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The "Curator's Eye" series features a group of students enrolled in the Masters Program in Curatorial Practice at the School of Visual Arts, who have offered their thoughts on some of the standout exhibitions at the 2015 Venice Biennale. Last week, we looked into "

revolutions-at-the-venice-biennale/)" at the French Pavilion — and now, we're on to Ursula von Rydingsvard at the Giardini de la Marinessa.

Ursula von Rydingsvard creates a reflective, open-air space in a formerly abandoned site close by the hustle of the Giardini and the Arsenale at this year's Venice Biennale. Set in the Giardini de la Marinessa as a collateral event, the exhibition site includes six monolithic sculptures created from 2" x 2" and 2" x 4" cedar blocks that were originally commissioned for the UK's Yorkshire Sculpture Park by its director, Peter Murray. Murray curates the show here, where the little park's oasis of green is laid out with rock pathways that connect Von Rydingsvard's pieces, whose looming forms echo the twisted trunks of the pine and poplar trees around them. All they are missing is outreaching branches.

The artist creates her sculptures without preparatory sketches, carving each cedar block into its organic shape. She then makes molds and casts them in resin or bronze. "Elegantka II," 2013-14, stands out, with its blue resin activated by the changing Venetian light that goes through it. Other works in bronze, such as "Heart in Hand" and "Bronze Bowl with Lace," both from 2014, more closely hew to the dark tonalities of wood, creating a unity between the manmade and natural worlds.

The powerful figures of Von Rydingsvard's pieces are at once tree trunks and standing figures, dark and light, evoking decay — but also of the cycles of nature and the earth. The Russian writer Vladimir Megre, author of the immensely popular series of books from the 1990s, "The Ringing Cedars of Russia," makes the whimsical claim that when cedars reach their maturity, they start ringing so that people can use the trees' magical properties to heal themselves. It is a beautifully calculated artistic and curatorial gesture that nearby Owoiki Enwezor's highly politically charged main exhibition of the Biennale, Von Rydingsvard's works proffer their tranquility.

— *Manuela Reyes*

(Photo: Venturelli/Getty Images for Yorkshire Sculpture Park)