

Habitat: Ursula von Rydingsvard

BY *Katherine McMahon* POSTED 07/30/15 4:14 PM



Ursula von Rydingsvard photographed in her Brooklyn studio on July 28.
KATHERINE MCMAHON

Habitat is a weekly series that visits with artists in their workspaces.

This week's studio: Ursula von Rydingsvard; East Williamsburg, Brooklyn. "I started painting in the 1960s," Ursula von Rydingsvard recalled, as we talked in the second floor of her studio. "I would put so much paint on the canvas that it would slide off, almost as if it wanted to become a sculpture. In 1975, I started working with cedar."

She is best known for her monumental outdoor sculptures, and has been working out of her current studio for 14 years. Currently, her installation at Giardino della Marinaressa park is being exhibited as a satellite event at the 56th Venice Biennale. "Initially, the park was a mess," she said. "It was dirty, there was no grass and there was cement everywhere before we reconstructed it. We got in trouble a number of times with terrible publicity because we had so much machinery to install the work." Though it seems to have all been worth it in the end. The installation at Giardino della Marinaressa presented by Yorkshire Sculpture Park, featured three cedar sculptures, two bronzes and an ice-blue resin sculpture titled *Elegantka II*, which she explains was "more blue than ever. The light and proximity to the water woke it up; it looked better than I'd ever seen it."

As far as von Rydingsvard's schedule goes, she maintains typical office hours. "I leave my home at 7:20 every morning and start work around 8 a.m. and usually work until 5 or 6. My assistants are fantastic, we will eat meals together at the studio. We're like a family, except a functional one." When describing where the inspiration comes from for her pieces, von Rydingsvard said, "My brain. You can't just wait for inspiration to tap you on the shoulder, it doesn't happen like that. There are times when I feel really dry, but I feel it's important to really put forth the effort to work." Aside from her current installation in Venice, she is also preparing for an exhibition at the Chicago Art Institute in October, as well as commissions for the San Francisco Airport in October and Princeton University in November, among other private commissions. Below, von Rydingsvard shows us around her studio.

ALL PHOTOS: KATHERINE MCMAHON

