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‘Michelangelo Lovelace. Nightshift’ coming to the Online Viewing Room at Fort Gansevoort

May 21, 2020



Michelangelo Lovelace, *Untitled*, 2008. Ink on paper. 8.5 x 11 in. Image courtesy Fort Gansevoort Gallery

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Beginning Thursday, May 28, Fort Gansevoort will present *Nightshift*, an exhibition of drawings by Michelangelo Lovelace (b. 1960), composed from the bedsides and common areas of nursing homes throughout Cleveland, Ohio, where he has worked for over 30 years as a nurse's aide while pursuing his artistic practice.



Michelangelo Lovelace, *Untitled*, 1993. Marker on paper. 18 x 23.75 in. Image courtesy Fort Gansevoort Gallery.

The third exhibition in the gallery's ongoing web series *SEEING THOUGH YOU*, *Nightshift* allows viewers to gaze into the daily lives of nursing home residents through 22 drawings that capture the vitality of spirit and depth of emotional life that persist in old age. Detailed, personal, direct, and inflected with flashes of wit, Lovelace's portraits and observational scenes are shaped by his rare access to a swath of society too often overlooked or forgotten.

As nursing homes across the country are pillaged by the COVID-19 pandemic, America has been forced to confront its biases toward the elderly. Lovelace, largely known for his vibrant paintings of inner-city Cleveland, has never been shy about depicting communities that remain conveniently but tragically relegated to the margins. In the *Nightshift* drawings, viewers find the artist at his most fearless and his most tender.

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While his work typically paints crime and poverty-filled streets from afar, *Nightshift* places Lovelace in close proximity to and intimate exchange with his subjects. Illustrated with an astute quietude, his nursing home images celebrate the accumulated experience and enduring life force that define each individual as singular and substantial in spite of being deemed negligible by society at large.



Michelangelo Lovelace. *Untitled*, 2008. Ink on paper. 8.5 x 11 in. ML205. Image courtesy Fort Gansevoort Gallery.

Calling to mind the drawings of Alice Neel, Lovelace's *Nightshift* portraits are formally frontal but informal in attitude. His playful but slightly quavering lines suggest the challenge of existence in old age. Bright magenta and hazy blue strokes envelop *Ms. I. Clark* (1993), described by Lovelace as "feisty" and "opinionated" despite her heavy-hooded eyes and sullen expression. Though portrayed in the same seated, stoic manner with a furrowed brow, another resident, *Ms. D. James* (1993), is swathed in a veil of bright, warm hues that convey the positive emotional bond between Lovelace and a woman who provided enthusiastic encouragement of his early artistic aspirations.

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These records of eye-to-eye exchange are complemented by scenes of the nursing homes' tiled halls and private living quarters where daily life takes place in a state of permanent quarantine. While strikingly medical and filled with the emblems of dwindling health, these incredibly detailed works burst with intricate patterns pressed up to the picture plane. Thickets of lines seem to convey layers of unseen energy and information, underlining a sense that the residents in these drawings have interior lives as active as their physical lives are still. A woman with breathing tubes reads intently in her bed, a man by a window observes the bustling city below from his wheelchair. Lovelace renders such precise moments with exquisite honesty.

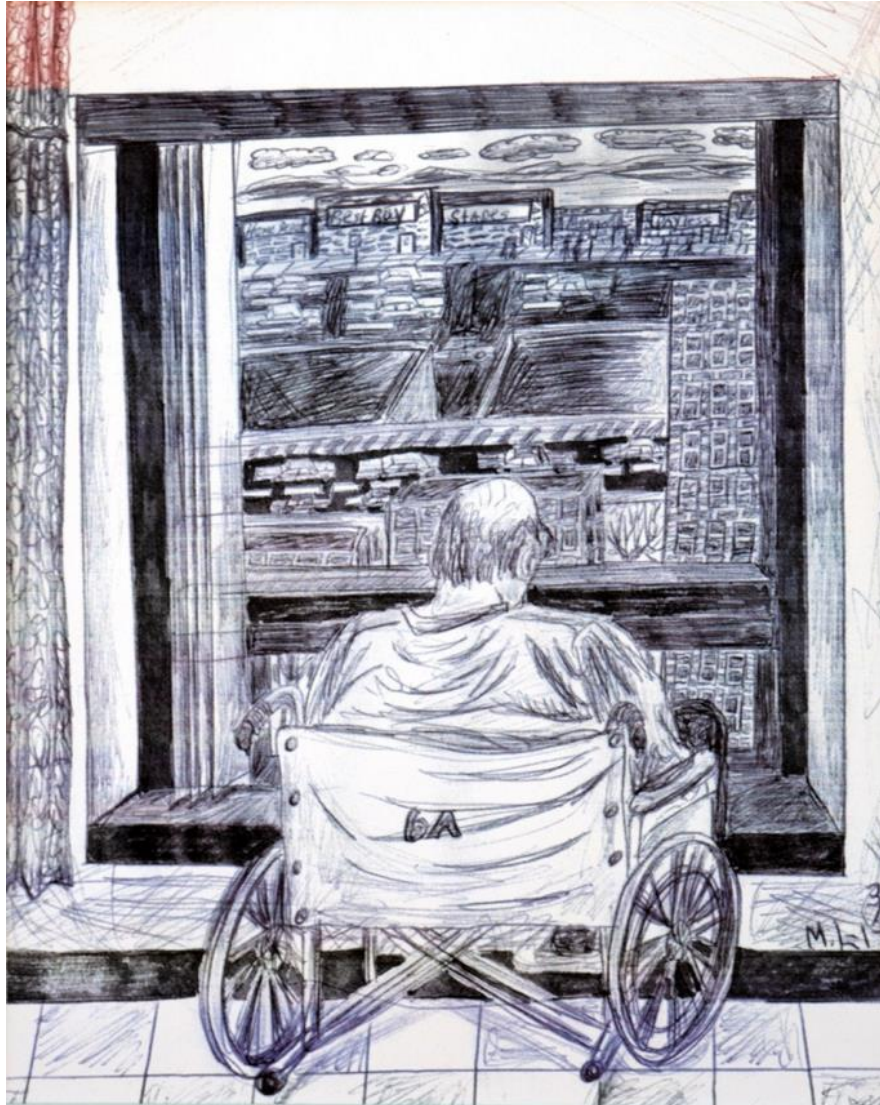


**Michaelangelo Lovelace. *Untitled*, 2008. Ink and marker on paper.
11 x 8.5 in. Image courtesy Fort Gansevoort Gallery**

For Lovelace, the years spent with these residents were “an honor”. To those who occupy them, nursing homes are not merely a place where life ends, but a world where life changes and experience, knowledge, and feeling are recycled. The drawings in *Nightshift* are reminders that each human path is filled with content and worthy of respect. Lovelace has summarized it succinctly: “Life is for the living. It’s not just for the young, but it’s for the old too.”

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Michelangelo Lovelace was born in 1960 in Cleveland, Ohio, where he currently lives and works. His work has been presented in solo exhibitions at Springfield Museum of Art in Ohio, Cleveland School of the Arts, Progressive Insurance Corporate Headquarters, and University of Illinois at Chicago. The artist has been included in group exhibitions at MOCA Cleveland, Cleveland State University Art Gallery, the Cleveland Clinic Foundation and Case Western Reserves University. Lovelace won the Cleveland Arts Prize Mid-Career Artist in 2015 and multiple Ohio Arts Council Individual Artist Grants for Painting. His work is included in the permanent collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Progressive Art Collection, and Springfield Museum of Art. Lovelace is represented by Fort Gansevoort, New York.



Michaelangelo Lovelace. Untitled, 2008. Ink on paper.
8.5 x 11 in. Image courtesy Fort Gansevoort Gallery.

Nightshift is curated in collaboration with artist John Ahearn and includes Ahearn's commentary on a central group of the works included in the exhibition. *Nightshift* will remain on view at Fort Gansevoort's website through July 9, 2020.