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## Frost Art Museum’s “Ursula Von Rydingsvard: Sculpture” Brings Craggy, Cedar Minimalism To Florida (VIDEO)

In flat, smooth South Florida, the word craggy is never really heard or used.

But a current exhibit at the [Frost Art Museum](#) centers on majestic rough surfaces evocative of Appalachian mountains and the rocky cliffs of an Irish coast — craggy dimensions completely foreign in our tropical land.

For “[Ursula von Rydingsvard: Sculpture](#),” the [New York artist](#) brings a series of her crude yet delicate, large-scale wooden sculptures to the FIU museum.

Sometimes referred to as the “sorceress of cedar,” [von Rydingsvard travels to Vancouver Island in British Columbia to handpick the trees](#) that will be milled into the 4x4 beams she works with in her Bushwhick studio.

She then saws the beams down into uniform modular units, which she stacks and sometimes alters with paint or fabric.

For the past 3 decades, von Rydingsvard has only worked in cedar, because [she says it is so soft and porous, it receives pigment well](#). Its malleable texture also means every physical interaction can also be traced on its soft wood. As von Rydingsvard states, “all the gentle marks get registered. One can get organic drama in their easily.”

Von Rydingsvard was born in Germany to a Ukrainian-born father who worked as a woodcutter and a Polish mother. As the family was driven out of Poland, they lived in the [wooden barracks of refuge camps](#) — von Rydingsvard’s childhood taking shape under oppressive timber forms.

“I would cross the unpaved road over to where the endless field of bricks lay,” [she recently told the Miami New Times](#). “I would surround myself with stacks of bricks as if building a grotto. It just felt so luxurious.”

For Miami gallery patrons, the exhibit will stand out for its intense cedar aroma, the smell of a forest thousands of miles away. But what’s also striking is how von Rydingsvard’s work contrasts with the shiny, colorful, animated art usually seen in South Florida galleries.

[As one critic puts it](#), “what disconcerts me about this work is its unfamiliar, passionate concentration of irony-free, intuitive feeling and a harnessed violence rare in today’s slick, over-mediated art world. It’s intense!”

*See Ursula von Rydingsvard: Sculpture at the Frost Art Museum until August 5.*