



Positive or Zero: Long Distance Collaboration
August 8 – September 21, 2025

Frey Michael Austin, Matthew Austin (For the Birds Trapped in Airports), Lois Bielefeld, Andi Crist, Camila Leiva, Liz Roberts, Jamie Robertson, lee rae walsh
Curated by Zach Clark and Sara J. Winston

Opening Reception: Friday, August 8, 6 – 9pm
Open Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, Noon – 4pm and by appointment
ACRE Projects, 2921 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60657

Chicago, IL, May 15, 2025 – Artists' Cooperative Residency & Exhibitions (ACRE) is pleased to present *Positive or Zero: Long Distance Collaboration*, curated by Zach Clark and Sara J. Winston. This group exhibition features a selection of artists making work in relationship with distance, showcasing collaborations over time and with time; work made with elders, ancestors, and past selves; the labor that goes into hiding labor; and projects about the places we once were and the resilient ways we figure out where we are going next.

Clark and Winston state that, "To be an artist who works in any form of collaboration requires a level of comfort with distance. At the bare minimum, an artist must be willing to remove their ego, at least to some extent, as the project is no longer solely theirs but a product of multiple minds and practices. It is rare that collaborative projects occur in a single fixed location with the makers working side-by-side; an expansion of time and space is almost always integral to collaborative work. One must be willing to approach the work in the only way distance can be measured, as positive or zero, never negative. The work will either progress or it will never be made at all."

Positive or Zero: Long Distance Collaboration provides a breadth of ideas for approaching the world today and tomorrow. We must be willing to work together and to learn from each other and from our histories, even slowly, if we have any hope of moving forward.

About the Artists

Frey Michael Austin (they/she/free) is a queer interdisciplinary artist, musician, maker + performer obsessively flirting with the divine. Their visual artworks and installations have been exhibited nationally and internationally and they have performed in such venues as The Park Avenue Armory (NYC), The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Hauser & Wirth Los Angeles, The Art Institute of Chicago, Green Line Performing Arts Center, Steppenwolf Theatre, Chicago Cultural Center, Arts Incubator and The Smart Museum of Art. They design and build unique altarpieces for both private and public spaces of worship – most recently completing a new central bimah for the historic KAM Isaiah Reform synagogue of Hyde Park-Kenwood – as well as artful, custom home furniture pieces. They compose and produce



music for film and for collaborative, multidisciplinary performance projects GABE, Growing Concerns Poetry Collective and Daisy Days.

Matthew Austin (he/him) is an arts worker in Los Angeles who is still learning. He has been working with books, furniture, and education in his creative efforts for the past several years. Previous projects aligned with the efforts of this studio first began with The Chicago Perch in 2012 and evolved into Candor Arts in 2015. For the Birds Trapped in Airports is the current iteration of Matthew's publishing practice, which is also the name of his newest book.

Lois Bielefeld is a queer series-based artist working in photography, audio, video, and performance. Their work continually asks what links routine and ritual to the formation of identity, personhood, and the development of meaning-making. Currently settled in Milwaukee, Lois has lived on both coasts with a graduate degree from the California Institute of the Arts. Their work is in the permanent collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art in New York City, the Milwaukee Art Museum, the Museum of Wisconsin Art, Saint Kate Arts Hotel, the Warehouse Museum and the Racine Art Museum in Wisconsin. Bielefeld has shown at The International Center of Photography in New York City, The National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC, de Young Museum in San Francisco, The Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago, and Dom Wein in Vienna.

Andi Crist is a Chicago-based artist, fabricator, and educator whose sculptural practice is rooted in her experience as a professional art handler and builder. Working across woodworking, ceramics, leather craft, and casting, she explores the role of the artist as a laborer through humor, skepticism, and traditional craft techniques. Her work critically engages with value systems in the arts economy, often blurring the lines between work, play, and practice. With a sardonic approach to institutional spaces, Crist challenges the perceived neutrality of the gallery and questions the frameworks that shape creative labor. She embraces absurdity and utility in equal measure, holding that being a "master of none is better than a master of one." Crist currently works as an adjunct professor and materials shop manager at the Illinois Institute of Technology, where she supports student learning through hands-on instruction in fabrication and material experimentation.

Camila Leiva is a transnational Chilean and U.S. American artist and educator whose body and soul are often seen traveling between Minneapolis and Santiago. Her life has been shaped by brave and loving women, especially by her grandmothers and her mother. She grew up in the musical and visual culture of Chilean social movements for justice, during the final years of the Pinochet dictatorship and in its neoliberal aftermath. She paints community murals, hand-draws comics, and sews textile arpilleras. She is razor-focused on telling the unknown story of her grandmother Fabiola Letelier, Chile's most tenacious human rights lawyer. Her work explores themes of memory, histories from below, and questioning the public versus private dichotomy imposed on women's lives. She attended ACRE in 2022, and completed her MFA at the University of Minnesota in 2023. She is the recipient of



Minnesota State Arts Board Grants, Forecast Public Art Early Career Grant and Creative Response Fund from the City of Minneapolis grant.

Liz Roberts makes artwork that is often collaborative and rooted in moving image and sound. Her work situates personal histories in political landscapes, navigating from her lived experience and bringing decades of behind the scenes work in mutual aid organizing. Her current projects address drug policy, harm reduction, and the drug war in the United States by centering the voices of people who use or have used drugs. Roberts has exhibited with galleries, museums, alternative spaces, and film festivals. She was part of the 2022 BAVC Media Maker Fellowship to develop her short film MIDWASTE into a feature length film. In 2023 she was awarded a Film/Video Studio Residency with the Wexner Center for the Arts and in 2024 became a Film House Resident at SFFILM. She was recently awarded the Direct Access Fund from International Documentary Association's Nonfiction Access Initiative and the SFFILM Rainin Filmmakers with Disabilities Grant.

Jamie Robertson is a visual artist and educator who works in photography and video. Her creative practice investigates the landscape of the American South as a living archive of Black life, engaging the land physically and spiritually as a primary witness to Black resistance, solace, and power. She has exhibited in galleries and museums nationally and internationally; in addition, her work is held in both private and public collections. She has received multiple grants and fellowships, most recently through The Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University. She earned an MFA in Studio Art from the University of Houston and an MSc in Art Therapy from Florida State University. She is an Assistant Professor at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA.

lee rae walsh (they/them) is an artist-poet-photographer-teacher-researcher-and-friend. they received their mfa from columbia college chicago in 2016 and have facilitated independent spaces for study, experimental performances, small-scale publishing and collaboration for over ten years. they have most recently been published in worms magazine (issue 7: artists that write and writers that art), the minutes of the hildegard von bingen society for gardening, vol.2, and sissy anarchy. they currently run sunday school, a platform that celebrates anti-institutional forms of pedagogy, calling on a cabinet of queer angels as guides.

About the Curators

Zach Clark is an Oakland, CA based artist, educator, and publisher. He received his BFA from University of Illinois Chicago, and MFA from University of California Davis. His work is rooted in locational memory and is based in the intersection of printmaking, photography, and publication. He publishes as National Monument Press, a publishing project focused on supporting uniquely American stories through small edition printed matter and curatorial projects, completed largely through collaboration with other artists. He is one half of Chute Studio, an Oakland based Risograph publishing studio. He is a lecturer at California State University East Bay, and has shown, worked, taught, and is in collections across North America, Europe, and Japan.



Sara J. Winston is an artist and writer based in New York. She works with photographs, text, and the book form to describe and respond to chronic illness and its ongoing impact on her body, mind, family, and memory. Sara is Associate Director of the Photography Program at Bard College; Acting Chair of the Penumbra Foundation Long Term Photobook Program; and a member of Storm King Art Center's Accessibility Advisory Group.

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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.