

MICROSIZE ME

Editor-at-Large Michael Slenske recounts the process of being made into a 3D sculpture by rising L.A. talent Ry Rocklen.

When I met Ry Rocklen at an achingly humid dinner in Ojai, California last summer we had a wide-ranging, wine-soaked conversation that hit on everything from how we could form an artist-led political activist group to the perils the contemporary art market posed for emerging artists to the legacy of his late friend, the curator and advisor Carolyn Glasoe Bailey, whose foundation was being launched that weekend. Needless to say, the last place I could imagine finding myself—almost a year to the day after this boozy introduction—would be strapped inside a human-sized, terracotta-tinged foam pack of Valet cigarettes (and a matching mock turtle) at the West Hollywood digs of 3-D sculpture fabricator Doob. “Maybe fan your fingers out, but lean a little forward, otherwise the sculpture will tip over,” Rocklen tells me as I prepare to enter the doob-licator, a 54-camera chamber capable of rendering every angle of my costumed body for a dye-injected gypsum sculpture that will become part of his latest sculptural series, *Food Group*, a delectable collection of Rocklen’s collaborators over the years (think Honor Fraser as a bunch of grapes or José Freire as French fries) comprising his forthcoming show at Freire’s New York outpost, Team Gallery, opening October 5. The concept began with Rocklen merging two of L.A.’s more intriguing readymade businesses—Hollywood costume shops and Doob—to portray himself as a burger. He then added a series of handmade outfits (a taco, fries, and Orange Crush soda can) so he and his cohorts might retake some authorship over the icons of American cuisine. “Just pretend you’re eating bittersweet chocolate,” Rocklen tells me as he positions my sneakers on two prompts and teases out some strands of my hair, which was near shoulder-length at the time. “I want a little bit of a trickster vibe.” After stepping outside the chamber Rocklen and the Doob crew give me a countdown, I steady the cigarette box, ready my “dizzy rascal face” as 54 flashes burst all around my body like some private paparazzi immersion. I’m not sure how I feel about being the only smokable character, and baker’s dozen of the bunch, but there is some power, some wickedness, some solace knowing that I won’t go down in art history as a pickle. Sorry Ken Taylor.



Ry Rocklen's *Slenske Valet*, created exclusively for *Cultured* on the occasion of his new show at Team Gallery. Contact info@culturedmag.com for more information.

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST