyramid of large wastebaskets. Each is for sale at $50 and features a picture of a chubby Leibowitz at his bar mitzvah. Other large paintings have shapes cut out of them, with commentary on the missing shape: *Painting Without a Heart,* for example, is missing a heart-shaped section, and says as much on the canvas.

None of this is terribly deep painting, but that's exactly the point, one which needs repeating now and again: Painting may not be dead, but it's still just a small gesture in a big world.—*Robert Mahoney*