

COVER STORY

Where to see von Rydingsvard's work

By Charles Desmarais

Ursula von Rydingsvard's large-scale piece at Stanford University is only her most recent public sculpture in the Bay Area. Here are four, viewable with varying degrees of effort.

**"Ocean Voices II" (2013),
San Francisco
International Airport**

Rushing through an airport to catch a plane may not be the best way to view a work of art. But arriving early for a flight from the San Francisco airport rewards the traveler with free access to an excellent art museum, tucked in among the security checkpoints, airline help desks and concessions. The SFO Museum, fully accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, claims more than 20 galleries for changing exhibitions and a large permanent collection, of which "Ocean Voices II" is a significant part.

San Francisco International Airport, Terminal 3, E Plaza, Level 2. www.flysfo.com/museum

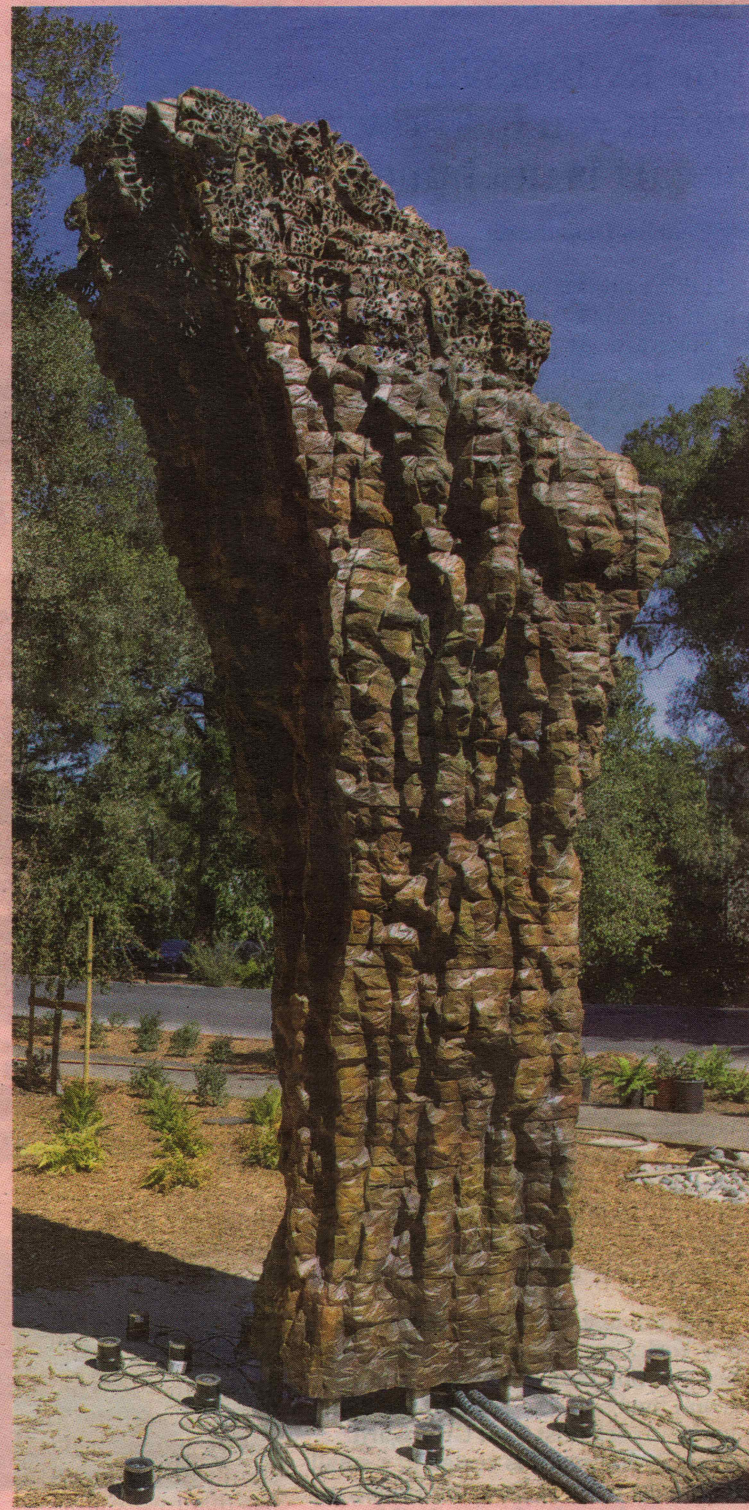
**"Mocna" (2018), Stanford
University**

Easily seen from the public sidewalk, "Mocna" is titled with a word in Polish, the artist's first language, that means "strength." Notably, it is the feminine form of the word. Though best known for her work in sawn and chiseled cedar, von Rydingsvard sometimes casts a sculpture destined for outdoor display in a more durable



Ursula von Rydingsvard

"Ocean Voices II," just over 10 feet high, is one of the worthy destinations in the SFO Museum's permanent collection.



Linda A. Cicero / Stanford News

"Mocna," a 17-foot-tall bronze sculpture, sits outside Stanford's Denning House, home of the Knight-Hennessy Scholars.



Beth LaBerge / San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Above: “Czara z Babelkami,” standing over 16 feet high, has its genesis in a popcorn-stitch sweater worn by Ursula von Rydingsvard as a child. **At right: Reservations and a light hike** are required to see “Iggy’s Pride” at Oliver Ranch.



Ursula von Rydingsvard

material. That is the case with “Mocna,” a unique cast from the wooden model, and the only public example in bronze in the Bay Area. Its distinction from a paired cedar-clad academic building, which houses the innovative Knight-Hennessy program to encourage positive social change, might be read as staunchly emotive resistance to codified knowledge.

North entrance to Denning House, Stanford University, 580 Lomita Drive, Stanford. <https://knight-hennessy.stanford.edu>

“Czara z Babelkami” (2006), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Von Rydingsvard readily admits to the anthropomorphic qualities of her work. She told Sculpture magazine, “Czara is an ancient bowl associated with magic. Babelki are the popcorn stitches that get knit onto sweaters. ... I started with ... the grid of the unbleached wool sweater made from popcorn stitches that I wore as a child. That grid got stretched and worn. It was one of my only pieces of lovely clothing.

... I made portions of the cedar grid in a slow and deliberate way (as seemed respectful to this scale) to make room for something like a belly.”

Jean and James Douglas Family Sculpture Garden, Floor 5 outside of Cafe 5. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Fridays-Tuesdays, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Thursdays. \$19-\$25; ages 18 and younger free. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 151 Third St., S.F. 415-357-4000. www.sfmoma.org

“Iggy’s Pride” (1990-91), Oliver Ranch

The spectacular Oliver Ranch, 100 acres of rolling Sonoma hills, is not your standard sculpture park. Site-specific works by some of the leading sculptors of the past three decades have been commissioned over the years, with the artists given a far freer hand than in many such arrangements. Patron Steve Oliver told one artist regarding a proposal, “Go ahead and make a budget, but I don’t let artists run the budget. They

always skimp on the project.” For “Iggy’s Pride,” von Rydingsvard excavated a 77-foot shelf, where she installed a row of nine, 17-foot cedar forms. The ranch is not easy to visit — reservations are required, often long in advance, and a 2½-mile hike is part of the deal — but an extraordinary experience awaits those who make the effort.

Oliver Ranch, Geyserville. Admission by donation, reservations required. <http://oliver-ranchfoundation.org>

Charles Desmarais