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## Cleveland Artist Michelangelo Lovelace Faces Health Challenges

Dennis Knowles - April 14, 2020



Michelangelo Lovelace seen painting in his studio in 2017 [Dennis James Knowles / ideastream]

At the start of the new year, well-known Cleveland artist Michelangelo Lovelace became a patient at his day job for the past 19 years, Metro Health Medical Center, where he works as a home health-care aid. He wasn't stricken by the coronavirus, but by lingering health issues previously untreated.

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Lovelace at his studio in 2019 [Dennis James Knowles / ideastream]

Lovelace knew he was sick before this year, but he didn't know how sick. In 2018, while not feeling well, he had his first major art show in New York at the Gansevoort Gallery. Jillian Steinhauer of the New York Times reviewed the exhibit, noting: "He has a distinctive ability to dramatize the intractable social forces that threaten to drown us."

A year later and feeling worse, he exhibited at the Chicago International Art Expo. "I kept putting it off and putting it off," Lovelace said.

Michelangelo Lovelace painting [Dennis James Knowles / ideastream]

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On January 8, the pain become so severe Lovelace walked into the emergency room at



MetroHealth.

“If I hadn’t come in, I probably would had died,” Lovelace said, “I had gallbladder problems and gallstones, a collapsed bowel track and hernia.”

His condition was complicated by hypotension – low blood pressure.

Lovelace is a self-taught artist. At 16 years old, he began painting urban street scenes of Cleveland that depict social, cultural and economic divisions between the haves and havenots. He’s a 2015 Cleveland Arts Prize winner and the recipient of grants and commissions, but he considers himself a struggling artist, who needs full-time employment and bene ts.

Michelangelo Lovelace painting [Dennis James Knowles / ideastream]



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"I'm really blessed for the time working at Metro and benefits they've provided me," Lovelace



said. "Being an artist, you don't have medical, when you try and survive off of your art, you know, you find yourself battling your health. Not having medical puts you behind the eight ball and economically bankrupts you."

On April 8, Lovelace underwent a biopsy of his pancreas. He's gone on long-term disability.

As part of his recovery, he paints when he feels well enough.

"It's my therapy, he said. "My wife allowed me to move my studio from the basement into the first-floor living room so I wouldn't have to walk downstairs."

Lovelace at his studio in 2019 [Dennis James Knowles / ideastream]

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As for the skilled rehabilitation facility at Metro Health Medical Center that Lovelace works for,



it's been made over into an area for COVID-19 patients. "I would be right there. Helping people who couldn't help themselves," Lovelace said.

For now, however, Michelangelo is helping himself recover by adhering to his doctor's orders and creating art.

"What it has done is increased my appreciation to paint, having that pleasure of being able to paint is therapeutic," he said.