

The New York Times

Ursula von Rydingsvard

'Primitive Jarring'

Galerie Lelong
528 West 26th Street
Chelsea
Through June 21

The massive, roughly hacked cedar sculptures of Ursula von Rydingsvard are now well known, but they are never formulaic. Each one still has a freshness and surprise to it. Of the four recent works here, the most intriguing is "Pod Pacha" (2002), a craggy, motorized behemoth on multiple feet that resembles both the lower quarters of a great, shaggy beast and a sarcophagus from an ancient culture.

"Pod Pacha" produces a thumping, creaking noise — a "breathing," the sculptor calls it — as a motor continuously raises the hefty slab that is its lid by an inch or two and then releases it. An inevitable anthropomorphism stirs fear that something inside is trying to get out. Or is it the spirit of the wood giving voice?

Another work, "River Bowl," a conic-cylindrical structure more than 14 feet high, continues another aspect of Ms. von Rydingsvard's work, translating an essentially domestic agenda into colossal forms. This one, a beaker for the gods, is a towering monument whose rough, highly expressive surface gives a forbidding skin to a sophisticated, finely tuned shape.

Lace collars, the old-fashioned kind that used to adorn women's Sunday best, are models, too, for the domestic forms that Ms. von Rydingsvard often celebrates. "Lace Medallion," an intricately carved relief collar on a closely incised flat board traced with swirling chalk lines, stands almost 10 feet high but still retains the suggestion of an ancestral relic.

Standing on its own, shunning the influence of Minimalism and other sculptural trends of the last three decades, putting emphasis on the handmade and the associative, Ms. von Rydingsvard's work has made an important place for itself.

GRACE GLUECK