

Colin Martinez: ARENA
November 13 - 29, 2026

Opening Reception & Book Launch: Friday, November 13, 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 *ARENA*, a solo exhibition of new work by artist Colin Martinez, and the launch of his second self-published photo book.

Made over the last five years, the quiet frames included in *ARENA* depict evocative moments of pigeon rescuers; controlled burns; bodybuilders; and loners, centering the precarious intersection of people and nature in the contemporary Midwest. The work constantly asks: what might it mean to find new worlds of curiosity and hope in the degraded landscapes of this region?

Martinez shares:

I was raised with birds as pets. We had many over the years, brought home from the humane society with cages or in glass, but never pets any bigger than a bird; my dad wouldn't allow it. For a time we had a mouse named Thimble who lives on in many of my mother's passwords, plenty of unnamed fish, and a couple aquatic frogs, but the birds were the most enduring and loved family pets. The longest living, most agreeable bird was named Ilzamar, and I always thought of him like our family's dog. The midwest is full of dogs and families and birds, though they say you see a lot less birds than you used to.

ARENA began about five years ago when I was living in Ohio, and was initially born from a desire to make images that spoke of finding respite within a changing world. Delusions of pristineness are rare in this region—most folks who know the enormous rusted industry, pitted beauty of extracted land, and roadside idiots will tell you all about it. In this way, a new kind of relationship emerges within the interface between human and nature. In this changing region I find myself constantly asking: what might it mean to find new worlds of wonder and hope in these degraded landscapes? There is hope in birds, dogs, and family. There is hope in making images. Most of all, there is hope in the arenas of nature.

A remembrancer of wild/Arenas we avoid/The fear she rode,
reminded of the void/That flung the ancient rider to the cold.
- James Wright, from *Above the River*

We invite you to join us for the opening reception and book launch of *ARENA* on Friday, September 13 from 6-9pm or visit the exhibition during gallery open hours, Mondays through Thursdays, 11am–3pm and by appointment.

Colin Martinez (b. 1999) is a visual artist and designer based in Chicago, IL. He was born and raised in Ohio, where he earned a B.S. in Landscape Architecture from the Ohio State University. He employs print, installation, moving image, and collaborative projects to interrogate how familial history, ecological change, and capital investment interact in the landscape we share. His work often pictures the precarious unison of the natural and human-made.

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.