

# FORT GANSEVOORT

WhyNow

## ‘Dignity in eye-to-eye exchanges’ — Michelangelo Lovelace’s Nightshift

During his time as a nursing aide, Michelangelo Lovelace made numerous portraits of elderly care home residents. Against the backdrop of coronavirus, the new online Nightshift invites us to confront our biases towards the elderly.

Sammi Gale - June 30, 2020



Michelangelo Lovelace, *American Panther*, 2016, 40 x 60 in, Acrylic on canvas

Nursing homes are a vulnerable place to be at the best of times. But now more than ever. Care homes have proved coronavirus incubators and sadly account for a staggering share of the death toll in both the UK and the US. It's time we confronted our biases — both personal and systemic — towards the elderly. Fort Gansevoort's online Nightshift exhibition is the perfect place to start.

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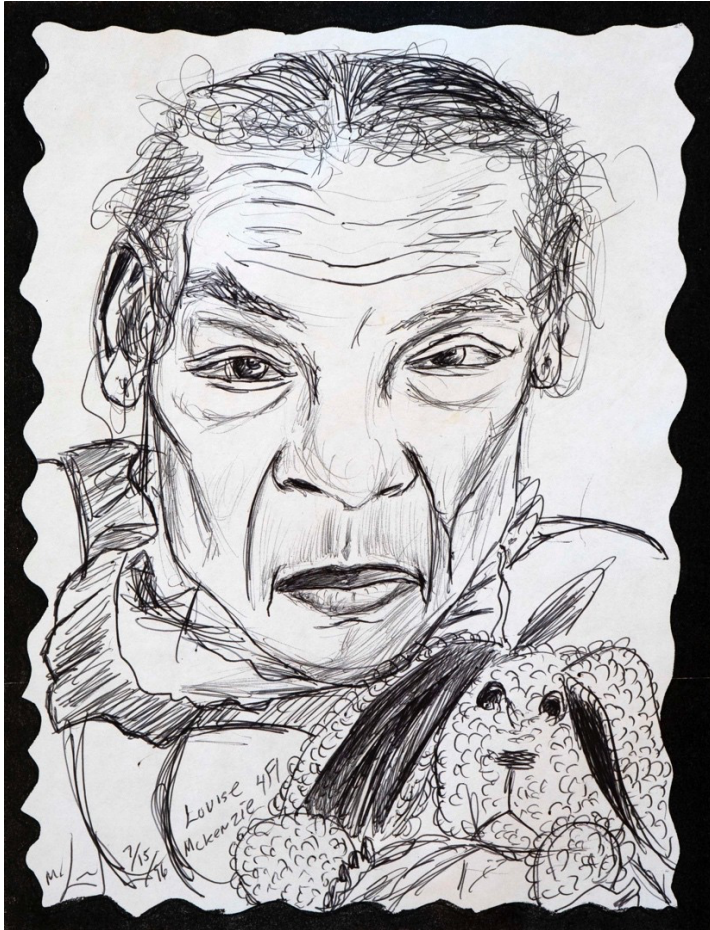


Michelangelo Lovelace, *At The Intersection of East 79th And Old Cedar*, 1997, 72.25 x 72.25 in, Acrylic on textured canvas

Nightshift brings together 22 drawings spanning from 1993 to 2008. Michelangelo Lovelace's portraits, drawn from over 30 years experience as a nurse's aide, bring such character to a space I often think of as characterless. Even the phrase 'nursing home' brings back memories of nonenal, high-backed chairs, and institutional hallways — memories I've shut away. Perhaps just like how, as a society, we've conveniently neglected the elderly.

'Residents in the Day Room on the Fifth Floor' (1993) proves a welcome to the community in marker pen. The only figure facing us is, ironically, featureless, emitting authority in a blue power suit on TV. The rest of the room is loosely orientated towards the television set; I say 'loosely', because Lovelace brilliantly captures the disjointed drift of chairs and wheelchairs seemingly pointed towards nothing in particular, an angular awkwardness echoed in the sketchily rendered octagonal tables.

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Michelangelo Lovelace, *Louise McKenzie*, 1996, 8.5 x 11 in, Ink on paper

A man in the background appears to be asleep, another man to the right of him is scratching his face, a couple to the right again might be talking, but perhaps in murmured tones — you can imagine the television being the loudest thing in the room. Disjointed and subdued the Day Room might seem, but in fact it's just the opposite: Lovelace brings these disparate figures together with vibrant blues and yellows, hastily hatched net curtains beaming like party streamers.