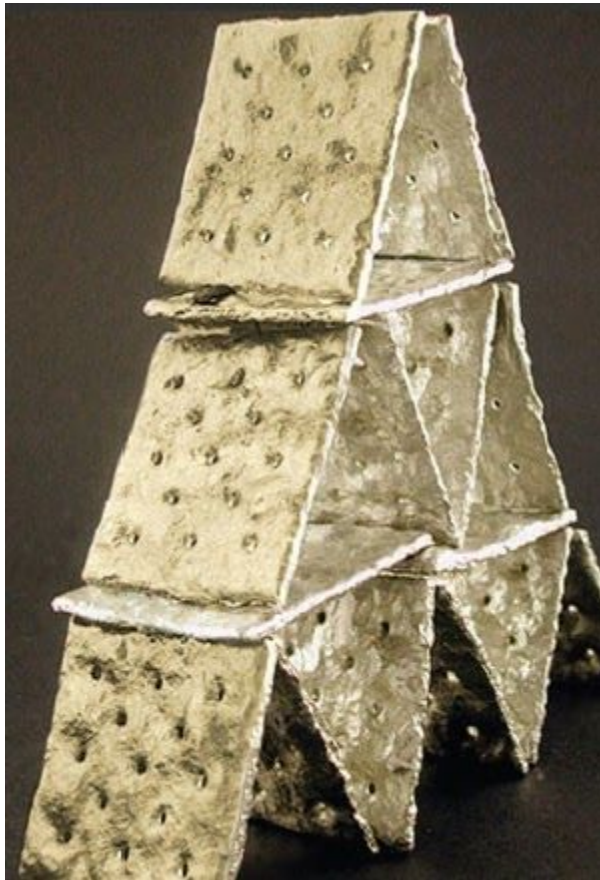




NOTABLE EDIBLES:

Hard Candy

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November 5, 2008 | By Jeanne Hodesh



Herbert Hoover's crackers fit inside a pack of cigarettes. No, not the former president's—the East Harlem-based visual artist's. He'd been trying to figure out what he could sell in Art-o-Mats, the 82 re-outfitted cigarette vending machines around the country stocked with small objets d'art, each encased within an old cigarette box. Inspiration struck at a gallery show where he saw Lost Host, a

bronze sculpture of a loaf of bread—the gleaming slices inspired him to make the perfect trinket for a vending machine: a lost-cast mold from a piece of food. He toyed with encasing various edibles that would burn to ashes in the kiln, leaving behind a shell into which molten metal could be poured and cooled, forming a perfect replica, with a shelf life no preservatives could hope to bestow. Via trial and error, Hoover quickly learned that snack foods with docking holes, “you know, the 13 holes on a cracker,” worked best. Soon he was turning out pewter saltines, pewter ice cream sandwiches, and, once he got the hang of things, a pewter wishbone. The saltines (available for \$5 in the Whitney Museum’s Art-o-Mat) became the number one best seller, and fans now send him photos of posed crackers in situ around the world.

Recently Hoover has been working on a series of copper- and brass-plated candy corn, but we’re partial to his fortune cookies, for which he’ll pen custom fortunes upon request. “Someone once asked me if I could put a ring inside. I said, ‘Sure, but you’ll never get it out.’” Like a diamond, these cookies are forever.