

FORT GANSEVOORT

OUTSIDER ART NOW

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May, 3 2018

MICHELANGELO LOVELACE

For a long time art has been made to be understood by everyone. You can easily get scared by looking at the demons that adorn medieval churches and find out how the image should be understood by anyone. To do this, it was necessary to simplify.

Michelangelo Lovelace is like this: he shouts the desperation caused by the chasm between poverty and wealth of **Cleveland**, where he was born and raised. He becomes the voice of racial, cultural and economic tensions of the city, tells the world of Afro American people in simple images born from the fusion of reality and his imagination.

His paintings are visual documentation of the life in many American cities because they represent the reality of living in a community where everything can happen at any time and where life can often be fast and poor. He tells this stories with clear and understandable images to anyone.

“ So my work is about the community. When people see my work, they see themselves. They see their streets. They see their environment. They can put themselves in (the painting) and relate to the message that you are expressing. So when I paint, I come from that viewpoint. I try to construct it so that I’m inviting my audience into the picture to have a conversation about whatever issue I’m addressing in the painting. I always put text in my work, because there is text everywhere. Because I’m looking at my environment, I also have to look at the signs and the words being used in my environment. ” (from clevscene.com)

Michelangelo Lovelace is not an outsider, but his style strongly refers to a series of American figures that tell their daily life with this freshness: from **Reverend Albert Wagner** (his mentor) to Howard Finster, up to a series of young artists (I think of some authors of Land or Pure Vision Arts and many others).

Michelangelo was born in 1960 and is one of the most expressive painters of Cleveland. In January 1984, Lovelace decides to enroll at the Cleveland Institute of Art, where he works hard to develop his artistic talent.

Lovelace paints with acrylics in a seemingly childish style, but his work has been exhibited for years (MOCA Cleveland, Springfield Museum of Art, ...) and has won a series of awards. He often uses a complex bird-eye perspective and he puts signs or billboards in his paintings to communicate his verbal ideas.

Regarding his relationship with Outsider Art, Michelangelo admires **Jacob Lawrence, William H. Johnson and Faith Ringgold**. He also explains that:

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" I was told I was an outsider artist because my mentor Reverend Albert Wagner was labeled as an outsider artist. Both of us did not graduate from any school and are self taught, so people think of us as outsider artists. Plus the colors and simplistic drawings I use are typical of this. This is just the simplicity of the way I handle my materials and the type of drawing I do. I do not consider myself an outsider artist, I just consider myself an artist. One thing I noticed over the years in Cleveland, is that if you are an African American artist and are not academically trained, this is how they find a way to label you. My drawings are crude, they are textured, and I flatten the figures so a fit into this esthetic that people choose to label me as. "

On May 3, Fort Gansevoort (New York City) presents *The Land* , the first solo exhibition of Michelangelo Lovelace, which traces its artistic work from 1994 to today.

The exhibition, which can be visited until June 16, recomposes the entire route of Lovelace, especially focusing on portraits of the events of Cleveland, its main subject.

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