

ARTNEWS

REVIEW OF EXHIBITIONS

NEW YORK

Ursula von Rydingsvard at Galerie Lelong

Ursula von Rydingsvard's sculpture is most often made of blocks or strips of blond cedar wood pieced together to form large, deceptively simple shapes on a monumental scale. This has been her signature style for some 30 years. With their roughly sawn and hewn constituent parts rarely aligned, her works display a considerable degree of facture. They hover between figuration and abstraction, and as easily reference man-made vessels of various sorts as natural forms—rugged cliffs of brittle stone or sun-baked earth. Her recent exhibition at Lelong, which included nine works, was titled "Sywetka," which is Polish for "silhouette."

Wall Pocket (2003-04) is a hollow, 13-foot-tall columnar volume open on one side and at the top, with an irregular silhouette and an uneven thickness. The piece evokes a twisting tree trunk whose core has rotted through or been burned out, or the remains of a ruined smokestack—both hinting of tragedy. The artist has rubbed graphite into the wood, which heightens the play of light and dark across the vibratory skin and reinforces the impression of something charred. *Wall Pocket* demonstrates how von Rydingsvard's piecing process allows her greater formal liberty than carving alone would do and imbues her shapes with staccato or rippling movements. It seems to show the inside and outside all at once.

Dubeltowa (Double), of 2006, consists of two squat forms resembling vases and covered with knobs; they are joined at their shoulders and have small openings at the top. Unlike *Wall Pocket*, these forms press down toward the floor and hint at two colossal heads linked in thought or affection. Von Rydingsvard also showed some very large, roughly flat, irregular wooden discs mounted to the wall. *Plate with Dots* (2006) achieves a floating quality with its somewhat oblong shape and a knot at the top left. More than a plate, it suggests an ornate mirror, with dots on the surface recalling condensation or a reflection. These wall pieces offered a playful alternative to the drama of other works in the show.

—Michaël Amy

Left to right, Ursula von Rydingsvard's wood sculptures *Plate with Dots*, 2006, *Wall Pocket*, 2003-04, and *Weeping Plates*, 2005; at Lelong.

