

# SCULPTURE

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## NEW YORK

### Ursula von Rydingsvard Exit Art, New York City

With the sculpture of Ursula von Rydingsvard we always see the blood, sweat and tears. But in conjunction with the evident toil, we get memorable shapes of great poise and elegance. Her recent exhibition at Exit Art offered these qualities in spades, not only in large works of repeating elements, but in several smaller, single images as well.

Von Rydingsvard is thoroughly identified with her origins, constantly recalling her woodcutter father and her life in Polish resettlement camps following World War II. Associations with those experiences doubtlessly give her pieces their strong sense of unease.

Von Rydingsvard always works in cedar, but has traditionally maintained elegant surfaces, often despite vigorous hacking. Here she uses such additives as graphite and whitewash to lessen the sheen of the wood and enhance the idea of aliveness. Graphite appears on a sculpture of linked forms, each resembling a squat oven, and whitewash is used effectively on a piece featuring seven short columns, each with a twist, propped on a triangular base.

The artist gets much mileage out of repeated forms in her sculpture. Repetition is an elementary device, but von Rydingsvard knows it rivets attention. In her work it also refers to the deep impression made by living in standardized barracks.

Some of the major pieces in the show featured projections and several others were characterized by large gouges. Indeed, this was von Rydingsvard's most muscular and varied show ever. These pieces alone would have been enough to satisfy, but she chose to contrast large works with individual images that seemed to come out of various folk cultures of the world—especially African and Latin American. A large comb, with its row of long, skinny teeth was pleasing, but especially winning was the large tongue-shaped flat piece of wood called *Polish Wing*.

—William Zimmer

## REVIEWS



Ursula von Rydingsvard, *Untitled*, 1986-88. Cedar and graphite, 62 x 201 x 42 in. Photo: David Allison, courtesy Exit Art, New York City