

Datebook: A new biennial focuses on water, paying tribute to the Merzbau, a Barnsdall takeover



Kerry Tribe

Kerry Tribe, right, who has created a film devoted to the 51 miles of the L.A. River, as part of the new Current: LA Water biennial. (Panic Studio LA / Current: LA Water)

A biennial of public art. A takeover of the Barnsdall Art Park. And 1,000 paintings of words that describe women. Plus: A Mexican gallery comes to downtown and an L.A. artist pays tribute to a pair of renowned European Dada-ists. Here are seven events to check out this week:

“Current: LA Water,” in locations around Los Angeles.^[1] The city’s new public art biennial will feature installations around the city by more than a dozen artists focusing around the theme of water. This includes a new film by Kerry Tribe^[2], a sculptural fountain by Edgar Arceneaux^[3], a garden by Mel Chin^[4] and an installation by Teresa Margolles^[5], which employs water used to wash sites of violent crimes. The show also includes plenty of events, including film screenings, musical performances, a tea ceremony and a family-friendly workshop that

looks at historical issues surrounding water. *Opens Saturday and runs through Aug. 15. See the website for location and event information, currentla.org*^[6].



A detail from collaged canvases from Betty Tompkin's "WOMEN Words" series at Gavlak in Los Angeles.

A detail from collaged canvases from Betty Tompkin's "WOMEN Words" series at Gavlak in Los Angeles. (Genevieve Hanson, Art Echo LLC / Betty Tompkins / Gavlak)

Betty Tompkins, “Sex Works/WOMEN Words: 1000 Words, Phrases and Stories,” at

Gavlak.^[7] Known for paintings that take graphic images of pornography and give them a distinctly feminist cast, Tompkins has taken on the ways in which women are referred to in our society. An installation of 1,000 paintings features words that describe women — from “babe” to “sis” to “hot tomato” to others that remain unprintable. The show also includes works from her various series devoted to sex and sexuality. Expect up-close views of various body parts — a.k.a. NSFW. *Opens Saturday and runs through Sept. 3. 1034 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood, gavlagallery.com*^[8].

“Mertzbau: An Exhibition by Joe Sola featuring Albert Mertz,” at Tif Sigfrids.^[9] In a show that reads like a turducken of conceptualism, L.A. artist Joe Sola pays tribute to German artist Kurt Schwitters (known for transforming his family home into an all-encompassing architectural installation known as the “Merzbau”^[10]) through the lens of Danish artist Albert Merz, who was influenced by Schwitters’ Dadaist leanings. To achieve this, Sola will create his own architecturally -minded construction — out of 419 salvaged wooden chairs. *Opens Saturday and runs through Aug. 20. 1507 Wilcox Ave., Hollywood, tifsigfrids.com*^[11].