

<http://blog.sculpture.org/2014/09/10/ursula-von-rydingsvard-yorkshire-sculpture-park/>

## Ursula Von Rydingsvard at Yorkshire Sculpture Park

September 10, 2014 By [intsculpturectr](#) in [Artists](#), [Book Reviews](#), [In the Studio](#) Tags: [Jan Garden Castro](#) [2 Comments](#)



Ursula von Rydingsvard working on *Bronze Bowl with Lace* at Polich Tallix Foundry. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Lelong. Photo by Jonty Wilde.

On October 23, Ursula von Rydingsvard's latest solo exhibition opens at Galerie Lelong, Chelsea. As we await the opening, the artist's solo exhibition at Yorkshire Sculpture Park is also on view through January 4, 2015. This month's blog takes you inside the pages of von Rydingsvard's extraordinary catalog and show in West Yorkshire, England – the most exciting exhibition to date of her career.



Ursula von Rydingsvard working on *Bronze Bowl with Lace* at Polich Tallix Foundry. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Lelong. Photograph by Jonty Wilde.

*Bronze Bowl with Lace*, 2013-14, six meters or about twenty feet tall, opens and closes the book. Photos of the steep, reticulated, seemingly windswept bowl, show its craggy surface rising skyward like a testament to endurance, at one with its 18<sup>th</sup> Century vista, as a family or grazing sheep approach. In addition, the closing pages highlight the bowl's cedar-to-bronze construction

starting in the artist's studio, moving to Polich Tallix fine art foundry where the artist works on both the lace effects at the top and the patina for the bronze, and ending with the welding together and installation of the bronze bowl and its lace top at Yorkshire.

"Why do I make art?" is a poem by the artist that sets the tone:

Mostly to survive.  
To ease my high anxiety, to numb myself with the labour and the  
focus of building my work.  
Objects, or the process by which I concretize my ideas, feel so  
good....  
Because it's a place to put my pain, my sadness.  
Because there's a constant hope inside of me that this process will  
heal me, my family, and the world...



Galerie Lelong. Photograph by Jonty Wilde.

Bronze Bowl with Lace, 2013-14. Bronze, 19.58 x 9.4 x 10 ft. Courtesy of the artist and

The twenty-seven lines remind me of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* condensed into one song, of Ginsberg, Walt Whitman, William Carlos Williams. This is a working class poem, a field song.

The essays and formal content flow seamlessly from here. Peter Murray, head of Yorkshire Sculpture Park, discusses his discovery of von Rydingsvard's art in Warsaw in 1992 as well as seeing her Storm King Art Center retrospective in 1992, his first visits to her studio in a graffiti-strewn Brooklyn neighborhood, and Ursula's traveling retrospective exhibition at Yorkshire in 1997. He discusses the 2014 exhibition and the artist's remarkable way of giving cedar fabric

and lace-like characteristics as well as working in monumental scale that stretched the foundry's capacities.

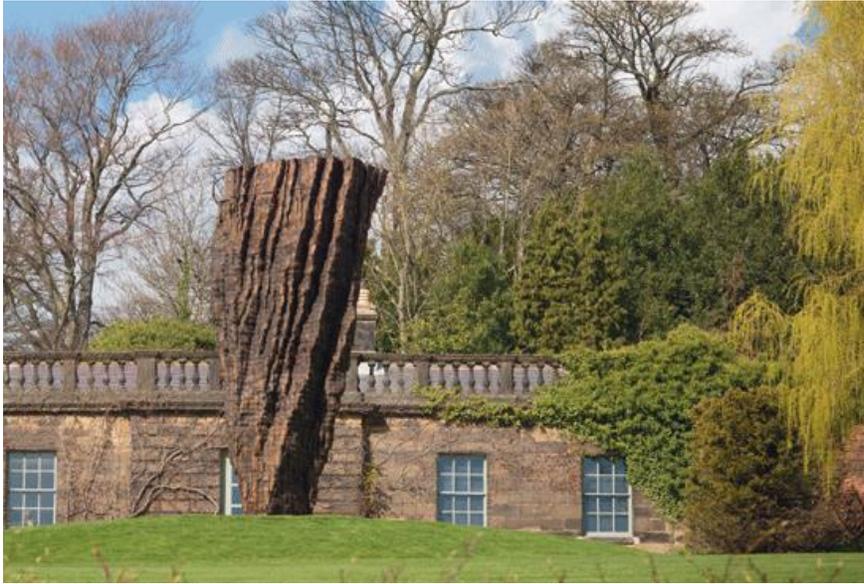


untitled (stacked blankets), 2014. Cow intestines and string. Large Spoon with Split Balls, 2006-2012. Cedar, graphite, ink, and plaster, 3.5 x 3.67 x 1.4 ft. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Lelong. Photographs by Jonty Wilde.

National Gallery of Art Associate Curator Molly Donovan's essay "A Forest of Her Own" explores many directions connected with wood and provides potent metaphors that expand von Rydingsvard's relation to the history of art, starting with the cedar forest of Gilgamesh and Brocéliande forest in the tales of King Arthur. She discusses the roles of wood in the Karoliszyn family's life in refugee camps following World War II – wooden barracks, floors, furniture, kindling. The first camps were situated near forests and forests were also the settings for some Polish folk tales. Donovan's narrative takes us to Ursula's formative years in New York and to her initial projects using cedar 4 x 4s "because of the 'neutrality' and availability of the material" (p. 15). In 1977, the artist made nine hollowed out cedar cones which were installed in Battery Park. These perhaps stood for her nine family members. From the artist's cedar forest in British Columbia to her wood-filled Brooklyn studio, Donovan weaves together a lucid picture of the potent oppositions – "serene and violent, protective and frightening, intimate and monumental" – that coalesce in the artist's work.

A range of images – from the artist at age three with her brother to her family's boat trip from Germany to America in 1950 to her active studio practice – add intimacy to the artist's body of work. Each bowl has a 360-degree profile, and each is packed with suggestive signs or shapes. Her *Bowl with Lace*, with tall sides that jut in and out reminds me of many things, including a perilous journey or a princess-in-a-tower tale. Another new bowl, *Anastazia*, 2013-14, shown standing over a hedge, has a calm side and a windswept side with deep grooves running on diagonals to the top. *Scratch*, 2013-14, is a deeply rutted large form with an animal-like head and rump. *Elegantka II*, 2013-14, is a urethane resin curving slender form, lit from within –its turquoise hues simultaneously icy yet inviting, its rutted surface regal and feminine. A bowl for Martin Friedman, 2013, is both playful and strong. Other major art works have been discussed in depth in *Sculpture Magazine* and [sculpture.org](http://sculpture.org).<sup>[1]</sup> The untitled stacked blankets, 2014, made of

cow intestines and string, have a translucence that makes the veined surfaces seem like scarred skin. Some smaller woven and carved works from the artist's studio suggest shovels, spoons, a comb, bits of fabric, the knots on a favorite sweater, old worn objects. In all, the body again emerges as signs of our shared humanity – skin, hair, limbs, veins, even intestines. The artist often gives her bowls a slender “waist,” then builds up from that point, suggesting torqued torsos.



Pierwsza, 2013-14. Cedar and graphite, 21.25 x 9.4 x 10 ft. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Lelong. Photograph by Jonty Wilde.

This fascinating catalog ends with a note by John Elderfield, Chief Curator Emeritus of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art. As a native of Lazenby, England, a tiny town seventy miles northeast of Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Elderfield compares first his differences and then his experiences in common with von Rydingsvard's. He concludes that specific associations may vary or fade but that the art's underlying qualities make it vital. Elderfield points to “the capacity of works of art to speak vividly, at one and the same time, of the means of their making, and of things other than themselves” and points to qualities of immediacy and ancestry in von Rydingsvard's art that “seize and guide the imagination” (p. 125).

This exhibition closes January 4, 2015. A second exhibition, developed in collaboration with YSP is at Kloster Schoenthal in Switzerland through October 12, 2014.



Small scale experimental works from the artist's studio. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Lelong. Photograph by Jonty Wilde.

Personally, I can't imagine how Ursula conceived and created the new work and installed the 57 sculptures since I last visited her studio. The important earlier pieces include *Blackened Word*, *Droga*, *Large Spoon with Split Balls*, and *Ocean Voices*. The artist's lines, crevices, construction, and processes have evolved over the years as the themes of toil, humanity, pain, and joy continue to strike universal chords.

By [Jan Garden Castro](#)

Ursula Von Rydingsvard at Yorkshire Sculpture Park  
5 April 2014 – 4 January 2015. ISBN 978-1-908432-10-0. £20. 160 pp.  
Essays by Peter Murray, Molly Donovan, and John Elderfield  
<http://www.ysp.co.uk/shop/product/ursula-von-rydingsvard-2014-catalogue>

---

[i] See also: Sculpture Magazine Editor Glenn Harper's review of UVR's retrospective Working: <http://blog.sculpture.org/2011/04/20/ursula-von-rydingsvard/> and see Jan Garden Castro interviews and reviews of the artist and Brooke Kamin Rapaport essay at Sculpture.org, including:

[blog.sculpture.org/?s=ursula+von+rydingsvard](http://blog.sculpture.org/?s=ursula+von+rydingsvard),

[www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag14/april\\_14/april14\\_features1.shtml](http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag14/april_14/april14_features1.shtml)

[www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag10/dec\\_10/ryd/ryd.shtml](http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag10/dec_10/ryd/ryd.shtml)

[www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag07/janfeb\\_07/rydingsvard/rydingsvard.shtml](http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag07/janfeb_07/rydingsvard/rydingsvard.shtml)

<http://www.sculpture.org/documents/programsandevents/press/PDFs/JAN-LAA2014-PR.pdf>