

Published by Gallery Crawl, April 16, 2010

"Ursula von Rydingsvard: Erratus" at Galerie Lelong

By: Simmy Swinder



Ursula von Rydingsvard, Droga, 2009

Cedar, graphite

54 x 115 x 219 inches (137.2 x 292.1 x 556.3 cm)

Courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York

«Errätus,» Latin for ‘wandering’ or ‘straying’ is the title of the current exhibition of five works by Ursula von Rydingsvard at Galerie Lelong. The sculptures are dispersed evenly throughout the entire the gallery on walls and as freestanding sculptures, compelling the visitor to wander through the space and confront the objects as individual pieces. The works are of varying dimensions and shapes, having only its media (cedar and graphite) and the mark of the artist’s hand in common. They are on the cusp of being free flowing, organic forms if it were not for von Rydingsvard’s deliberation and control.

In *Blackened Word*, von Rydingsvard begins with a Polish word written by an elderly woman closely acquainted with the artist (von Rydingsvard did not name the woman and said the meaning of the word was unimportant, focusing instead on the movement of the letters). She then enlarges the word (81 x 248 x 78 inches) and builds upwards, splicing layers of cedar to give three-dimensional form to the word. The result is an undulating architectural object one can walk around and step into the small crevices, which form the curvatures of the letters. This interaction with the sculpture is also possible with *Droga*, a large, billowing waveform that forms a tunnel one can peer into. *Unraveling* is described as a “wall drawing.” In the upper left hand corner there is a dense grouping of concave circular forms that progressively unravel into branchlike forms across the pictorial plain.

Ursula von Rydingsvard’s towering sculptures are emotionally charged, vivacious and voluptuous. This is probably because her sculptures do not begin with designs or models. Instead, von Rydingsvard first envisions a vague form then improvises the building process, relying on her instinct to create her work. She first imports cedar from British Columbia to a mill. The wood is then custom cut into 2 x 4 pieces. She then determines the future location of the work, as many of her sculptures are placed outdoors (her work is currently being shown at the Storm King Art Center in Mountainville, New York). She then draws lines on the wood and has her “cutters” slice where she has drawn. She follows this by having special assistants, whose only responsibility is to drill and screw the pieces together. Afterwards, von Rydingsvard coats the sculpture in a glue base, sands it and finally uses a brush to cover the sculpture in fine graphite, being sure to get into every pore of the wood. She controls the shade of the graphite by vacuuming excess powder and scouring the surface. This process is labor-intensive and time consuming. The results show this: the heavy sculptures have a strong, energetic presence and are worth experiencing first hand, if not at a gallery then a public space.

“ERRĀTUS” runs through May 1st
528 West 26th Street

Take the C or E train to 23rd Street and/or the M23 Bus to 10th Avenue

Gallery Hours: Tue-Sat, 10 - 6

Gallery Website: www.galerielelong.com