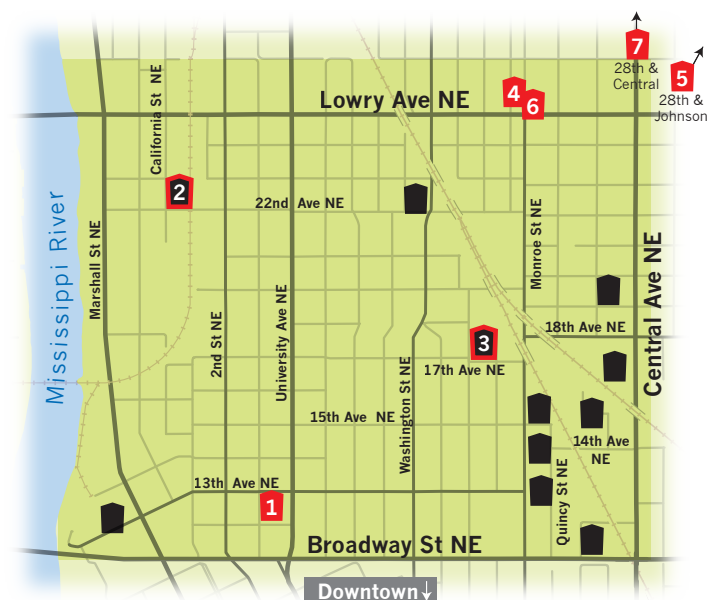




arts INSIGHTS

A page about artists and The Arts at Work by the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District in collaboration with the Northeast.



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Research & art combine in Shoreham exhibit

by Meg Bishop

The 230-acre train and trucking facility in Northeast, Shoreham Yards, has become the exposé piece of Minneapolis artist, Gudrun Lock, who wanted to discover what more there is to the depot than its current aged state. Her research of over two and a half years is being showcased at Weisman Art Museum, 333 E. River Parkway, through May 15.

Lock has resided in Northeast for 14 years. She would pass by Shoreham Yards, 2800 Central Ave. NE, on her daily dog walks. She is a professor at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Her mediums include sculpture, photography, writing and performance art.

By paying attention to the local nature and community of the site, Lock, along with many collaborators—constructed a showcase of Shoreham Yards' history and current existence within the Northeast neighborhood, contrasted with colonialist expansion,



Gudrun Lock
(Photo by Janet Lobberecht)

historical pollution, contemporary consumption and wildness.

Some of the collaborators include a bird specialist, an arborist, a professor of anthropology at University of Minnesota, a multimedia artist, a designer, a musician, a writer, a community activist, a naturalist, an artistic educator, a multimedia and performance artist, and students from the Arts Entrepreneurship Department at MCAD.

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White Hawk in Whitney Biennial

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 quill-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 intergenerational and interdisciplinary group of sixty-three artists and collectives whose dynamic works reflect the challenges, complexities, and possibilities of the American experience today."

Alicia Eler 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.



Dyani White Hawk
(Photo by Dave Ellis)

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 north side of the Eastside Food Co-op, painting live and in person throughout Art-A-Whirl weekend, May 20-21-22.

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 collaboratives view the Eastside Food Co-op mural as an opportunity to coalesce 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 Kraco

A conversation with St. Paul artist Ta-coumba T. Aiken is a lot like taking in one of his paintings: Many layers 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 results in what Dreamsong co-owner and curator Rebecca Heidenberg calls "vortexes of color," and in the case of Awakening, rays 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 shards 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



Ta-coumba Aiken in his studio. (Photo by Karen Kraco)

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 canvas 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."

AIKEN ▶ 12

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History informs exhibit

8 ◀ SHOREHAM YARDS

The topic of *value* has been Lock’s main artistic interest. “Questions of value have always been interesting to me—what we consider valuable, and what dominant culture considers valuable versus what in reality is valuable,” Lock said.

Clean water, air and the relationships within communities are some areas in which Lock looks to study the topic of value. “I focus around questions related to the underdog, so people and ideas, plants and animals, communities that often aren’t foregrounded in our contemporary culture as having any value,” Lock said.

While walking her dog around Northeast, Lock notices out-of-the-ordinary places that remind her of the curiosity she had as a teenager. “I would like to explore these types of sites, the in-between places or places where the rules were different, and you didn’t know what to expect around the corner,” Lock said.

Three years ago, Lock first began researching the tree and bird species at Shoreham Yards and the Iron Range taconite that would fall off the trains. She also took account of some areas where the sand and dirt would blow around, making it harder for passersby to breathe and see. She would notice the community that used Shoreham Yards’ neighboring garden and those who would walk their dog past the site.

“How do we rethink the green spaces around the yards as a place of possibility,” Lock asked.

One of her more notable research findings was the Shoreham Yards Repository, an online data collection starting in the 1980s 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—noting that although clean-up is taking place, pollution can never be undone; it can only be moved elsewhere.

“How do we reimagine some of these places with the remaining pollution?” Lock asked. She hopes that the 81 species of birds and numerous pollinators already present on these lands can be supported by introducing more plant and tree diversity.

When the exhibit first gained traction earlier this spring, Sue Leaf, the writer who published the biography of T.S. Roberts, founder of the Bell Museum of Natural History who is known as the father of Minnesota ornithology, reached out to Lock. Lock’s collaborators sourced entries from one of Roberts’ journals written in the 1870s that explored the species of wetland birds in the area that is now Columbia Golf Course, adjacent to Shoreham Yards. Later, he would return to capture notes on the declining population of the area’s wetland birds.

“Almost every time he mentions Sandy Lake, he says, ‘Went to Sandy Lake. We shot,’ ‘Went to Sandy Lake. We shot’—and then fifty years



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

later, after shooting them for eating and collecting specimens, he returns and finds that there’s not as many birds there,” Lock said.

“The Eurocentric thinking back then was that nature’s gifts were infinite.” She finds that wild-life sustainability was so unthought of in the late 1800s that naive consumption of nature was the usual. Contemporary consumption is another key point of Lock’s exhibit.

“It’s [the exhibit] relating to so many different types of people. You could be interested in one

very specific thing like the diversity of trees or the mapping of the landscape or be interested in birds or train hopping. There are so many ways to get involved,” Lock said.

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 University of Minnesota’s Bell Museum.

Commission considers more Lowry apartments; city owns the vacant land

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 authorizing the sale said, “The proposal is hereby determined to be in the best interests of the City and its people and that the transaction fur-

thers the City’s general plan of economic development.”

The developer has submitted land use applications for the project: including rezoning, a variance to reduce the front yard setback adjacent to Lowry Ave NE, and a site plan review.

All property owners within 350 feet of the property have been notified by mail. The City planning Commission will have an in-person public meeting (no Zoom or call-in comments) on Monday, May 9, at

4:30 p.m. in room 317, City Hall, 350 South 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) 673-3790; Fax (612) 673-2526; or email andrew.frenz@minneapolismn.gov. The meeting agenda and staff reports are available at <https://lms.minneapolismn.gov/independentBodies/IndependentBodiesMeetings/CPC>



715 and 719 Lowry Ave, NE. (Photo by Mark Peterson)

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“Damning” report precedes NE listening session

by Mark Peterson

The search for a new Minneapolis police chief came to Northeast Minneapolis the same day the Minnesota Department of Human Rights released its two-year investigation finding a pattern of racial discrimination.

After Medaria Arradondo’s announcement on Dec. 6 that he would retire as Minneapolis’ police chief, Mayor Jacob Frey made Deputy Chief and 28-year veteran Amelia Huffman the interim chief, and set in motion a nationwide search for Arradondo’s replacement.

The City of Minneapolis contracted Public Sector Search & Consulting Inc. (PSSC), which specializes in police executive hiring, to conduct the search. Mayor Frey appointed a diverse search committee to help recommend candidates to the mayor for final consideration. Calling the choice, “One of the most consequential hires we will ever make,” Frey emphasized the need to rebuild the police department and strengthen the concept of public safety in the community.

Part of the process includes an online survey and a series of listening sessions

for the public, one in each police precinct. The fourth session, 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: Sara Jones, director of the Great Northern Innocence Project; former police officer Alisa Clemons; 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 inves-

tigation found that the police created social media accounts that caused surveillance of Black people without criminal activity. Human Rights Commissioner Rebecca Luce-ro said the Department would seek a consent decree, a legally enforceable binding agreement between two parties without an admission of guilt.

Almost everyone in the room seemed 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 culture persisted so long without intervention from the police administration.”

One speaker said, “Reform of the department is not enough; foundational, structural change is needed.” Several said transparency needs to be an explicit goal. More than one speaker mentioned the power of the local police union to resist change. Another said, “We must change the police culture from warrior to guardian.”

A speaker who said she was a criminal defense attorney noted that her job required viewing a lot of body cam footage of police officers speaking disrespectfully to citizens;

another said any future chief will have to be comfortable with a reduction in resources. Two speakers said all candidates should be required to read the Department of Human Rights Report, and search committee member Jones said, “Any chief selected must be unwilling to accept the death of anyone at the hands of a police officer without inquiry.”

The final listening session will be Tuesday, May 3 from 6-7:30 pm at Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Park building, 4055 Nicollet Ave. After that, notes of the meeting will go to the full search committee and then to the Mayor. Ultimately, the appointment must be approved by the full City Council, likely in July.

Aiken pays it forward to others

8 ◀ AIKEN

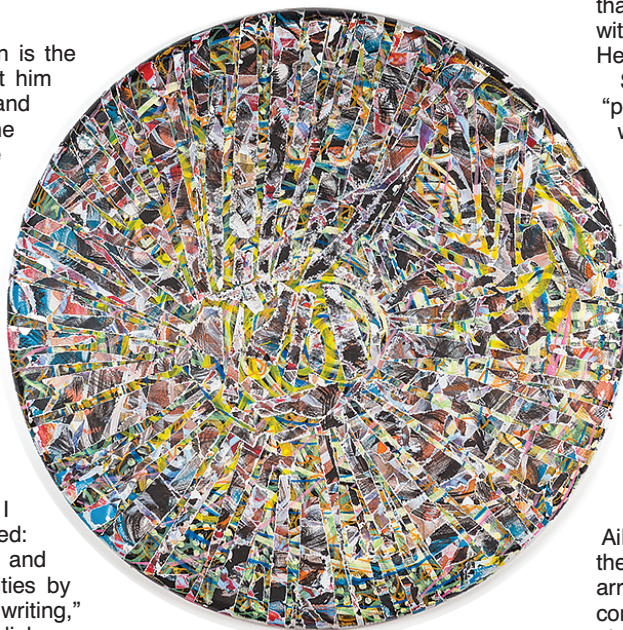
He said the Dreamsong exhibition is the first time that gallerists have sought him out, in spite of his being well known, and that led to his remembering what he said was his first exhibition at the age of 6, in his family’s home in Evanston, Ill. His mother was a house cleaner, his dad a garbageman; the train tracks were next to “their 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 inherited something that I didn’t want. But it has served me well, and I serve it well,” he says. His artist’s creed: “I create my art to heal the hearts and souls of people and their communities by evoking a positive spirit.” His “spirit writing,” as he calls his painting process, is a dialogue with community, something that he himself doesn’t always fully understand, with his creations seen differently by each person. “Do I trust between me and the creator, that they will see what they need to see, not what I want them to see?” he asked.

Also passed on from his parents, the importance of supporting community. He remembers being disciplined for taking out and thawing meat from the wrong freezer in the basement - from the one that was used to give food to neighbors who needed it - and being asked to turn his back when someone in need would show up at the door, so that he wouldn’t see who they were.

As Aiken reflected on his material needs and the extent to which his art has and hasn’t provided for them, he talked about how the sale of “No Words” to the anonymous donor who bought it for the Walker has allowed him to support other artists, funding no-strings-attached stipends to artists of color belonging to the ROHO Collective. It allowed him to buy more of other artists’ works, he explained, pointing to his collection on the wall behind him. Last year he also contributed to an arts and history program at the Minnesota African American Museum, which provided grants to Black emerging artists.

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 offering solo exhibitions and group exhibitions

that focus on local artists, but in conversation with the broader contemporary art world,” Heidenberg said.

She said that she 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 recent paintings and collages on paper that incorporate the paint-covered tape used to create the paintings. The show will open May 13 with a reception from 5 - 7.

“Our plan is not only to present this incredible show at Dreamsong and publish an important accompanying catalog, but to ensure that Ta-coumba’s work receives critical attention and acclaim in the wider art world, within and beyond the Twin Cities,” Heidenberg said.

Garnering that exposure was one of Aiken’s goals in submitting a proposal for the Guggenheim. “You have got to be pretty arrogant” - he corrected himself: “Or pretty confident- to say I’m good enough, just people don’t know it. So let me get out there, and I can guarantee you, I will work with the same vigor, the same honesty, the same humor, and reflect pain and joy and everything in a way where we can take another step forward.”

Image: Arrival, by Ta-coumba Aiken



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