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Artist's 'Ruins' Rise on the High Line

Adrián Villar Rojas's Installations Commissioned for Final Stretch of High Line

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By **ANDY BATTAGLIA**

May 11, 2014 9:00 p.m. ET



'Mi familia muerta' ('My dead family'), a 2009 sculpture made by Adrián Villar Rojas for the End of the World Biennial in Argentina. *Carla Barbero/Marian Goodman Gallery*

When the High Line opens its third and final section this fall, allowing access to an untamed segment from 30th Street to 34th Street, park visitors will have company in the form of art designed to fall apart.

"Some people call them ruins," said Adrián Villar Rojas, who has been commissioned to create a new series of outdoor sculptures for the site, dubbed the High Line at the Rail Yards.

The artist, however, prefers to think about the state of his works in a different way. "The material is breathing," he said.

Mr. Rojas said he is still in the planning stages for a project that will unfold in the coming months, with much of the construction to take place on the High Line itself. When it opens to the public in the fall, it will remain in place until September 2015.

Based in Rosario, Argentina, the 34-year-old is known for large-scale sculptural works made with materials like concrete and clay and often intended to deteriorate over time. In 2011, he won the Benesse Prize, given to promising young artists at the Venice Biennale, and last year, the Serpentine Sackler Gallery in London tapped him for its inaugural exhibition. He has contributed to group shows in New York, including last year's "Expo 1" at MoMA PS1, but the High Line project will mark his first major solo

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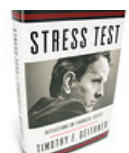
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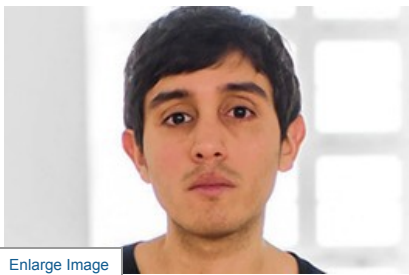
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Adrián Villar Rojas *European Pressphoto Agency*

exhibition in the city.

Cecilia Alemani, [High Line Art's curator](#), grew interested in Mr. Rojas because of his work with perishable materials.

"That will work well with the wild and delicate landscape of the High Line," she said, calling the Rail Yards area "not planted, not curated. It's the wild landscape that grows among the rocks.

His work will create an interesting dialogue."

It is the second commission for the largely unexplored site, following "Caterpillar" by the [sculptor Carol Bove](#), which showed from May 2013 to April 2014. That series, however, was accessible only by way of small guided tours whose reservations filled up fast.

Unlike the rest of the High Line, which has earned plaudits for its precise architectural design, the last section will open to the public with a temporary walkway running beside grounds left in their natural state, with weeds and rogue plants borne from seeds blowing around.

"It's dramatic how much it changes," said Ms. Bove. "The passage of time is really legible, and it's subjected to actual celestial conditions."

The state of constant construction, too, makes the area especially dynamic, Mr. Rojas said. "If you stop to think about it, it's the most contradictory thing: You're in relaxed, dreamy space, and then all around you is like a battle zone. People are taking pictures of construction sites."

He will begin his own sculptural construction later this year, but for now, he is spending some time at the site of his future project, getting a feel for it as well as New York.

"I'm still getting used to the city," he said. "The city as an entity is super-present. I feel it all the time."



Another installation by Mr. Rojas, 'Return the World' (2012). *Marian Goodman Gallery*

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