

Opening of the exhibition "Only art" by Ursula von Rydingsvard at the Center of Polish Sculpture in Orońsko

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The exhibition is the second presentation of Ursula von Rydingsvard's art in Poland.

Monumental sculptures by Ursula von Rydingsvard evoke the ancient notion of the sublime. When we look at her works, placed in parks, squares or in the magnificent architecture of American buildings, they delight us with their dynamic form. They testify to the amazing ability of the artist to create poetic works made of cedar wood, charged with a personal emotional touch.

During her over forty years of artistic practice, Ursula von Rydingsvard has gained the ability to cross cultural boundaries that reflect her intellectual and psychological development. She is one of the few sculptors in the world who uses such a monumental form, combining precision and diligence reminiscent of medieval artists with modern abstract art, which she has given its own unique character.

The immediate impulse to organize her exhibition in Poland was the presentation of six sculptures, in the newly restored public space Giardino della Marinaressa, at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015, organized by Peter Murrey and the Yorkshire Sculpture Park team. It was widely echoed in the world of art and media. Ursula von Rydingsvard is one of the most famous artists in the United States. Her work can be found in major art collections and venues such as the New York Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art in Wisconsin, National Gallery of Art in Washington, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, the Storm King Art Center Sculpture Park near New York and many other important cultural and scientific institutions.

The exhibition by Ursula von Rydingsvard, who lives and works in New York, is presented to the Polish audience in three places: the Center of Polish Sculpture in Orońsko, the National Museum in Krakow and the Royal Łazienki Park in Warsaw. Its co-organizers are Ursula von Rydingsvard's Studio in New York and the Lelong Gallery.

The subtitle of our exhibition, "Tylko Sztuka / Nothing but Art", emphasizes our passion and total dedication to art. Her inspiration was the artist's text "Why do I create art? / Why do I make Art?" - a kind of litany listing the spiritual, life and artistic reasons for its activities. In an interview with Marek Rosenthal in 2018, she admits that she could not survive without art.

The show at the Sculpture Center in Orońsko, including twelve sculptures made of cedar wood, one of animal intestines and one of polyurethane resin, eleven drawings and one installation made of ready-made objects, is a representative cross-section of the author's work, from the work Untitled (Nine Cones) / Untitled (Nine Cones) created just one year after graduating from Columbia University in 1975 with her art studies to her latest works, such as Norduna II and Elegantka. The sculptures are presented in the Museum of Contemporary Sculpture, the Orangery Gallery and the park space.

The oldest sculpture, Untitled (nine cones) (1976), comes from the early period of creativity, when the texture of the works is undulating, giving them a dynamic character, but not yet as expressive as in his later works. The work The Bottom of the Ocean (1996), which is very important in her output, contains elements made of animal intestines, the artist created while experimenting with various materials. The remaining sculptures and drawings shown at the exhibition come from the last period of creativity, characterized by certainty and monumental, often dramatic form. The installation Nothing (2002–2021), composed of ready-made objects, is each time a different composition of things found and collected by Ursula von Rydingsvard. On a daily basis, they can be found in the artist's studio, as well as the African sculptures and masks collected by her.

The play by Ursula von Rydingsvard deserves our attention all the more because the author comes from a Polish-Ukrainian family, who during the Second World War was deported to forced labor in Germany, and then chose to emigrate to the United States. Ursula, née Karolizyn, was born in Deensen, Germany in 1942. Parents came from Podhale. Her childhood experiences and her country of origin left an emotional mark on her works. The towers, wooden bowls, tools, shovels and walls echo the family heritage. Even though she has never lived in Poland, she gives her sculptures Polish titles and feels connected with her homeland.

Her spiritual and intellectual inspiration were 20th-century artists such as Mark Rothko, Vasily Kandinsky, Sol Le Wit, Giacometti, and Philip Guston. From the beginning of his artistic activity, he creates sculptures of cedar wood, as well as bronze and polyurethane resins. They are inspired by nature, non-European art - Africa, Australia and Oceania, as well as the tradition of folk art and wooden sculpture (especially the note of Podhale). The artist also draws on hand-made abaca paper with the addition of hair, silk, lace and other materials.

The exhibition is the second presentation of Ursula von Rydingsvard's art in Poland. The first took place in 1992 at the Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw and was an important event in the life of the artist, who returns to her native country after 30 years.

The exhibition includes three films about the life, work and art of Ursula von Rydingsvard. Two by Marcin Giżycki and Peter O'Neill: *The Making of Hand-e-over* (1997) and *Unorthodox Geometry* (1998) and one by Daniel Traub: *Into Her Own*, 2019, which in 2020 was recognized as one of the top 10 films documentaries in the United States.