

Landmarks Guide for Older Children



Ursula von Rydingsvard
American, born in Germany, 1942

Untitled (Seven Mountains)
1986–1988
Cedar and graphite powder

Subject: Building up volume

Activity: Making a sculpture by building

Materials: Cardboard or tongue depressors, chisel and/or sandpaper, colored chalk

Vocabulary: Biomorphic abstraction, graphite powder, western red cedar

Introduction

Ursula von Rydingsvard lived in New York City during a time when women artists were becoming more recognized. She enjoys working in an expressive style and believes viewers should have their own personal responses to her abstract works. She builds her wood sculptures layer by layer with glue, and then shapes the wood using hand tools. The wood she uses is western red cedar. After she's done building, she rubs the sculpture with powdered graphite. Von Rydingsvard's artistic style is biomorphic abstraction.

Questions

What materials did the artist use?
Can you identify them on the sculpture?

Why do you think the artist subtitled this sculpture *Seven Mountains*?

How do you think the sculptress carved the material? Did she use a chisel or chainsaw?

Activity

Von Rydingsvard works by building up a volume of wood out of small pieces, and then she carves the surface. Build your own volume by gluing together pieces of cardboard or tongue depressors and then chip away at the surface to create a new form and texture. Finish your sculpture by rubbing colored chalk into the surface.

Ursula von Rydingsvard, continued



Vocabulary

Biomorphic abstraction - Organic forms taken from nature but not realistic

Graphite powder - A substance that is soft and gray or black, used in pencils

Western red cedar - A tree native to the Pacific coast of North America