

EVEN FLOW
Artist Frédéric Gautier's *Eat the River* exhibition will consist of videos, photographs and 100 ceramic objects cast from the L.A. River's diverse landscape.

A River Runs THROUGH IT

The possibilities inherent in the Los Angeles River's vibrant future provide inspiration for *Eat the River*, French artist Frédéric Gautier's latest project.

By Abigail Stone // Photography by Cameron Gardner

When visualizing the landscape of Los Angeles, seascapes and hillsides usually come to mind. So French artist Frédéric Gautier was understandably puzzled when his American gallery, downtown's Please Do Not Enter, suggested he visit L.A. for a project centered around the L.A. River. His preconceived image of the waterway, culled from music videos and movies like *Chinatown*, *Drive* and *Grease*, was of a concrete culvert, dusty and devoid of life. "I knew of the L.A. River from movies, but I'd never seen it in person, despite many visits to Los Angeles, because I'd never had any reason to go there. When I saw it, I was just amazed."

The artist, who trained as a landscape designer before segueing into ceramics, found himself excited by the setting's possibilities. "When I first saw the river, it sparked the idea of working on a project that dovetailed with my interest in creating ceramic objects, tools for making and serving food, and, in a larger sense, for offering nourishment." With a studio in Frogtown as his base, Gautier has mined the area for materials, creating a series of 100 pieces, ranging from bowls to plates to containers, that will be presented at Please Do Not Enter later this month. The simple brutalist concrete forms are modern, timeless and compellingly tactile.

Gautier's celebration of the river's hidden treasures and its capacity for nurturing life comes at a time when Los Angeles is turning its eye toward its original water source. The region's rapid growth has pushed the city eastward, reclaiming former industrial areas alongside the river's banks for housing and recreation, instigating both artistic projects and rapid urban renewal. Landscape architect Mia Lehrer of Mia Lehrer & Associates—who was a key author of the 2007 Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan and who has long been an advocate for the area's development—sees the explosion of interest as stemming from "the combination of environmental issues, laws, climate change [and] the drought." Her vision imagines a vital waterfront teeming with life, bike paths, parks, solar energy plants, cafes and museums. Gautier agrees. "When you go to this place, it's just fantastic to imagine all the things that are born from it. This archeological survey will help to elevate this location and provide a personal perspective on the landscape of the river."

As Noah Cross told Jake Gittes in *Chinatown*, "Either you bring the water to L.A. or you bring L.A. to the water." The water's already here—let's celebrate it. Sept. 21-Oct. 22, 549 S. Olive St., L.A., 213.263.0037, pleasedonotenter.com