

Saffronia Downing: *Pressed Flower*
August 14 - September 27, 2026

Opening Reception: Friday, August 14, 6 - 9pm
Open Hours: Monday through Thursday, 11am – 3pm, and by appointment
ACRE Projects
2921 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL

ACRE Projects is pleased to present *Pressed Flower*, a solo exhibition of new work by artist and researcher Saffronia Downing.

Featuring ceramics with impressions taken from the natural environment, works on paper, and a tactile research table mapping her harvesting of native clays, Downing blurs boundaries between the outdoors and the domestic. She connects her personal history to the ecological memories of the land, forming a non-linear archive of place while concurrently revealing clay as a site-specific marker of geological, biological, and industrial impact.

The artist pays homage to disappearing folk art traditions including quilting, tile-making, and bricklaying. In one such gesture, she embeds ceramic tiles into ACRE's gallery walls, marking her first infrastructural intervention. Here, the inlaid tiles represent architectural building blocks, further solidifying the collapse between the natural world and built environment.

Downing deepens her exploration of craft histories in a new body of work made for *Pressed Flower*, developed through ritual-like repetition. Day after day she takes impressions of a decorative floral tile lifted from the concrete outside of her home. The flower reveals itself through rubbings on paper woven into a quilt, pressings on soft clay, imprints fired and glazed. While the ceramics recall collections akin to those found in herbariums, the works on paper are reminiscent of gravestone rubbings, both reinforcing the connections between body, memory, and the earth. Together, these archival methods form an epistemology of plant life that uses ecological material as a tool for record-keeping.

We invite you to join us for the opening reception of Saffronia Downing: *Pressed Flower* on Friday, August 14 from 6-9pm or during gallery open hours, Mondays through Thursdays, 11am–3pm and by appointment.

Saffronia Downing (she/they) is a ceramic artist whose research explores material studies and ecological thought. Downing works with wild clay to create sculptures and installations that map relationships to place. She received her MFA in Ceramics from School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2020. Downing has been a recipient of awards, fellowships, and residencies such as the Future Bodies symposium at the Gardiner Museum, Toronto, ON, and a studio session at A-B Project, Los Angeles, CA; grants from SPACE American Rescue Plan and Buck Lab for Climate and Environment; fellowships at College of the Atlantic, Lunder Institute of American Art, and Oxbow School of Art; and residencies at PADA, ACRE, and Tokyo Arts University. Recent exhibitions include Terrestrial Extra at the Dorsky Museum, New Paltz, NY; A Beautiful Experience; The Midwestern Grotto Tradition at the John Michael Kohler Art Center, Sheboygan, WI; Tracks and Other Signs at Old Friends Gallery, Chicago, IL; Clay-In-Place at Triangle Projects, Los Angeles, CA; and Field Dug Over at Bad Water Gallery, Knoxville, TN.

ACRE is supported in part by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Field Foundation, Good Chaos, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, Arts Work Fund, and Illinois Arts Council Agency.

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Accessibility Information:

ACRE Projects is on the ground level with a 4-inch step to enter the building. The bathroom is wheelchair accessible. Masks are not required to enter the space but we do have masks available upon request. For additional information, please contact the gallery's accessibility coordinator Lauren Leving at exhibitions@acreresidency.org.