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 you 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