

### Jessi Reaves

The story behind an artwork,  
in the artist's own words

THIS IS A SHELF as well as a sculpture. The piece is constructed of plywood, cedar fence posts, and sawdust. I have built several of these shelves using the same materials, but this is the first that is self-supported, as opposed to hanging on the wall; in that regard, it's the beginning of a new series.

The scale, color, and cedar wood in this piece are meant to imitate the cabinets built by studio furniture makers in the 1960s and '70s. The material and construction are persistently irrational and rudimentary. In that kind of cabinetry you might find details such as carving, inlay, or exotic wood. I have replaced those with my own techniques. The marker lines from measurement and laying out the shapes remain visible. Sawdust and floor sweepings are mixed with glue to create lumpy "details" on the surface of the unassuming plywood, almost like inverse carving.

The piece is meant to approach ideas of imperfection and irrationality as they relate to notions of craft. The term *craft* implies some level of mastery, and, especially with woodworking, you're held to a certain standard of perfection and durability. But there's also the flip side: Craft can be crude and primitive or childlike. I enjoy the split expectation within the idea of craft. Working with sawdust comes directly out of those ideas, because the technique of mixing sawdust with glue to fix an imperfection in wood is a woodworker's trick, so to speak, but I've turned it into this crude and irrational decorative gesture. MP

