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Ursula von Rydingsvard On Her “Outrageously Big” New Sculptures

The artist unveils new monumental work at Galerie Lelong.



For someone who toils for eight months or more creating her monumental sculptures, artist Ursula von Rydingsvard certainly smiles a lot. Why shouldn't she? She's been on a winning streak lately. von Rydingsvard recently received a lifetime achievement award from the International Sculpture Center; her sculpture *Ona* was installed in August this past year at the Barclay's Center becoming the first permanent outdoor sculpture in Brooklyn; and her first large-scale European survey at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park is currently under way. This week, the artist's show "*Permeated Shield*" opened at Galerie Lelong.

Some of von Rydingsvard's sculptures loom like outcroppings in a canyon while others appear to be outsize tribal artifacts, which von Rydingsvard creates using a particular process of carving organic grooves into 4x4s with a circular saw, then stacking and gluing the wood beams together in a labor-intensive process that can take roughly eight months to complete. For the show at Lelong, von Rydingsvard will be displaying bronze works for the first time at the gallery and a series of new works on paper.

The heart of the show, her seventh with Lelong, is *Bent Lace*, a nine-and-a-half-foot tall bronze sculpture that is as ominous as a weather-worn rock face but as seemingly fragile as a piece of embroidered silk. The work demonstrates a new process for Von Rydingsvard, involving the application of lace to a wood model before casting it in bronze, and reveals how instrumental wood remains to her practice. Massive

sculpture crafted from paper pulp made from banana stems are also on view as well as some of her signature cedar works.

Born in Nazi Germany to a Polish mother and a Ukrainian father, von Rydingsvard, like her work, is both gentle-seeming, but firm. And she likes to laugh. On a recent visit to her gargantuan Bushwick studio (she's had studios in Williamsburg for 35 years), von Rydingsvard unveiled her new work while describing it in a way that, in retrospect, feels "von Rydingsvardian": "Abrasive in a gentle way," "it's outrageously big and it cozies up against the wall," and "the neutrality enables me to get carried away with all the organics." And while she has reached a certain comfort with her work, she has no desire to slow down. "You want to squeeze more out of yourself than ever," she told artnet News. "You want to make it better."

In the following video, you can see Von Rydingsvard discussing some of her latest works.