

10 Questions for Iconic Brooklyn Sculptor Ursula von Rydingsvard

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by Ashton Cooper



Ursula von Rydingsvard in her studio

Name: Ursula von Rydingsvard

Age: 72

Occupation: Artist

City: Brooklyn

Your current exhibition at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park is your largest exhibition to date, and it includes two decades worth of work. What is it like to see such a breadth of your art brought together in one show?

All six of the outdoor sculptures at Yorkshire Sculpture Park were made within the last two years. The interior of the underground gallery holds approximately 30 sculptures and yes, this felt like a wide range of work.

I held my breath while opening crates with sculptures that had been stored for over two decades. The works I hadn't seen for a long time were particularly interesting, as they gave me queues as to what my mind was up to at that time, sometimes surprising me...sometimes making me want to do that kind of sculpture over again, trying another tangent.

The sculpture park is a very interesting venue with both open air space and an underground gallery. What were you try here that you haven't had the opportunity to do in other exhibitions?

The underground gallery at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, which has grass growing on its roof, also has a huge part of its front walls glassed, dedicated to visually bringing the outdoors in. The opportunity also exists for sculpture to be seen outdoors in a hugely varied spectacular 500-acre setting with roaming sheep, cows, and a generous sprinkling of Henry Moore's sculptures.

The show is also your first big exhibition in Europe. Did European audiences react differently to the work?

As my work is on the whole a new find to Europeans, I felt a high level of excitement with the many questions during the tours I gave.

What project are you working on now?

Two weeks ago I finished installing a sculpture for the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. I'm working on a large outdoor sculpture for Princeton University made of hand-pounded copper for the Andlinger Center, which was designed by Billie Tsien and Todd Williams. I'm preparing for an exhibition at Galerie Lelong in New York City, opening October 24, 2014. I will be making a sculpture in resin for the San Francisco Airport. Also, I'm working on a 20-foot cedar sculpture for the indoor lobby of a new federal building in Miramar, Florida designed by Ron Kruek and Mark Sexton.

Describe a typical day in your life as an artist.

I leave my home at 7:20 a.m. each day and drive my car to the studio in Bushwick. I have a short meeting with my assistants, after which we start making sculpture.

What's the most indispensable item in your studio?

My brain.

Where are you finding ideas for your work these days?

Cast iron teapots; old shovels; old tools; old fabric from Japan; old leather bottles from Korea; old wooden bowls, masks, small weaving looms, and knives from Africa.

What's the last artwork you purchased?

I bought an African mask (from a flea market where I get everything I collect) made by the Fang Tribe from Gabon.

What's the last great book you read?

"Duino Elegies" by Rainer Maria Rilke.

What international art destination do you most want to visit?

Machu Picchu.