

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



COURTESY OF FRANK VERPOORTEN

Chilean artist Rodrigo Bruna installs "Urban Reconstruction" at the Newhouse.

BY MICHAEL J FRESSOLA

Many mouth-watering permutations of the food-art-love connection have been served up over the years at the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art, from Janine Antoni's chocolate sculptures and Yoko Ono's tea-cup repair station, to the buffet cooked and served by Rirkit Tirivanija, just months before international fame descended on him.

These were lighthearted gestures — cocktail nibbles — compared to Rodrigo Bruna's "Urban Reconstruction."

His wallpiece is food for serious thought. It's an austere, brown-and-ivory (9-by-17 foot) grid that "reads" like a photo-mural.

It depicts a neighborhood devastated by earthquakes.

It's familiar territory for the Chilean-born Bruna, who still lives in Santiago. The original images were taken in Copiapo, in northern Chile, shattered in 1922 by record-breaking earthquake.

The food connection: Bruna made the pixel-like squares of "Urban Reconstruction," one by one out of care-

fully toasted slices of *bread*. It's good to know — because you would never figure it out on your own.

Why bread? Only Bruna can say for sure. One idea: It's a basic life support that will disappear in an earthquake.

Who would have guessed that properly carbonized, it would be so articulate? Bruna's "rafts" (dinerspeak for toast) are perfect as units in a mosaic.

The street scene depicted in the big grid is actually three scenes combined: a street, an elevated train and a row of shattered facades. Bruna has turned the images into a subversively handsome trio of toast-crumbs-on-steel-plate plaques.

"Urban Reconstruction" is up through Aug. 17 in the Newhouse, on the grounds of Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden, 1000 Richmond Terr., Livingston. Visit Snug-Harbor.com and NewhouseCenter.org for more information.

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