

ARTNEWS

1991

REVIEWS



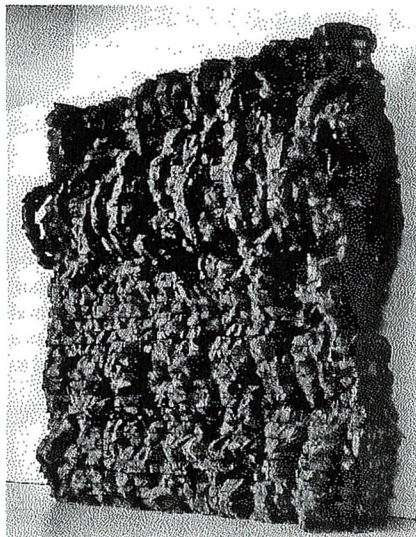
Ursula von Rydingsvard

LORENCE MONK

Ursula von Rydingsvard orchestrates masses of wooden stanzas in a somber poem. Her imposing sculptures are hewn, hacked, and stacked from fragrant red cedar, then rubbed with graphite, giving them a brooding, aged quality. Their jagged, scarred surfaces have been said to invoke the triumphant terrain of the artist's native Poland; certainly they invoke a potent sense of history, conveyed in a distinct, highly powerful language.

Von Rydingsvard's newest work shows the sculptor narrowing her focus and restricting her scale. Yet for all its rugged lyricism, to this eye her work becomes too formal and obsessive, too reliant on intimidation as a means of engagement. *Five Columns* and *Untitled (Wall)* are typical; each is composed of massive columns of rhythmically stacked four-by-fours. *Pink Companion* highlights the violation and surprising resilience of the hacked wood by resting an equivalent block of uncut wooden beams atop it. In *Flat Landscape* von Rydingsvard sets her slashed volume on the floor like a battered woodblock or a brutally cleared forest floor.

Johnny Angel is refreshingly playful, like wooden water tumbling out of a split bucket. The standout of the show was *Girlie Girl*, a 9½-foot-high wall in which the artist's signature columns unfurl into choppy, jug-eared handles of varying dimensions, animating the work with sensuous glee. Despite its mass, the work utterly engages the human scale. Dancing in place under the gallery's skylight, it exhibited a spontaneity and liberation the other works could only aspire to. —George Melrod



Ursula von Rydingsvard, *Girlie Girl*, 1991, cedar and graphite, 116 by 116 by 44 inches. Lorence Monk.