

# ARTNEWS

NEW YORK REVIEWS

Up Now

## Ursula von Rydingsvard

NEUBERGER MUSEUM OF ART, PURCHASE

Through May 5

Like cliffs or canyons or fossils, Ursula von Rydingsvard's monumental wood sculptures are weighted with the push and pull of nature plus time—exhibiting simultaneously accretion and abrasion. This show, "On an Epic Scale," allows her stunning formations more than ample space in which to tower and breathe.

Von Rydingsvard uses 4-by-4-inch cedar beams, which she stacks and glues in horizontal or vertical accumulations before beginning the transforming process of cutting, chiseling, and mark-making that yields a satisfying tension between order and irregularity. This comes off most beautifully in *Bowl for Boston*, a columnar behemoth standing some three times the height of viewers and twice their armspan in girth. Two sides of the piece show the clean horizontal

layers of the planks, while the other two form a grid, based on the boards' ends, that is almost obscured by the dramatic play of light and shadow, shifts in natural color and raw texture, and the deeply faceted surfaces.

While *Bowl for Boston* stands monolithic and impenetrable, *Can't Eat Black* is its low-slung counterpoint, yawning at over 18 feet wide and immediately calling to mind the Grand Canyon. This vast basin, with its deep, smooth crevices, appears evolved from the motion of

wind, sand, and water.

In *Lace Collars*, a row of seven wall reliefs, the slender, serpentine patterns cut away from massive blocks of wood indeed suggest the delicacy of lace, or fossilized bones, or rudimentary numerals, or of decay. In *mama, build me a fence*, the first piece she worked on after September 11, von Rydingsvard leaned tall cedar planks next to one another against the wall, making a kind of long canvas. She then incised on the wood a repeating diamond-shaped web of cross-hatchings, like a matrix of footprints across sand, emphasizing the temporal over the eternal.

—Hilarie M. Sheets



COURTESY GALERIE HELONG, NEW YORK

Ursula von Rydingsvard, *Lace Collars* (detail), 2001-2, cedar, 6' x 42' x 20'. Neuberger Museum of Art.