

LAKE COUNTY NEWS-SUN

Brushwood Center exhibit features ex-Northwestern football player

By Annie Alleman

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“Abundance: An Art Exhibition” curated by Dwight White II will be at the Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods through Aug. 31. (Parker Nelson)

A new art exhibit by an athlete-turned-artist opens at the Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods’ gallery.

“Abundance” is an exhibit curated by former Northwestern football player turned artist and activist, Dwight White II. The exhibit seeks to explore beauty, justice, inclusion and freedom through painting and sculpture by several Chicago-area artists, White said.

The exhibit runs July 17 to Aug. 31. Hours are 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays and 1-3 p.m. Sundays.

Julia Kemerer, Brushwood Center’s Director of Arts and Administration, came across White’s 2021 Chicago mural project, “Havens: Invest in Rest,” and knew she had to one day work with him.

“We’re excited about it because Brushwood has made a commitment to showcasing programming that highlights ways people can improve their well-being and we do that through the arts and nature,” she said. “I know Dwight’s commitment to art that improves mental health and highlighting those issues is something that really fits in well with our mission and we’re excited to bring his work to Lake County.”

White says he’s fortunate to be able to curate and showcase art in this show. It is a group show with several artists represented.

“Abundance” started out of a larger idea, an exhibition he curated in called “Something I Can Feel,” he said.

“Abundance is really an extension of that show in a way to show the Black experience through art,” he said. “All of the creators in this show are African-American artists and utilize primarily the mediums of painting.

“A lot of them are either oil or acrylic-based artists and there are some oil pastels included as well. They have trusted me to bring that larger vision to life and we’re lucky to be able to work with Brushwood on this.”

White is originally from Houston, Texas, but didn’t become an artist until he moved to Evanston for college, he said. He began navigating the art world, looking for opportunities to showcase his work, which led to the desire to curate his own shows.

He grew up an athlete before playing football at Northwestern University.

“Balancing art and sport was almost nonexistent for me until college,” he said. “That was the first time I gave myself permission to pursue my creative side while being an athlete. I ended up getting injured before my final season at Northwestern and that’s (when) it truly opened up (my) creativity on an entirely different level. It was the only thing that brought me joy in a darker time in my life.”

From there, art became a way to connect and communicate with people, he said.

He still mentors young football players and tries to impart not only his knowledge of the game, but also what happens when their football careers are over.

“The art world is where I spend the majority of my time now navigating, especially in the Chicago area,” he said.

“My primary objective now is inspiring people and sharing stories through art. That is where I spend my time now.”

White works primarily in oil paint as well as acrylics and oil pastels.

“When I do murals — outdoor, large-scale pieces — I primarily work with spray paints,” he said.

He worked in marketing for four years before making curating and creating art his full-time job.

“Abundance” will celebrate abundance and peace, he said.

“There’s a lot of color in the show but the subject matters have a very peaceful tone throughout. It focuses on self-care, family, peace. The name of the show, ‘Abundance,’ is all (about) ... having more, celebrating yourselves, looking at artwork as a highlight and something that is supposed to bring joy, happiness and peace. Those are the main objectives of the show and you will see that throughout several of the pieces.”

‘Abundance: An Art Exhibition’ curated by Dwight White II

When: July 17-Aug. 31

Where: Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods, 21850 Riverwoods Road, Riverwoods

Tickets: Free

Information: 224-633-2424; brushwoodcenter.org

Annie Alleman is a freelance reporter for the News-Sun.