

Artist Profile – Alvin Loving

b. 1935 Detroit, MI; d. 2005 New York City

Loving's father, Alvin Loving Sr., was a teacher as well as an artist. Starting when Loving was twelve years old, his father had him copy paintings he had done. Loving quickly realized his passion and talent with painting and began painting sets for plays done in a Detroit high school. After graduating high school in 1954, Loving started taking classes at Wayne State University, then a local art school, before moving with his family to India for a year. It was in India that Loving decided to pursue a career in fine arts as opposed to commercial arts. Loving earned an associate's degree from Flint Junior College, a B.F.A. from the University of Illinois, and a Master's degree from the University of Michigan. Loving received many awards throughout his artistic career, included are two fellowships, the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship and the Guggenheim Fellowship.

When Loving began as a painter, most black artists were trying to depict the African American experience, but Loving was drawn to the style of abstract expressionism. Loving's early signature style comprised of representations of open cubes with interlocking edges that resembled optical illusion paintings. In the 1970s Loving began experimenting with his works and started creating paintings that used the wall of the gallery as the canvas. He tacked strips of painted canvas on the walls and ceilings to drape them across the gallery space, the pieces were sewn into various geometrical shapes to remain in his style of geometric abstraction. After Loving experimented with using the wall as a canvas, he began creating soft sculptures; woven-fabric surfaces that were tactile in nature and stemmed from his first sewn cloth works.

In the 1980s and 90s Loving was still experimenting and making new stylistic changes in his works, a significant one being collage. Loving used paint with cardboard that jutted out from the edges of the painting, he was also known for his use of warm colors with touches of cool tones. Soon after beginning his collage work, Loving learned how to make his own paper and began incorporating this into his pieces. Although people have claimed that it is easy to find patterns that resemble traditional African art in Loving's work, he made it clear that this was not his intention and was skeptical about an African American aesthetic.

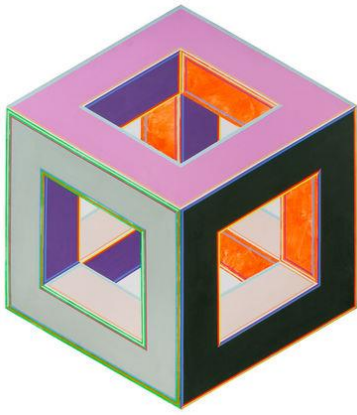
Loving's work was about geometric shapes and line, color, and experimenting with materials. He wanted to focus on the tension between flatness and spatial illusionism in his early works that included hard-edged geometric shapes. In his later works, Loving focused on ideas of centralized composition, figure/ground separation, and the pictorial frame while he began using torn canvas and collage as his medium. In his collage works Loving used a process of overlapping patterns and shapes to create irregularity, depth, space, and to engulf the viewer.

Examples of Loving's works include *Cube 28* (1); an example of his earlier style, *Self-Portrait #23* (2); an example of his later works when he used strips of canvas right on the gallery wall, and *Mercer Street VII* (3); an example of his later works with collage and handmade paper.

Online sources:

<https://biography.jrank.org/pages/2810/Loving-Al.html>

<http://www.garthgreenan.com/artists/al-loving/biography1>



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