



88  
Cary S. Leibowitz/  
Candyass  
*I Love You More*,  
1988–90  
mixed media,  
two parts  
6½ × 6½ inches each  
Courtesy of  
Robert Berman Gallery,  
Santa Monica

Teenage culture of the white male adolescent has been the point of departure for recent installations by Cary S. Leibowitz/Candyass and Pruitt·Early (Rob Pruitt and Jack Early), artists who build environments surrounding fictional characters. “Candyass,” Leibowitz’s alter ego, is a narcissistic, self-pitying homosexual who surrounds himself in a world of never-fulfilled hopes and dreams. Candyass’s “playground” is like a high-schooler’s bedroom, filled with banners, pennants, and other such souvenir items bearing desperately cynical phrases such as “Life Sucks” and “Misery Rules.” The political strategy underlying Leibowitz’s presentation, of course, is analogous to that of theatrical farce—exaggerate the ridiculous

to call attention to social injustice, which in this case refers to the prejudices faced by gay male adolescents in a culture dominated by heterosexually defined expectations. In many of his images, Leibowitz fights hatred with humor, as exemplified by his “I love you” series, where Candyass practices self-deprecation by putting others on a pedestal. In *I Love You More* (1988–90; plate 88), the artist uses real-life irony to make his point, as he has inscribed the phrases “I love you more than Prince” and “I love you more than Michael Jackson” beneath photographs of two of the most famous rock stars to have developed public images that defy conventional stereotypes of masculinity.

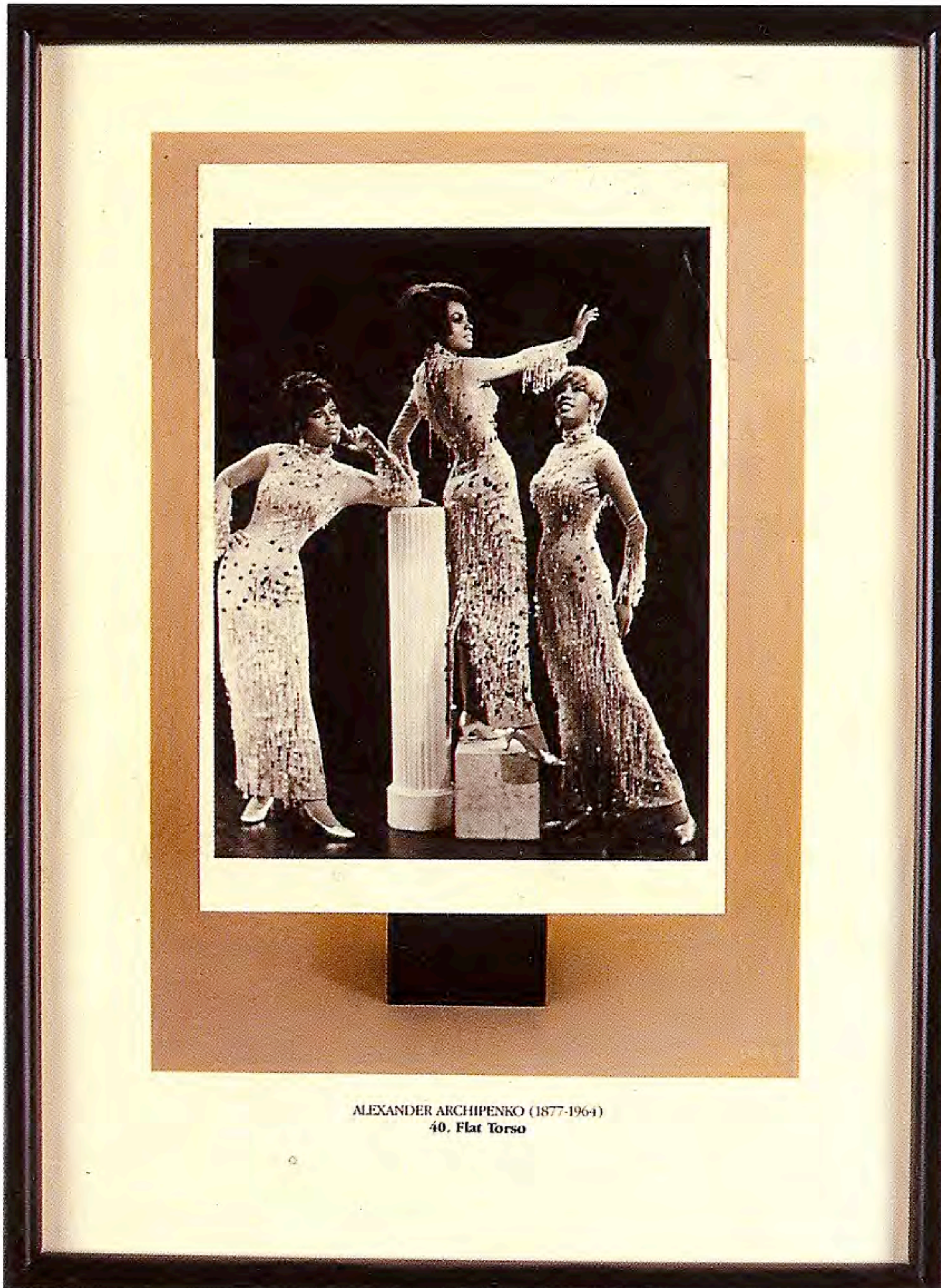
Cary S. Leibowitz/  
Candyass

Flat Torso, 1988

mixed media

10 × 7 7/8 inches

Collection of David Ortins,  
East Boston,  
Massachusetts



ALEXANDER ARCHIPENKO (1877-1964)  
40. Flat Torso

Pruitt·Early join in Leibowitz's challenge to prejudicial stereotyping by focusing on the perpetrator: the straight, oversexed, beer-guzzling, macho "dude." For their installation *Artworks for Teenage Boys*, Pruitt·Early made paintings and sculptures from "white trash" artifacts such as beer cans, blue jeans, American flags, and rock music decals, and even included an MTV-style video in which art-world celebrities sing or lip-sync popular songs, with Pruitt and Early performing backup. Mimicking the packaging of beer, Pruitt·Early's paintings are assembled in sets of six and twenty-four. Each of the six panels in *Painting for Teenage Boys (Mini-Series Miller Six-Pack, Kiss)* (early 1990s, plate 90) was made by shrink-wrapping a sew-on patch with the logo for the group Kiss over fabric printed with Miller beer labels. In addition to Kiss, other heavy-metal rockers whose names appear in Pruitt·Early's installation include Guns N' Roses, Def Leppard, and Anthrax.

As the work of Pruitt·Early might suggest, rock and roll stereotypes may very well contribute to the perpetuation of sexism in our culture. Certainly, women recording artists have traditionally been treated as a minority interest group in an industry dominated by men. According to Gillian G. Garr, "Women performers have often been caught in a double bind. Female artists were (and are) frequently not seen as having the commercial potential of a male artist, and so were not given the chance to demonstrate that they could sell records on their own merits. . . . When given the opportunity, women performers have proved again and again that they can sell records, but doubts about the ability of women artists to make records that people will actually want to buy remain; even today, managers relate that they still have trouble finding a record deal with companies who continue to exclaim, 'But we already have a girl singer.'" <sup>179</sup>

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Cary S. Leibowitz/  
Candyass

I Remember when  
Disco Counted, 1993  
four ice trays  
1½ x 5 x 12 inches each  
Courtesy of the artist



A comparably witty stance is taken by Cary S. Leibowitz/  
Candyass in his deadpan ode to the disco era, entitled  
*I Remember When Disco Counted* (1993; plate 159).  
Here, empty ice-cube trays remind us of disco's  
temporality as a short-lived fad that quickly melted away.

Today in the 1990s, it is less appropriate to categorize  
pop culture in terms of a specific period style. Just as art  
has become pluralistic and multicultural, so has popular  
music. Celebrating this diversity, and the freedom to  
select from multiple listening options when channel-  
surfing the radio, is Jory Felice's *Pure Rock 105.5 KNAC*  
(1993–94; plate 160). Executed in vivid, dissonant  
colors, the painting interweaves the call numbers of  
several Los Angeles radio stations within an explosive  
abstract composition that suggests streamers and  
firecrackers. Added together, the sum of the parts is a  
visually charged equivalent for the entire spectrum of  
the radio dial.