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ARTnews

Michelangelo Lovelace, Compassionate Painter of Cleveland's Community, Has Died at 60

By Claire Selvin – April 28, 2021



Michelangelo Lovelace Sr. and his wife, Shirley Lovelace. Courtesy Fort Gansevoort.

Michelangelo Lovelace Sr., a Cleveland-based artist who created poignant paintings and drawings often focused on issues of injustice in America, has died at age 60. A representative for Lovelace's gallery, Fort Gansevoort, said that he dies after a long illness.

The subjects of Lovelace's works, which the artist created over the course of 40 years, range from everyday city life to poverty, war, immigration and policing. The artist told *Ideastream* in a 2017 interview, "What I'm trying to do in my work is tell that urban, inner-city story of what it's life

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growing up, dealing with poverty, dealing with crime, dealing with drugs, having so much to overcome to keep your dream alive.”

One of Lovelace’s 2020 paintings, titled *Social Distancing*, examined the impact of the pandemic on his community. Using stage-like, illuminated quadrants, the artist conveyed the isolation wrought by business and school shutdowns.



Michelangelo Lovelace Sr., *Social Distancing*, 2020, acrylic on canvas. Courtesy the artist and Fort Gansevoort.

Born in Cleveland in 1960, Lovelace attended the Cleveland Institute of Art and spent 30 years working as a nurse’s aid in the city. “No matter what was going on, I always drew, because drawing just came naturally to me,” Lovelace once said, referring to financial hardships he experienced.

In his artist statement, Lovelace writes, in part, “The paintings I produce are visual documentations of life in Cleveland and many other American inner cities. I continue to explore concerns of cultural, racial discourse, and economic tensions between the haves and have-nots with the overall theme being the community. My paintings depict what it is like living in a

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community where anything can happen at any time, and where life can often be fast, poor, and short.”

In recent years, the artist has garnered acclaim for his intimate scenes and portraits. He won the Cleveland Arts Prize Mid-Career Artist in 2015, and that same year, his work figured in a group at the museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland. In 2018, Lovelace has his first solo exhibition with Fort Gansevoort in New York, Drawing attention from critics at the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker*.

Last year, Fort Gansevoort presented an online exhibition of his portraits of nursing home residents, many of which were made in the 1990s. Lovelace’s work can be found in the collections of the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Nashe Museum of Art at Duke University in North Carolina, the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas, and other institutions, and his art will figure in the 2021 group exhibition “Next To You” at the McEvoy Foundation for the Arts in San Francisco.

“His work is a testament to the beauty of his community and the people he knew and loved,” Fort Gansevoort said of Lovelace in a statement. “We would like to thank everyone who generously supported Michelangelo’s practice throughout the years and those who gave him the opportunity to share his vision with the world.”