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## In the Studio with Ry Rocklen

August 13, 2014 By [intsculpturectr](#) in [In the Studio](#) By [Jan Garden Castro](#) [Leave a comment](#)



Second to None , 2011. Trophies, trophy parts, wood. 94.5 x 146 x 39 inches

This virtual visit to Rocklen's two studio spaces in Lincoln Heights, Los Angeles follows my discovering his work at his solo show at Untitled, on New York's Lower East Side. At Untitled, I saw a basketball bean bag chair titled "The Rock" covered in mosaics and other art pieces resembling familiar objects, such as "Deserted Boots." The gallery had a large number of pieces of white clothing that Rocklen had turned into folded porcelain wall sculpture. As he told me, "For the show at untitled, I did in fact cast my entire wardrobe in porcelain. The shirt labeled "Carolyn's old puff..." was a gift to me from my wife Carolyn."



Carolyn's Old Rainy Day Puff Paint White Tee, 2004-2014.  
13.5 x 11.125 inches



Deserted Boots, 2013-2014. Copper plating. 6.375 x 12 x 12 inches Porcelain.

Even though Rauschenberg called his found objects combines, these differed since each object or piece of clothing seemed familiar rather than found. Each art work was neat and intimate. Unlike Ai Weiwei's photographs of one woman's clothing at the Brooklyn Museum, Ry transformed his own clothing into unwearable art. This new take on art for art's sake adds value to everyday things.

Rocklen was born in Los Angeles and has a 2006 MFA from the University of Southern California. Since that time, he has had nine solo shows in locations including Paris, France; Athens, Greece; Brussels, Belgium; Bangkok, New York, and Los Angeles. He also received enthusiastic press coverage for his design of the Art Basel Miami Absolut bar in 2013. His upcoming show at the University of Georgia in Athens opens September 12th.

Rocklen told me:

I am attracted to objects that are anachronistic despite their commonality. The objects used in my work are unavoidable. Mattresses, bed frames, futons, tables, chairs, and trophies all come pouring out of homes and storage spaces from across the country. They are ubiquitous and essential to the average American lifestyle. A particular object I may use in an artwork will often exhibit eccentricities and peculiarities despite its prevalence.

The objects I use in my sculptures are not particularly outrageous. I will take a recognizable and meaningful object, like an old mattress or set of trophies, and turn it into an artwork through some type of bedazzlement or alteration. After someone views one of my sculptures they can see the spirit of the work in the next trophy or abandoned mattress they encounter. An unaltered object can share a sense of exaltation as it reminds the viewer of one of my sculptures.



The Rock, 2014. Basketball beanbag chair, fiberglass, AQUA resin, marble tile, grout. 16.25 x 35 x 34.5 inches

As the Untitled press release points out, “Constant in Rocklen’s practice is the paradoxical relationship between the familiar objects he selects and their distinguished treatments.” This includes porcelain casting, metal plating, hand tiling and other mediums. Part of the attraction of Rocklen’s work is his clean aesthetic and the tactile surfaces of the materials he employs. His latest series as part of his Trophy Modern Furnishings is ten chess sets with gold-hued chess pieces. I know several chess aficionados who would enjoy playing with these. His gold-plated plastic trophies are decorative ornaments disguised as prizes. Another use of gold is a flat gold tire. This, like a man’s five o’clock shadow, is an everyday event usually *not* worth celebrating. Daily occurrences gain dignity by becoming art. Rocklen seems, in a way, like a philosopher of the quotidian: turning the things that surround us into objects of contemplation.

Check out: [www.ryrocklen.com](http://www.ryrocklen.com) and [www.trophymodern.com](http://www.trophymodern.com). By [Jan Garden Castro](#)

Untitled, 2013. cast bronze, 14 x 30 x 33”



Five O’Clock Shadow, 2014. Found wall, plastic bristles, glue, 36 x 48 x 9”



Treaty, 2007. Tree, 2-part epoxy metal, 65 x 40 x 36.5”



Rollin’ On 23’s 2007. Glasses, pressure treated lumber, concrete, water, stones 144 x 23 x 23”