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CENTRUM
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POLSKIEJ

Centrum Rzeźby Polskiej
w Orońsku

ul. Topolowa 1
26-505 Orońsko

www.rzezba-oronsko.pl
sekretariat@rzezba-oronsko.pl

tel. +48 48 618 40 27
fax +48 48 618 44 70

Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego
(PL) 69 1130 1017 0020 1468 1620 0001

NIP: 799 14 39 395

URSULA VON RYDINGSVARD

Nothing but Art

4.09 – 17.10.2021

Museum of Contemporary Sculpture, Orangerie, Contemporary Sculpture Garden

4 September 2021 (Saturday), 2 pm

Curator: Eulalia Domanowska

Ursula von Rydingsvard's monumental sculptures bring to mind the ancient concept of the sublime. When we look at her works, situated in parks, squares or in the magnificent architecture of American edifices, they delight with their dynamic form. They testify to the artist's extraordinary ability to create poetic works made in cedar wood, charged with her personal, emotional touch.

During her over forty-year-long artistic practice, Ursula von Rydingsvard has gained the ability to transcend cultural frontiers which illustrate her intellectual and psychological development. She is one of the few women-sculptors in the world to use the monumental form in such a unique way combining precision and laboriousness resembling medieval artists, with modern abstract art, to which she gave her own inimitable character.

What became a direct impulse for organizing the artist's exhibition in Poland was the show of her six sculptures in the newly restored public space Giardino della Marinaressa, during the 56th Art Biennale in Venice 2015, organized by Peter Murrey and a team from the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. It got a lot of publicity in the world of art and media. Ursula von Rydingsvard is one of the best known artists in the USA. Her works can be found in key collections and art spots like the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 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, Sculpture Park of the Storm King Art Center near New York and many other important institutions of culture and science. The artist's significance has considerably grown over the last twenty years.



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The exhibition of Ursula von Rydingsvard, living and working in New York, is presented to the Polish audience in three places: the Centre of Polish Sculpture in Orońsko, National Museum in Krakow and the Royal Łazienki Museum in Warsaw. It is co-organized by Ursula von Rydingsvard's Studio in New York and the Lelong Gallery.

The subtitle of our exhibition *Tylko sztuka /Nothing but Art* emphasizes her passion and devotion to art. It was inspired by the artist's text, presented in the exhibition, 'Why do I make art?' – a sort of litany, listing her spiritual, practical and artistic reasons for activity.

The show at the Centre of Polish Sculpture in Orońsko encompasses twelve sculptures made in cedar wood, one in animal intestines and one in polyurethane resin, eleven drawings and an installation made from ready-made objects; and it is a representative review of the artist's work. The sculptures are presented at the Museum of Contemporary Sculpture, the Orangery Gallery and the park space where you can see the works *Pierwsza*, *Scratch* and *Elegantka*.

The oldest sculpture, *Bez tytułu (dziewięć stożków)* (1976) comes from the early period of her work, when the texture of artworks undulates, giving them a dynamic character, but does not yet achieve such an expressive appearance as in her later projects. The work *Dno Oceanu* (1996), extremely significant in her oeuvre, including elements made from animal intestines, was made while the artist was experimenting with various materials. The remaining sculptures and drawings presented in the exhibition come from the latest period of her work, with its characteristic confidence and monumental, often dramatic form. The installation *Nic* (2002–2021) consisting of ready-mades, is each time composed differently from objects found and collected by Ursula von Rydingsvard. On a daily basis they can be seen at the artist's studio, just like the sculptures and African masks which she collected together with her husband Paul Greengard, an eminent neurobiologist, laureate of the Nobel Prize for physiology and medicine.

Ursula von Rydingsvard's art specially deserves our attention because the artist comes from a Polish-Ukrainian family, who during the WWII were deported to a forced labour camp to Germany, and then chose emigration to the USA. Ursula, nee Karoliszyn, was born in Deensen in Germany in 1942.



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Her parents came from the Sub-Tatra region. Her experiences from childhood and the country of origin have left a strong emotional mark on her works. Towers, wooden bowls, tools, spades and walls are an echo of her family heritage. Although she never lived in Poland, she gives her sculptures Polish titles and feels connected with her motherland.

Since 1950 she has lived in the USA, initially with her family in Plainville, Connecticut, and since 1973 in New York. She studied at several universities: University of New Hampshire in Durham (1962), University of Miami, Coral Gables in Florida (1964), University of California in Berkeley (1970) and Columbia University in New York, where she gained artistic education in 1975. Since that time she has created sculptures, usually in cedar wood, but also in bronze and polyurethane resins. They are inspired by nature, non-European art – from Africa, Australia and Oceania, as well as the traditions of folk art and wooden sculpture (especially from the Sub-Tatra region). Besides, the artist practices drawing on abaka paper, hand-made according to her original technique.

The exhibition is the second presentation of Ursula von Rydingsvard's art in Poland. The first took place at the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw in 1992 and was an important event in the artist's life. This is a sort of return to her motherland after thirty years.

The exhibition includes three films devoted to Ursula von Rydingsvard's work and art. Two were made by Marcin Giżycki and Peter O'Neill: *The Making of Hand-e-over* (1997) and *Unorthodox Geometry* (1998), and one made by Daniel Traub; *Into Her Own*, 2019, which in 2020 was acclaimed as one of the 10 best documentary films in the USA.

Organizers: Centre of Polish Sculpture in Orońsko, National Museum in Krakow, The Royal Łazienki Museum in Warsaw, Lelong Gallery and Ursula von Rydingsvard's Studio in New York

The works come from Ursula von Rydingsvard's Studio in New York, Lelong Gallery and the collection of the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw

The exhibition is held under the Honorary Patronage of the Minister of Culture, National Heritage and Sport of the Republic of Poland, Prof. Piotr Gliński

Contact for media:

Dorota Monkiewicz, d.monkiewicz@rzezba-oronsko.pl, tel. +48 720 841 600

Paweł Czyż, p.czyz@rzezba-oronsko.pl, tel. +48 690 096 044