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UNIVERSITY GALLERY

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST
AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS 01003 (413)545-3670

NEWS RELEASE

The University Gallery is pleased to present the exhibition Ursula von Rydingsvard: Socks On My Spoons which is on view from November 4 through December 15 and features a selection of the artist's most recent work. The artist will present a slide talk on Thursday, November 16 at 7:30 p.m. in the Gallery.

Ursula von Rydingsvard has become known for her sculptures made from cedar which bear associations with anatomy, hand-made tools and objects, and organic forms found in the landscape. Although the work is speculative in meaning, there is an overwhelming sense of the deep-seated urges and traits that cause people to want to make, to mark and to remember. Coming up from under, Von Rydingsvard's forms are, in a way, a non-verbal journal reflecting the combination of childhood memories, which contain the presence of her heritage and beliefs, her working methods and materials, and the choices made and influences gathered throughout her life.

The artist was born in Germany in 1942 four years after her parents were forced to flee their native Poland because of the war. The family of nine lived in a number of German refugee camps for Poles where life was regimented, but free enough for them to continue to practice Catholicism and for their father to start up small farms at the various camps. Von Rydingsvard was largely educated in the United States when her family was able to move here in 1950. She received her Bachelor of Arts and her Master of Arts from the University of Miami, Coral Gables, and her Master of Fine Arts in 1975 from Columbia University, New York. She visited Poland for the first time in 1985, and the Ukraine, the place of her father's birth, last summer.

Von Rydingsvard began working with cedar in 1976 after she had been given some of this soft and aromatic wood by a monk. The 4"x4" beams come in lengths of between 8 and 24 feet which the artist stacks, glues and clamps together. She then begins to work the bulk of wood into a shape that will evolve during a process of exchange between the artist's ideas and the material's resistance. Chisels, mallets, circular hand-saws and grinders are some of the tools the artists uses to create surfaces that are at once delicate and hearty. Socks On My Spoons marks the introduction of two new materials, animal intestines and peat moss, that extend the potential of meaning in the work. Both fabricated and carved, abstract and representational, ordered and rhythmic, Von Rydingsvard's sculptures provide a

purely visceral way of reflecting upon the place where primitive nature and the yearning to cultivate first meet.

Von Rydingsvard has had one-person exhibitions at the Weatherspoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina, Greensboro (1993); Capp Street Project, San Francisco (1990); and Exit Art, New York (1988). In addition to her indoor sculpture, the artist has made many large-scale outdoor works. Large-scale commissions include Iggy's Pride, Oliver Ranch, California; Three Bowls, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Tunnels on the Levee, Dayton City, Ohio. A ten-year retrospective of her work was organized by Storm King Art Center, Lewiston, New York in 1992.

Between 1978 and 1986, the artist taught at several institutions including Pratt Institute and Yale University. She joined the Graduate Division of the School of the Visual Arts in 1986 as a Professor where she continues to teach and to guide a younger generation of artists.

The Univeristy Gallery, located on the lower level of the Fine Arts Center, is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. The Gallery is also open during evening performances held in the Concert Hall of the Fine Arts Center. For further information, please call (413) 545-3670.