Dyani White Hawk’s work ‘Wopila | Lineage’ involved 20 people from White Hawk’s community beading what reads from afar as geometric swaths of color. Close up, the 14’ by 8-foot beaded rows shimmer with quilt work texture. The artist describes it in part as “a moment of gratitude and recognition of the contributions of Indigenous women to the history of abstraction.”

The work is hanging in the Whitney Museum’s prestigious Biennial show in New York City, at the fifth-floor entrance. Titled “Quiet as It’s Kept,” the Biennial is described on the Whitney’s website as “an interdisciplinary and intergenerational group of sixty-three artists and collectives whose dynamic works reflect the challenges, complexities, and possibilities of the American experience today.”

Alicia Eller of the Star Tribune was at the March 29 VIP opening for the exhibit which runs through September 5. A link to her article is at northeastminneapolisartsdistrict.com. White Hawk has a studio in the Casket Arts Building in the Arts District.

Two collectives joining for mural at co-op

by Josh Blanc

Creatives After Curfew and Four Story Collective will join to paint a mural on the northwest side of the Eastside Food Co-op, painting live and in person throughout Art-A-Whirl weekend, May 20-22.

It’s part of the Mural Central project, which invited proposals for various buildings. When the two groups discovered that the other would be applying, they agreed to work together. Between the two groups there will be 10 artists forming an all-star roster of muralists whose studios are located in Northeast Minneapolis. The two collectives view the Eastside Food Co-op mural as an opportunity to co-create many shared beliefs that come from their individual work as artists, activists and conveners of community discussion.

The mural is currently scheduled to be completed by June 6. Eastside Food Co-op will be hosting an event featuring music, food, and entertainment on Saturday, May 21 from noon to 6 p.m.

Guggenheim fellow will have solo show at Northeast’s Dreamsong gallery

by Karen Kracon

A conversation with St. Paul artist Ta-coumba T. Aiken is a lot like taking in one of his paintings: Many ideas and winding threads lead to findings that might shift as you further consider them. There’s a playfulness that also can manifest itself in his work.

“It’s like a motion picture … or maybe an emotion picture,” he said, laughing at his play on words, but also dead serious as he described studio visitors’ shifting reactions to “Awakening,” the title piece in his upcoming solo exhibition at Northeast’s Dreamsong gallery.

He created “Awakening” and others that will be in the show, by using strips of tape to mask parts of the canvas as he applied color; multiple applications of tape and paint result in what Dreamsong co-owner and curator Rebecca Heidenberg calls “vortexes of color,” and in the case of “Awakening” says radiating outward.

Aiken compares “Awakening” to African drumming and Gregorian chants: “After a while you’re not hearing the repetitive, you’re hearing the tones that are going through the repetitive, the swirling of something else.” That visual swirling surrounds a figure looking out from the background of the painting. “You look through the shadings and the beams of light and notice that you’re not going to get the same expression every time.”

Aiken, who last month added a Guggenheim fellowship to his long list of grants, fellowships and awards, is an established artist in the Twin Cities whose public art appears in many venues, from the enameled metal of the exterior of Walker West Music Academy and 40-foot canvases that hung in a lobby at the McKnight Foundation.

Some of his works are part of the collection at the Walker Art Center; the most recent a triptych “No Words,” that he completed in response to the murder of George Floyd and was displayed in the exhibition Five Ways In: Themes from the Collection. Aiken flowed seamlessly between the present and past as he talked about his work and life as an artist. He evoked his mother’s gaze as he described how “No Words” evolved and how he was haunted in his live/ work space by the woman depicted in the central panel. For a while, he said, he needed to remove the canvases from the studio.

“It was like, if I did something really bad … And I say, ‘Hi mom,’ and then I get ready to go wash my face and hands and to set the table. And she’s sitting there, staring at me … And then I start confessing everything that I’ve done in the past ten years. It’s that look of total disbelief. There’s no words, she has nothing she can say, it’s like disappointment with just a glimmer of hope in there.”

Ta-coumba Aiken in his studio. (Photo by Karen Kracon)
History informs exhibit

by Mark Peterson

The City of Minneapolis has received an offer of $52,600 to purchase two parcels of land totaling approximately 7200 square feet at 715 and 719 Lowry Ave, NE, from NE Development LLC. The offer includes a development plan for a three-story, seven-unit residential building. A City council resolution is pending, and Lock, the owner of Lock’s Landscaping and Tree Service, is holding a public meeting (no Zoom or call-in) on Monday, May 9, at 4:30 p.m. in room 317, City Hall, 400 S. 5th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55401 or by phone (612) 673-3780; Fax (612) 673-2520; or email andrew.frenz@minneapolismn.gov. The meeting agenda and staff reports are available at https://lims.minneapolismn.gov/.

The City planning commission will have an in-person public meeting (no Zoom or call-in comments) on Monday, May 9, at 6:30 p.m. in room 317, City Hall, 400 S. 5th Street. Comments can be made at the meeting, or submitted to Senior City Planner Andrew Frenz at 505 4th Ave #320, Minneapolis, MN 55415 or by phone (612) 673-3780; Fax (612) 673-2520; or email andrew.frenz@minneapolismn.gov. The meeting agenda and staff reports are available at https://lims.minneapolismn.gov/.

Commission considers more Lowry apartments; city owns the vacant land

One of her more notable research findings was the Shoreham Yards Repository, an online data collection starting in the 1890s that follows the history of pollution mitigation efforts at the depot. The pollution is not only from the railroad and trucking industry but also from a historical utility pole company that would dip trees in diesel fuel. Lock shares about the site’s clean-up agreement with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency in her exhibit—nothing that although clean-up is taking place, pollution can never be undone; it can only be moved elsewhere.

The reimagining of Shoreham Yards is presented in the form of objects, documents, data sets, visualizations, maps, illustrations, and photographs including several objects on loan from the history of pollution mitigation efforts at the depot. Pollution is not only from the railroad and trucking industry but also from a historical utility pole company that would dip trees in diesel fuel. Lock shares about the site’s clean-up agreement with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency in her exhibit—nothing that although clean-up is taking place, pollution can never be undone; it can only be moved elsewhere.

Commission considers more Lowry apartments; city owns the vacant land

The Nature of Shoreham Yards is on view at the Weisman Museum through May 15. (Photo courtesy of Gudrun Lock)

Join us for an evening of community connection!

The Northeast Park Neighborhood Association (NEPNA) will host an evening of environmental engagement for renters and homeowners in Northeast Park. Neighborhood organizations and representatives will share ways we can all be environmentally friendly, engage with our city, while saving money!

Thursday May 12, 2022, 5:00–6:30 pm
Outside the Northeast Park Recreation Center, 1530 Johnson St NE

Right after the event at 6:30, join us for our monthly meeting to learn how you can lend your talents to help Northeast Park be a thriving, equitable place for ALL.

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Aiken pays it forward to others

8 • Aiken

He said the Dreamsong exhibition is the first time that gallerists have sought him out, in spite of his being well known, and that led to his remembering what he said was his first exhibition at the age of 6, in his family’s home in Evanston. His mother was a house cleaner, his dad a garbage man; they had a small backyard. They ran a religious household, very strict - as one might guess from the “No Words” musing - and they were supportive of his talent for art.

His mother was a healer, he said, and he took on her legacy when she died on his 20th birthday. “I create my art to heal the hearts and souls of people and their communities by expressing the power of the soul,” he said, and he took on her legacy when she died on his 20th birthday. “I create my art to heal the hearts and souls of people and their communities by expressing the power of the soul,” he said.

As Aiken reflected on his material needs and the potential to their own needs in the community, he described how he could draw from the “No Words” musing - and they were supportive of his talent for art.

His mother was a healer, he said, and he took on her legacy when she died on his 20th birthday. “I create my art to heal the hearts and souls of people and their communities by expressing the power of the soul,” he said.

he said that he had been aware of and “pulled in” by Aiken’s work previously, but it was a summer art crawl last year that led to several studio visits and conversations resulting in Awakening, which will feature paintings incorporating the paint-covered floors, and pride of ownership throughout. $340,000

Aiken’s Dreamsong exhibition will be the sixth show that Heidenberg and her husband, Gregory Smith, have staged since they opened the gallery and cinema space at 1237 4th Street NE in June 2021. “We have been presenting solo exhibitions and group exhibitions that focus on local artists, but in conversation with the broader contemporary art world,” Heidenberg said.

The fourth show, in Northeast’s Second Precinct, happened Wednesday, April 27, at the Logan Park building. City Council members Elliott Payne (Ward 1), Michael Rainville (Ward 3) were present, along with LaTrisha Vetaw (Ward 4) and four other members of the search committee. After Jones, director of the Great Northern innovation Project; former police officer Alisa Clements; former police officer Gary Hestness, board chair of the Minnesota Crisis Intervention Team; and Emma Pederson of the Minneapolis Youth Congress. More than 30 city residents attended. Two dozen speakers got three minutes each to give their thoughts on the attributes the ideal candidate for police chief should have. Several brought prepared statements.

By coincidence, this took place the same day the Minnesota Department of Human Rights released a report of a two-year investigation of the city’s police department, finding that the department engaged in a pattern of racial discrimination, including stops, searches, arrests and use of force against people of color at much higher rates than white people. Further, the investigation found that the police created social media accounts that caused surveillance of Black people without criminal activity. Human Rights Commissioner Rebecca Luke- ro said the Department would seek a consent decree, a legally enforceable binding agreement between two parties without an admission of guilt.

One speaker said, “I am in the room and I want everyone in the room to be aware of the report, and some speakers referred to it in their comments. Council Member Payne said, “What was more damning than the level of racism revealed in the report was that it wasn’t shocking; that the department persisted so long without inter- vention from the police administration.”

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