

Rosamunde Bordo
May 2 — Jul 25, 2026



Western Front
303 E 8th Ave
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Canada

Magic Show

Western Front is pleased to present *Magic Show*, a solo exhibition by Vancouver-based artist Rosamunde Bordo. The exhibition brings together new metal-cast, woodworked, glass blown, and sewn objects, alongside video. These forms resemble clues or magical instruments, positioning the figures of the detective and the magician as corresponding frameworks for making meaning through intuition and association, iteration and sleight of hand.

Magic Show builds on Bordo's ongoing project *The Denise File*—an interdisciplinary work of serial detective fiction written through physical space and material form. Since 2018, *The Denise File* has evolved from Bordo's interaction with a collection of found postcards addressed to a woman named Denise. With each chapter, Bordo responds by materializing objects, sourcing found items, and constructing installations. Paradoxically, through this, Denise becomes increasingly real, even as the same process of artistic invention renders her ever more fictive.

In *Magic Show*, ritual and investigation unfold in parallel. The works function as talismans holding material, linguistic, and supernatural resonances, while also acting as evidence of Denise's existence. Together, they constitute the dispersed ingredients for a "potion" within the gallery space, one that corresponds and communes with Denise, conjuring her presence.

Working across craft- and time-based processes, Bordo approaches material practices as a reciprocal action between inner reality and the external environment. By learning to work with her hands in new ways, Bordo uncovers further aspects of the enigmatic Denise, who continues to emerge through tactile forms. Drawing on esoteric knowledge traditions, the works operate as conduits for sympathetic transference—where objects and their traces act upon one another, and upon us, across distance. In doing so, relationships between part and whole, microcosm and macrocosm, come into focus, opening onto speculative encounters that extend beyond empirical perception.

AS ABOVE, SO BELOW: A NOTE ON PROPERTIES

Kiel Torres

Over the course of his career, Czech occultist Franz Bardon (1909–1958) authored a series of instructional texts offering practical, step-by-step guidance for aspiring magicians. His second book, *The Practice of Magical Evocation* (1956), outlines key ritual tools within Hermetic practice for preparing a space to summon spirits. Bardon emphasizes that successful evocation depends on carefully attuning the atmosphere to the spirit being called, identifying three essential devices—the circle, triangle, and mirror—as channels for communication within this constructed environment.¹ In *Magic Show*, the shapes and materials across Rosamunde Bordo’s work activate Bardon’s principles, structuring both the narrative and spatial experience of the installation.

For Bardon, colour is also vital in calibrating the space to the spirit being called. The gallery window is treated with a purple filter that recalls iolite, a stone known as the “Viking’s compass” for its wayfinding properties. This association with travel recalls the postcards at the centre of *The Denise File*, while alluding to the psychic movement between corporeal and spiritual realms, visible and invisible thresholds, and waking and dream states.

While pursuing ritual magic, Bardon also worked as a stage magician under the alias of Frabato. His shows involved mentalist acts and demonstrations of psychometry, the ability to read energetic traces held within objects through touch.² In Bordo’s video *Tarot in D-Minor*, psychometry is performed on a “Denise” nameplate necklace. The necklace not only bears Denise’s name but takes the same cursive form as her signature, lifted from a postcard sent by Denise from La Rochelle, France to Golden Meadow, Louisiana. In the gallery, it reappears adorned with a star-shaped charm set with a peridot gem. Through the transmutation of handwriting into metal, Denise’s forged silver signature becomes both a document and conduit: a material trace that carries the lingering presence of transmission. The necklace is a tether, a devotional loop where identity becomes entangled into a shared fiction.

In the process of developing *Magic Show*, Bordo worked from the guiding proposition that a lock of hair or shred of garment taken from a person are fragments of their reality, and could be evidence in a detective’s case or ingredients for a potion. Within this framework, psychometry becomes both a magical technique and a conceptual framework for Bordo’s artistic process that reenchants everyday life and objects. Balancing precision with an openness to coincidence, affinities, and resonance, Bordo embodies the magician’s pursuit: to attune to the subtle currents that animate things in the world. To send and receive.

Notes

1. Franz Bardon, *The Practice of Magical Evocation: Instructions for Invoking Spirit Beings from the Spheres Surrounding Us*, 2nd ed. (Dieter Rüggeberg: Wuppertal, 1991).
2. Franz Bardon, *Frabato the Magician* (Dieter Rüggeberg: Wuppertal, 1979).

Biographies

Rosamunde Bordo is an artist based in Vancouver, Canada. Working through the logic of the detective genre, her practice collapses fiction and reality to probe how meaning, subjectivity, and belief are constructed relationally through material encounters. Her research unfolds through free association, analogy, and hands-on experimentation to question the assumed boundaries of the everyday. Her past projects have comprised handmade furniture, gemstones, intercepted letters, unrequited love, astrology, a stranger’s to-do list, magical alphabets, bread, wool, carrot tops, life drawing, table salt, tarot, television, small trees, hand-knitted sweaters, and a missing housecoat.

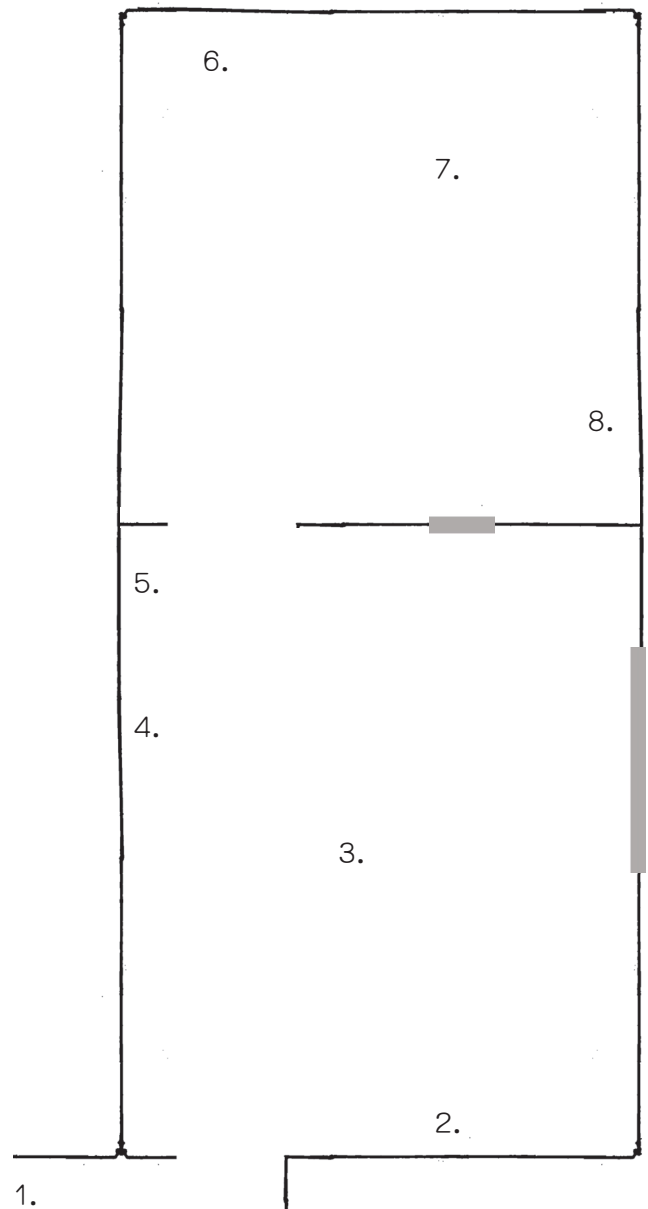
Kiel Torres is a writer, editor, and curator based in Vancouver, Canada. Her work focuses on performance, poetry, correspondence, and criticism. She is assistant curator at Western Front.

List of Works

Floorplan

All works by Rosamunde Bordo, dimensions variable, and courtesy of the artist unless otherwise specified.

1. *Karmic Cleanse* (2026)
Single channel HD video, borosilicate glass, lock of wig
14 min. 5 sec. loop
2. *Shred of Garment* (2019/2026)
Denise housecoat, cherry wood, shellac
3. *Communicating Vessels* (2026)
Borosilicate glass, uranium, cobalt, vodka, chartreuse, velvet
4. *Sleight of Hand 1* (2026)
Maple wood, basswood, wax, shellac, silver chain, lost-wax cast silver charms
5. *Sleight of Hand 2* (2026)
Maple wood, cherry wood, stain, wax, madder-dyed silk scarf, lapped beach stones
6. *Nameplate Necklace* (2026)
Lost-wax cast silver charms, peridot gem, silver chain
7. *Tarot in D-Minor*, 2026
Single channel video
13 min. 25 sec.
Performer: Tara Travis
Camera: Eva Anandi Brownstein
Sound: Alex Shamku
After Agnès Varda, *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1962)
8. *Burnt Offering* (2022-2026)
Bronze organic burnout casting of salt dough



Project Team

Curator: Kiel Torres
Graphic designer: Line-Gry Hørup
Technicians: Csaba Laszlo, Hannah Rickards, Ben Wilson
Copyeditor: Trey Le
Video post-production: Eva Anandi Brownstein
Fabrication support: Brian Ditchburn, Richard Forbes, Sophie Slater

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