



***tether me to the ground or let me float***

**Curated by Gemma Kim**

**February 22 - April 25, 2026**

**Opening Reception: Sunday, February 22, 2 - 5pm**

**Epiphany Center for the Arts**

**201 South Ashland Avenue, Chicago, IL 60607**

ACRE and Epiphany Center for the Arts are pleased to present *tether me to the ground or let me float*, organized by ACRE curatorial fellow Gemma Kim.

Through the investigation of personal histories, familial ancestry, and the weight of place, the six ACRE alumni artists in *tether me to the ground or let me float* consider how we gather fragmented ideas of place and identity to piece together notions of belonging and grounding.

Grounding becomes a means of navigating obscured histories and solidifying ourselves, our ancestors, and our communities to a place. *tether me to the ground or let me float* examines how we ground ourselves within our own histories and how we become informed and infused by the places we occupy.

The exhibition questions the complexity of home, the relationship between the environment and the body, and the fragility of temporalities. Molded and shaped by the landscapes that surround them, the artists in the exhibition explore the multifaceted, imperfect, and often difficult undertaking of building an ecology of belonging that radically imagines our relationships to the ongoing history of a place.

Unearthing and breaking down these relationships, the artists reflect on space in relation to memory, migration, community, and spirituality. They consider the tangible traces of our presence and the ephemeral quality of the personal and ancestral histories that both tether and release us from the places we pass through and remain in. Place and home become at once stark and ephemeral in these narratives, inviting the viewer to imagine how we locate and ground ourselves within these complexities.

We invite you to join us for the opening reception of *tether me to the ground or let me float* on Sunday, February 22 from 2 - 5pm at Epiphany Center for the Arts or by appointment.

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### **About the Artists:**

**Prerna** is a multidisciplinary artist born in Mumbai, India. In her most recent works she engages with familial archives and government documents to discern the overlapping elements of bureaucracy and superstition. Prerna is interested in her relationship to being the subject and being subjected, using the materials and language found in government buildings, airports, classrooms, and other spaces where the body undergoes categorization and evaluation. She has been awarded several global opportunities and residencies, including the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Artists for Artists Edition 4: Language Is Never on the Ground, Artists' Cooperative Residency & Exhibitions (ACRE), MCAD X Jerome Foundation Fellowship for Early Career Artists, and the Studios at MASS MoCA. She is currently a resident at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts.

**Colin Martinez** is a visual artist and urban designer living and working in Chicago, IL. He was born and raised in Ohio, where he earned a B.S. in Landscape Architecture from the Ohio State University in 2021. Photography is an essential tool that he uses to understand the built and non-constructed environments. Employing printed images, installation, video, and collaborative projects, Martinez interrogates how familial history, ecological change, and capital investment interact in the landscape. His work often pictures the precarious unison of the natural and human-made.

**yétiündé olágbajú** is an artist, cultural strategist, adorner, and earthworker living and creating in Kashia Pomo (Mendocino County). Their practice is anchored by a single guiding question: What must we reckon with as we build a future, together? In pursuit of answers to this question, they approach artmaking as both inquiry and offering.

Inspired by the divine and the everyday within the Black diaspora, they work with sound, sculpture, ceremony, and collaboration to illuminate our interdependence in the wake of these confrontations.

Holding an MFA from Mills College, they are the recipient of multiple awards including a Headlands Center for the Arts fellowship, Foundation for Contemporary Arts award and LACE Lightening Fund award. They are the Founder + Director of àjìjà space, the Education and Public Programs Manager at Mendocino Art Center and consult as a cultural organizing strategist and facilitator.

**Lars Shimabukuro** is an artist whose work expands ideas of homelands, family, and memory to include the queer landscapes that raised them. They earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Studio Art from Yale University in 2013, an Associate Degree from Haywood Community College (NC) focusing on weaving in 2019, and completed the Core Fellowship program at the Penland School of Craft in 2023. Lars has shown nationally and internationally, and teaches

weaving at craft schools. He is currently pursuing a Design Studies MFA at the University of Wisconsin's School of Human Ecology in Madison, on unceded Ho-Chunk land.

**Ian John Solomon** is an Emmy award winning interdisciplinary artist, journalist & organizer from Detroit, Michigan. Ian's lens-based practice explores themes of identity, ancestry, community, land and ecology. Deeply motivated by environment, Ian's practice asserts a relationship to the natural world as a necessary vehicle to personal and communal actualization, utilizing space and place as foundation for urgent community conversations spanning the spiritual to the political.

**Shirin Towfiq**, is an Iranian-American artist whose work addresses cultural memory, legacies of trauma, migration, and translation. Towfiq completed her Bachelor in Art Practice from the University of California Berkeley and a Masters of Fine Arts from Stanford University.

Towfiq has presented solo exhibitions at Spill 180 Gallery, Brooklyn, NY; The Mingei Museum, San Diego, CA; 1078 gallery, Chico, CA; City Gallery, San Diego, CA; and has been included in group exhibitions at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; The De Young Museum; Minnesota Street Project. She has won various awards, such as the Rydell Award and Harpo Award in 2024.

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#### **About the Curator:**

**Gemma Kim** is a curator, arts administrator, and researcher based in Chicago, IL. Her practice explores histories of displacement, diaspora, and culture, considering how we make sense of and exist in the unclear boundaries of identity and place. She is the Marjorie Susman Curatorial Fellow at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. Kim received a B.A. in Art History and English at the University of Maryland, College Park, in 2019 and a dual M.A. in Art History and Arts Administration & Policy at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2025.

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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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