

# WILDING CRAN GALLERY



Ry Rocklen *ShelfLife*  
March 16 - May 4, 2024

Wilding Cran Gallery is pleased to present *ShelfLife*, an exhibition of recent works by multi-media artist and sculptor Ry Rocklen.

Through ceramic, modular assemblage, and installation, *ShelfLife* uncovers the aesthetic sincerity held within the debris of everyday life. The exhibition features a series of wall-mounted mosaics, inspired by the delicate patterns on squares of household paper products. The assembled ceramics, slip cast from squares of bath tissue, paper towels, and napkins, lock into place with surgical masks and shop towels to create a surface peppered with porcelain pantry foods, leftovers, and other disposables.

While much of Rocklen's past work plays with the role of scale in our interpretations of an object's form and function, the series of wall works mark a departure in their adherence to pattern, repetition, size equivalencies, and set color palette. Within *Absorption Panel (First Slice)*, the muted tones and low relief emphasize the formal surface of the sculpture. In contrast to the disposable nature of his subjects, Rocklen's careful preservations serve to highlight the presence of aesthetic care and intention imbued within each embellishment.

Throughout the gallery, oversized aluminum casts of ritz, goldfish, saltines, cheez-its, and club crackers lie scattered across the floor, as though plucked from the surfaces of the absorption panels.

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By approaching the same objects from different angles, Rocklen presents a visual iconography which celebrates mass produced products as objects of veneration and value.

Alongside the selection of absorption panels and oversized pantry items, *Shelf Life* includes two freestanding industrial food storage shelves holding various life-size ceramic figures. Drawing upon his personal collection of ceramic heads, sourced from thrift shops, Rocklen has created torsos and legs to accompany his found objects. Each element of the human body rests on a different shelf, as though awaiting assembly, mirroring the modularity of the wall works. These ceramics impart a sense of harmony in marrying the found object, the readymade, and the handmade, pointing to a sense of freedom in re-presenting and re-interpreting the notion of a “shelf life” as an extension, rather than an expiration.

To put something on a shelf is to save it for later, to set it aside until it can be assembled, employed, consumed, forgotten, or simply discarded. From paper products and canned goods to COVID tests and thrift shop finds, *Shelf Life* serves as an homage to the quiet dignity of the disposable, the unwanted, or the generally disregarded. By transforming overlooked artistries into ceramic, Ry Rocklen grants each of his objects second lives, immortalizing not only their design, but his personal, even devotional relationship to them.

In conjunction with the exhibition of *Shelf Life* at Wilding Cran Gallery, Ry Rocklen will be presenting a concurrent series of ceramic works inspired by abandoned desert homesteads near Joshua Tree, CA. Held at neighboring **Night Gallery**, the exhibition of *Sand Box Living* will open on March 16, 2024 and run until April 20, 2024.

**Ry Rocklen** (b. 1978) is an American sculptor and installation artist known for rendering the aesthetic value and historic significance of found objects. Through the use of ceramic as a primary index of time and devotion, Rocklen grants his subjects second lives as revered sculptural objects, uncovering the overlooked artistries of everyday life.

Rocklen studied at CalArts, Santa Clarita, CA, 1996 - 1998, received his BFA from the University of California, Los Angeles, CA (2001), and his MFA from the University of Southern California, CA (2006). Rocklen's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. Solo exhibitions of Rocklen's work have been presented at Team Gallery, New York, NY; Feuer/Mesler, New York, NY; Honor Fraser, Los Angeles, CA; Lazy Eye Gallery, Yucca Valley, CA; Lamar Dodd School of Art, University of Georgia, Athens, GA (2014); and the Visual Arts Center, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX (2010). Rocklen has also been included in several major survey exhibitions, including the Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, NY (2008); *Made in LA*, Hammer Museum (2012); *Murmurs: Recent Contemporary Acquisitions*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA (2013); *Sculpture from the Hammer Contemporary Collection*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2016); *CURRENT:LA FOOD*, Public Art Triennial, Los Angeles, CA (2019); *That Was Then... This Was*

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*Now*, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY (2008); *Red Eye*, The Rubell Collection, Miami, FL (2006); and the Athens Biennale 2009 *HEAVEN*, Athens, Greece (2009). His work belongs to public and private collections including Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Mohn Family Foundation, Santa Monica, CA; Thomas J. Watson Library, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, NY; Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection, West Palm Beach, FL, and the Rubell Museum, Miami, FL.

Ry Rocklen lives and works in Joshua Tree, California.