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Candyass: "Art isn't more special than an interest in cars"

Cary S. Leibowitz: Candyass.

Opening saturday 7 may 14 — 17, Ynglingagatan 1

Candyass, alias Cary S. Leibowitz, potters about in the little room that constitutes the gallery Ynglingagatan 1. Tomorrow, saturday, it's opening, och then everything is to be ready. Then the walls must be brown, paintings with brisk slogans like "U Bring Out The Best Suicidal Tendencies In Me" must to be hanging, together with the small necklace paintings. The swedishly nationalistic jewish skull-caps (with the text "Please Don't Forget Raoul Wallenberg") are going to hang like mini umbrellas under a giant poster of Candyass — totally naked — the covers the roof. In short, Candyass has a lot to do.

When we meet the most of the material is in trunks and the walls are white like snow. He is wearing a T-shirt with the text "Happy Birthday Sylvia", as a tribute to our queen. The name on the T-shirt being mis-spelt is rather striking. But the welcoming carpet, holding the message "Loser Line Forms Here" is already at place, so it must be important.

If you study the artistic background of Cary S. Leibowitz you realize that the carpet is a sort of programmatic explanation. The New York son Cary Leibowitz, or Candyass (something like "godisarsle". Ugh!) as he calls himself, sees himself as a distinctly jewish, outspokenly homosexual looser. A neurotic nobody, that uses his miserable life situation as a base material for his activity.

Some of the things he makes remind me of other american contemporary artists like Mike Kelly (exhibition at the Modern Museum this autumn) and Jenny Holzer. But when they are political and chocking, Candyass is merely therapeutically personal. During the conversation it will become evident that he really is placed precisely in time, both esthetically and theoretically. He simply is a perfect artist for the slacker generation.

— I think I would like to be more of a slacker, but I'm far too neurotic and too eager. All the time I want to do my best, so clearly I'm not cool enough, Candyass says.

— I also think that some romantic temperament that I lack is needed, he adds and looks down to floor shyly.

Candyass is 31 years, but he appears more like an insecure teen-ager when he talks. But right in the middle of this uncertainty there is a self consciousness and a desire to give the audience everything to win their approval.

— Basically everything I do comes out of frustration. Around 1984, 1985, when I attended art school, the art was

Exposing oneself honestly, both physically and mentally, can be liberating for the spectator, Candyass believes. His message is "You needn't be perfect, just look at me", although he phrases it with greater humour and with more irony. Everything else that has been said about him are theories constructed afterwards.

Obviously some of the art of Candyass has been marked by his religious background and his sexual preferences. But he thinks that he is through with the gay thing. Now the jewish part remains.

— Despite that the New York art world is very jewish, that is nothing you talk about. It's a delicate subject. I suppose so it is even to me. But I'm working on it, Candyass declares.

— But everything I do doesn't come out of the fact that I'm a jew and that I'm gay. A lot of it is ordinary everyday feelings that everyone can have. I don't say that because I don't want to be looked upon as a gay artist, I don't have any problem with such labels. Everyone is labeled, some are artists of the 80's and others are called something else. If you get irritated by that the problem is within yourself. To get a label isn't exactly like being sent to a concentration camp, Candyass remarks bitterly.

Then Mr. Leibowitz tells me that he often makes cheap things that he can give away, for example when he gives lectures. Also he usually is available in some way during his exhibitions to be able to meet the visitors. Another ambition he has got is to take down the art and the artists from their pedestal.

— I don't understand why the work I'm doing is regarded more important than any other work. I think it's the artists themselves that has come up with that. Art really isn't more special than a pronounced interest in cars, for example.

Candyass takes City on a round among the things that are to be exhibited. There is the box you make ice cubes in, having the text "I Remember When Disco Counted" and a bear wearing a T-shirt saying "I Will Make A Cubist Painting Someday But Right Now It's Not Important". A broken plate is a gift for some other looser, and a brightly coloured red and blue american football is especially designed for Candyass.

All the visitors at Ynglingagatan 1 will receive a lottery ticket, and the first prize is a genuine Candyass mug. The originator himself seems rather proud over the object, having the motto "I Went To Some Stupid Show In Stockholm On Ynglingastreet Or Something Like That And All I Got Was This Lousy Official Candyass Mini Nuclear Reactor Cum Pot". On the rear there is also the text "Fill It To The Rim".

Candyass clearly has made a career out of his own weaknesses. Whether that is enough to get as mentioned and famous as all the artists and stars he is jealous of probably