REVISITING EDEN: Glass by Kathleen Elliot
AT THE PENSACOLA MUSEUM OF ART

The Photography of Jerry Uelsmann and Maggie Taylor
AT THE VON LIEBIG ART CENTER, NAPLES

Carrie Ann Baade: SOLAR MIDNIGHT
AT MOCA JACKSONVILLE

Ursula von Rydingsvard: SCULPTURE
AT THE PATRICIA & PHILLIP FROST ART MUSEUM, MIAMI
SCULPTURE

ON VIEW 04.21-08.05.12 AT THE PATRICIA & PHILLIP FROST ART MUSEUM, MIAMI

Droga (detail), 2009, cedar, graphite, 4'6" x 9'7" x 18'3", photography by Rosalyn and Michael Bodycomb, ©Ursula von Rydingsvard, courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York
URSULA VON RYDINGSVARD:
ON VIEW 04.21-08.05.12 AT THE PATRICIA & PHILLIP FROST ART MUSEUM, MIAMI

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Halo with a Straight Line, 2010, cedar, graphite, ink, 133 x 114 x 79”,”
photography by Rosalyn and Michael Bodycomb. ©Ursula von Rydingsvard, courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York
Ursula von Rydingsvard has been creating large-scale—often monumental—sculptures from cedar beams, which she painstakingly cuts, assembles, glues, clamps, laminates, and finally rubs with powdered graphite to enhance the work’s textured, faceted surfaces. Her signature shapes are abstract, with references to objects in the real world. Drawing on a range of sources, from the humble to the majestic, von Rydingsvard’s work is recognized for its great psychological force and powerful physical presence.
Ursula von Rydingsvard: SCULPTURE

Top left: Ursula von Rydingsvard, photography by Zonder Titel

Below: Weeping Plates, 2005, cedar, 12’2” x 9’6” x 6.5” (left), 10’8” x 8’5” x 8” (right), photography by Rosalyn and Michael Bodycomb

©Ursula von Rydingsvard, courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York

Ursula von Rydingsvard: Sculpture, at the Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum in Miami, includes a selection of the artist’s most significant sculptures, including wall reliefs and massive cedar works created from 1991 to 2009.

Built slowly and incrementally from thousands of cedar beams, each work reveals the mark of the artist’s hand, her respect for physical labor and her deep trust of intuitive process. Though she sometimes adds bronze, resins or other materials to the equation, wood is her primary material.

Von Rydingsvard regards her connection to wood as part of her history. She comes from a long line of Polish peasant farmers for whom wood provided basic shelter and tools to work the land. Her forms typically suggest domestic objects such as spoons, plates and bowls; shovels, axes and other farm tools; women’s bonnets and lace collars; and vernacular architecture, including barns, barracks and fences. Her work also evokes great natural forms, from a craggy cliff side to a deep canyon, and phenomena such as the forces of wind and water or the formation of the earth’s strata.
Von Rydingsvard’s sculptures are simultaneously primitive and elegant, lyrical and ominous. Her most characteristic form is the bowl, which may appear as a shallow or towering form, and may alternately evoke nourishment, domesticity, the body, a simple enclosure or a mountain, among other references. The exhibition includes the five undulating bowls that make up *Krasawica II* (1998-2001), Ukrainian for “beautiful young woman,” whose overall shape conveys a fluid sense of movement and vitality, despite its substantial, weighty volume; *Ocean Floor* (1996), a large, low basin, ringed with bulbous, stuffed intestinal forms; a pair of huge, wall-mounted *Weeping Plates* (2005); and the enormous, horizontal torqued shape of *Droga,* or

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“bride’s veil” (2009), which undulates across the floor, flowing like soft fabric. In sculptures filled with contradiction, the artist succeeds in expressing something raw and elemental with remarkable sophistication and grace.

Von Rydingsvard builds her sculpture from the ground up—block by block, cut by cut. She begins with an image she envisions in her mind, then scratch-es chalk markings on the floor,

Ocean Floor, 1996, cedar, graphite, cow intestines, 3’ x 13’ x 11’, ©Ursula von Rydingsvard, courtesy of Galerie Lelong, New York, photography by Jason Mandella
indicating where pieces will be assembled. She then lays down cedar beams and decides how big each piece should be. Curved lines are sketched onto the wood in pencil and the beams are cut with a circular saw to the desired geometric and/or organic curves. Hacking irregularly gives the edges visual interest. At this stage, the artist’s studio is filled with the sounds of saws and the impact of wood landing on the
floor, after being lobbed. To maintain proper order, each piece of wood is given a code number and von Rydingsvard stacks the pieces of wood in layers. The positioning is crucial from the outset. “The bottom is important,” she points out. “Some of the pieces will dramatically move away from each other. That initiates the mood of the piece.” The cutting, stacking, marking, lifting, kneeling, bending and carrying goes on for days, weeks or months, depending on the size and complexity of the piece. “This part, the cutting and the building,” von Rydingsvard says, “is the glory of my life, because this is where all the decisions get made.” After a sculpture is entirely cut, shaped and coded, the pieces are clamped and glued together, one layer at a time. When the work is reassembled, von Rydingsvard rubs the red surface of the cedar with a grayish-black graphite. She then sprays the work with an alcohol-based adhesive before brushing on powdered graphite. The piece is finally scrubbed with a steel scouring pad to remove excess powder and to push some of the

Above: *Johnny Angel*, 1991, cedar, graphite, 112” x 14” x 18.5”

Right: *Wall Pocket*, 2003-2004, cedar, graphite, 13'5.5” x 6’ x 5’5”, photography by Rosalyn and Michael Bodycomb

Images courtesy of SculptureCenter, New York
pigment under the skin of the wood. This “wearing down” of the finish creates a patina that imbues the wood with a greater sense of depth and resonance.

Born in 1942 in Deensen, Germany, von Rydingsvard’s childhood was deeply affected by the upheaval of World War II. The artist spent years in postwar refugee camps for displaced Polish people, until her family eventually emigrated to the US, in 1950. The artist’s respect for organic materials, the dignity of labor, the sense of loss and pain, and the persistent memories that inform her work, may be traced back to those early formative experiences. Her nearly 14-foot-tall piece titled Wall Pocket, 2004, suggests the fragility of humanity in the face of violent devastation. “The easiest way for me to recall my past is to examine the spaces in which the events took place,” von Rydingsvard has said, and when her examination results in a tangible construction, the result is profound.

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primary material. There she learned to fuse sheets of welded steel with small steel bead by heating a rod and dripping it onto the sheets as it melted. For von Rydingsvard, the significance of this period was the discovery of a craft-oriented process for manipulating an industrial material and giving it a hand-worked texture—but the rigidity of steel frustrated her. 

When artist, Michael Mulhern, gave her some cedar beams to experiment with, she was captivated. She has remained faithful to milled lumber ever since, embracing the lush organicism of the wood and its heavily detailed, expressively textured surface.

In the 1990s von Rydingsvard began to draw on archaic Greek sculpture and on non-Western sources of art such as Asian, Oceanic and African art for inspiration, and her repertoire of materials has expanded to include plastic, aluminum, polyurethane resin and even...
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**Rydingsvard**

cow intestines (included in her 1996 work, *Ocean Floor*).

“I hope more than ever to be able to dip into that which is not so consciously controlled, to be able to trust myself where things are less predictable,” said the artist. “That’s where the fun is for me, and that’s where I want to go.”

Von Rydingsvard’s work has been exhibited in museums and galleries internationally. Her sculpture is included in numerous permanent collections,
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including New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art and Brooklyn Museum; Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City; High Museum of Art in Atlanta; and the Detroit Institute of Arts. Major permanent commissions of her work are on view at the Microsoft Corporation in Redmond, WA, and New York’s Storm King Art Center, the Bloomberg Build-

Ursula von Rydingsvard's sculptures are simultaneously primitive and elegant, lyrical.
ing and the Queens Family Courthouse. She has received two individual grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Guggenheim Fellowship and three awards from the American International Critics Association. In 2007, she was the recipient of the Mary Miss Resident in Visual Arts Award from the American Academy in Rome. In 2008, she was awarded the Rappaport Prize and an induction into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, along with being featured in Art21: Art in the Twenty-First Century on PBS. In 2011 she received the Skowhegan Medal for Sculpture from the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture in New York. A monograph on her work titled Ursula von Rydingsvard: Working, by Patricia C. Phillips, was published by Prestel Publishing in 2011. Von Rydingsvard currently resides in New York and is represented by Galerie Lelong, New York.

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