

Rebecca La Marre
Jul 3 — 26, 2025



Craft Parlour

Western Front, in partnership with Peripheral Review and the Vancouver Art Book Fair, presents *Craft Parlour*, a solo exhibition by Saskatoon/Treaty 6 artist and writer Rebecca La Marre. Installed in Western Front's library, the exhibition brings together a series of ceramic writing tablets and the newly released publication *Craft Parlour* to explore the intersection of craft and writing.

La Marre began researching the history of writing across cultures and languages in 2017, experimenting with ways to merge her writing practice with clay. This led to the creation of experimental tools and surfaces used in art writing workshops held at institutions across Canada, including the Darling Foundry, Montréal; MacEwan University, Edmonton; and the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon.

During her 2023–24 residency at Western Front, La Marre expanded this research through *Craft Parlour*, a six-part workshop series that brought together ten interdisciplinary artists—Rosamunde Bordo, Amelia Butcher, Xinwei Che, Hannah Crosson, Sun Forest, Amy Gogarty, Chloë p.f. Lalonde,

Christian Newby, Emiliano Sepulveda, and Julia Wong. Selected through an open call, the group met monthly from October to April to explore craft, contemporary art, and art writing, with a focus on writing as a tactile, material practice. The sessions combined shared research and hands-on exercises, and were enriched by guest contributors Rob Froese, Danny Kostyshin, Sharon Kivland, and A Jamali Rad.

Designed by Manon Fraser and co-published by Western Front and Peripheral Review, the publication *Craft Parlour* features original contributions by La Marre and the workshop participants, offering further insight into the ideas and processes that shaped the project.

Alongside the exhibition, La Marre will present a workshop at the Vancouver Art Book Fair.

A text by A Jamali Rad, titled “A Residue or Value” (2025), was commissioned to accompany the exhibition and is included in the pages following.

RESIDUE OF VALUE

By A Jamali Rad

Writing began by using what was at hand.

Symbols were created from the angles of a tool, a hollow reed, pressed and slanted onto a clay body, wet and heavy.

Each symbol represented a sound, an idea, a number.

A form takes shape with multiple symbols placed next to one another, a form of thought.

Slowly, the clay body dries in the warmth of the evening sun, and the symbols created call that which was written into being, record, preserve.

Still carrying some weight, these bits of earth as text could be held in one's hands, transported, fired, or wetted again for repurposing.

What's found of this early writing are accounts of transactions, receipts, letters, lists and lists and lists: from the naming of the first kings who descended from the skies to the trade of livestock, seeds, and grain.

Temples held the records for transactions, loans, and taxes, and functioned much like banks, storehousing silver, wheat, barley, wool, as well as herds of cattle, goats, and sheep.

Priests managed these resources and maintained records of the temple's finances on those same clay tablets, making the material sacred and the sacred material.

I don't know when calculations were first used by ordinary people, but when trading goods, some basic arithmetic had to be done on the spot.

Though clay tokens pressed with cuneiform symbols represented the value of goods traded, the trading itself required quick addition and subtraction, so equations were done using a sort of *sand math*, or abacus:.

Pebbles are put in columns that represent place values.

As value and goods move around, the act of adding and subtracting leaves little depressions.

If a pebble is removed from a column, a concave impression is left behind in the sand as a residue of value.

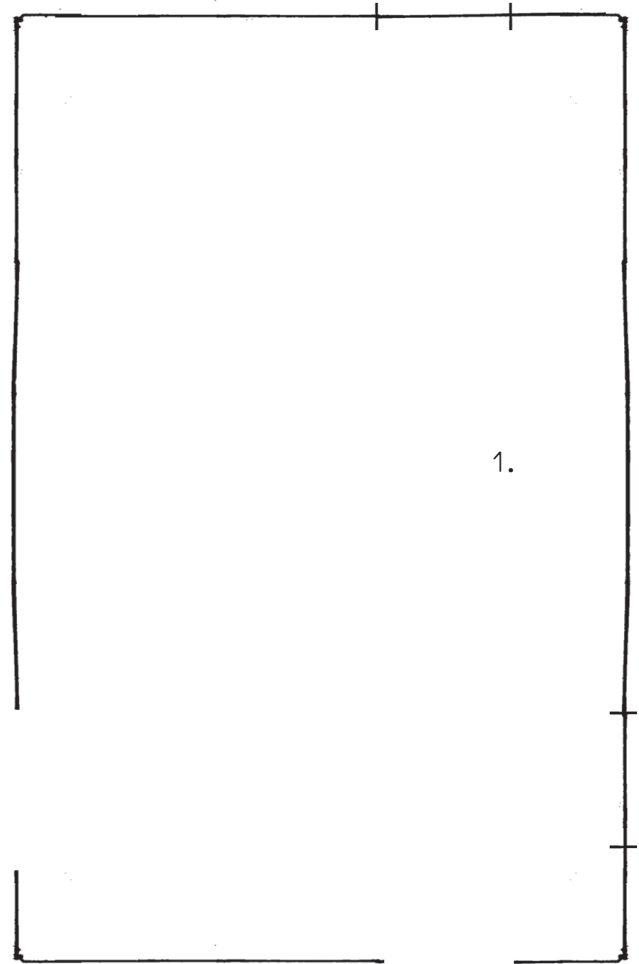
This process of removal makes a symbol, round and hollow, that comes to mean *nothing in this column*, or zero.

Biographies

Rebecca La Marre is a queer artist based in Saskatoon, Canada, or Treaty 6, the traditional home of the Blackfoot, Cree and Métis people. Her writing, making, and performance practice uses clay, text, and the human voice to give form to questions about what it means to be a person in the world. Her activity is driven by what she reads and a need to test how ideological structures, trauma, language, and ritual can shape bodies. The first person to teach her about clay was her grandmother Ellen La Marre, who displayed her work in domestic settings and craft markets.

A Jamali Rad is a text-forward artist based on the traditional territories of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishnaabeg, the Haudenosaunee, and Lunaapéewak peoples (London, Canada). Jamali Rad's work is founded on techno-materialist histories of dominant ideologies, class struggle, binary systems, and nothingness. They have exhibited and presented work across Canada and internationally. Their most recent collaboration is the speculative pedagogies project Doom Studies with C Lyke.

1. Rebecca La Marre
The Oldest Surviving Written Records Are IOUs (2025)
 Anagama woodfired stoneware, whiteboard
 dry erase emulsion, dry erase marker
 dimensions variable
 Courtesy of the artist



Project Team

Curator: Susan Gibb
 Graphic Design: Line-Gry Hørup
 Technician: Ben Wilson

Presented in partnership with Peripheral Review and Vancouver Art Book Fair with support from the Canada Council for the Arts and SK Arts.

Western Front gratefully acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Government of Canada, the BC Arts Council, the Province of British Columbia, and the City of Vancouver.