



museum of arts and design

WENDELL CASTLE, FATHER OF AMERICAN ART FURNITURE MOVEMENT, REVISITS GROUNDBREAKING ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE 1960s WITH 15 NEW DIGITALLY CRAFTED WORKS

***Wendell Castle Remastered* Opens October 20 at MAD**

NEW YORK, NY, August 25, 2015 – From October 20, 2015, to February 28, 2016, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) presents *Wendell Castle Remastered*, the first museum exhibition to examine the digitally crafted works of Wendell Castle, acclaimed figure of the American art furniture movement. A master furniture maker, designer, sculptor, and educator, Castle is now in the sixth decade of a prolific career that began in 1958—one that parallels the emergence and growth of the American studio craft movement.

In this solo exhibition, Castle takes inspiration from the first decade of his own artistic production to create a new body of work that revisits his groundbreaking achievements of the 1960s through a contemporary lens. Castle innovated stack lamination, a technique in which he builds up forms out of thick boards of wood before freely carving them into dynamic shapes. In its beginnings, this sculptural approach to furniture making was unprecedented, and it came to define his pivotal role as a leader in the field.

“Wendell Castle has had a long history with our institution, which has shown his work for over fifty years,” stated Glenn Adamson, MAD’s Nanette L. Laitman Director. “It is nothing short of astonishing that he is now making some of the best work of his long career, work that attests to the value of deep expertise and experience. It is an honor to be able to give a platform once again to this important American artist.”

Alongside a selection of historically significant works, chosen by MAD’s Marcia Docter Senior Curator Ronald T. Labaco, *Wendell Castle Remastered* presents new works realized through Castle’s latest practice of combining handcraftsmanship—such as carving, rasping, and finishing—with digital technologies including 3D scanning, 3D modeling, and computer-controlled milling. These new works are installed in dialogue with the earlier pieces that inspired them. Furthermore, newly created bronze works, *Wandering Mountain* (2014) and *Temptation* (2014), will be installed outside the Museum’s Columbus Circle location, building upon Castle’s longtime interest in how his work engages outdoor and public spaces.

“Wendell Castle’s incorporation of new digital technologies into his individual practice has allowed him to dramatically expand his creative productivity yet remain quintessentially Wendell Castle. It is his constant innovation that remains at the heart of his enduring longevity in the field,” said Labaco. “In the early 1960s, Castle brought a sculptural approach to furniture making through stack lamination. Today, over 50 years later, he has returned to these roots but with the

assistance of a CNC milling machine in the form of a robot named Mr. Chips. These extraordinary new works, never before possible, traverse the boundary between sculpture and furniture.”

While Castle’s approach to furniture making has evolved through his use of 21st-century digital tools, it remains rooted in handcraftsmanship and the same imagination that liberated him from the language of traditional joinery. The exhibition highlights Castle’s mastery of volumetric forms with a sculptural presence in the round, his vocabulary of softly organic shapes, and his invention of new furniture hybrids. *Wendell Castle Remastered* explores Castle’s increased capacity to address these themes, in ways that are now made possible through computer-mediated technologies. Gallery text, photography, and films will further illustrate how this new technology is changing the way he generates his work.

Highlights from the exhibition include:

Walnut Sculpture, 1958–1959

Castle began creating dynamic sculptures constructed from gunstock blanks sourced from a local factory while completing a Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture at the University of Kansas, the same university where he earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Industrial Design in the 1950s. *Walnut Sculpture* is one of the strongest examples of this group of works, which resemble free-hand drawing in the air. Although rooted in the fine arts, these gunstock sculptures encouraged Castle to begin experimenting with the idea of sculpture-cum-furniture, or works that were functional yet retained a sculptural aesthetic.

Scribe’s Stool, 1961–1962

As Castle’s interest in merging sculpture and furniture grew, his abstract gunstock creations matured into *Scribe’s Stool*, which has the same spindly quality dictated by the materials he used. Although the stool is technically functional as a chair, its ungainly highchair-like structure makes it difficult for the sitter to balance and emphasizes Castle’s focus on sculpture. Castle’s affinity for the fine arts becomes evident in this work, part of a group of early pieces that have been compared to the sculpture and drawings of Henry Moore, Alberto Giacometti, and Franz Kafka.

Chair with Table, 1964–1965

One of the most iconic elements of Castle’s work is his use of combined forms. From the beginning of his career, he was interested in simplifying furniture pairings. In this first iteration of combination furniture, Castle was able to create a more complex form that allowed for new sculptural possibilities, an important and enduring aspect of his work.

Environment for Contemplation, 1969–1970

Commissioned for the exhibition *Contemplation Environments* in 1970 at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, now the Museum of Arts and Design, *Environment for Contemplation* is a pod-like structure that draws inspiration from sources including automotive and interior designs of the late 1960s. Complete with a hinged door, the piece provides a physical space for reflection and a respite from an increasingly busy world, drawing comparisons with a womb or a free-form coffin.

More or Less, 2014

As Castle continued to re-explore stack lamination, he expanded upon his traditional vocabulary of forms—organically influenced combination furniture. One of these creative reimaginings resulted in his self-titled “misfit” furniture, a series created by 3D scanning two different chairs, digitally cutting them down the center, and re-creating a chair comprising half of each. *More or Less*, with its extended seat and exposed cross section, is a distinctive precursor of the series.

Wandering Mountain, 2014

Castle has long been interested in how his work can engage outdoor and public spaces. Throughout his career, he has created sculptures that do just this, including *M* (1971) for Marine Midland Bank in Rochester, New York; *Twist* (1972–1973), a public sculpture in Rochester; and *Unicorn Family* (c. 2011), an outdoor living room installed at the Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester. He expands on an element of this type of sculpture with his newest cast-bronze works, many of which are designed with outdoor use in mind. The towering heights of *Wandering Mountain* make its presence imposing in a way that creates the dynamism necessary for outdoor works, while the piercings in the seat allow for condensation to drain away.

Dining Table, 2015

Drawing influence from his *Dining Table*, 1966, Castle created *Dining Table*, 2015, using his new vocabulary of forms and technological capabilities. This organic tabletop with a central hole dramatically cantilevers—thanks to the ability of the CNC machine to create areas of joinery with exacting precision—away from a sculptural element comprising three overlapping cones, the tallest point reaching nearly seven feet.

High Hopes, 2015

At roughly nine feet tall, *High Hopes* is emblematic of Castle’s enduring interest in scale, one that pushed his works to become taller and more voluminous throughout the course of the 1960s. Now, with the help of computer-mediated technologies and his robot, Castle is able to realize increasingly complex forms at a scale that was never before possible. This monumental lamp is equipped with lighting elements that can be programmed to project multiple colors, shifting in a pattern that further emphasizes its fantastical qualities.

Remembering You, 2015

Designed with *Blanket Chest* (1963) in mind, Castle’s *Remembering You* exemplifies the reinvigoration of his most classic furniture forms. Here, he reimagines his concept of combination furniture by integrating a cabinet and chair—an unusual pairing that makes one wonder at its purpose. When viewed alongside Castle’s early works, *Remembering You* serves as a reflection on the evolution of his methodology and practice.

A press preview for the exhibition will be held on Monday, October 19, 2015, from 4:00 to 5:30 pm.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION, ASSOCIATED PUBLICATION, AND CREDITS

Wendell Castle Remastered is organized by Ronald T. Labaco, MAD's Marcia Docter Senior Curator, and Samantha De Tillio, Curatorial Assistant and Project Manager. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated, full-color catalogue co-published by the Artist Book Foundation and the Museum of Arts and Design. With a foreword by MAD Director Glenn Adamson and an introduction by Labaco, the publication includes an interview of Castle with Lowery Stokes Sims focusing on his influences and process; essays by De Tillio, providing historical context and a process-related analysis of the objects; and a case study by Amy Cheatle and Steven J. Jackson from Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, examining the digital process of *Long Night's* creation.

Support for *Wendell Castle Remastered* is provided by Friedman Benda, Autodesk, the Anne and Ronald Abramson Family Foundation, Ann F. Kaplan and Robert Fippinger, Susan Steinhauser and Dan Greenberg, the Margaret and Daniel Loeb - Third Point Foundation, Jane and Leonard Korman, Fleur Bresler, Anita and Ronald Wornick, Diane and Marc A. Grainer, George L. Lindemann, and the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester.

Additional thanks to KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, the Official Airline of MAD.

RELATED PROGRAMMING

ENCOUNTERS

On Shape and Form: A Guided Viewing Experience in *Wendell Castle Remastered*

Thursday, October 22, 2015 - 6:30 pm

Join MAD Educators on a guided viewing experience of *Wendell Castle Remastered*. Explore functional design and Castle's innovative sculptural techniques in a group setting that encourages visitors of all ages to look from multiple perspectives and points of view. This drop-in experience aids visitors in understanding Castle's work, influences and methods.

FAMILIES AT MAD

Studio Sunday: Build a model chair with artist educators Jano Cortijo and Leigh Wells

Sunday, November 1, 2015 – 2:00 pm

Free with Museum Admission

Families will explore *Wendell Castle Remastered* and reimagine furniture, as we know it by making their own whimsical, vibrant, miniature seats. Studio Sundays are intergenerational workshops, included with museum admission, during which families work with artist-educators who provide insight into creative processes. Each Studio Sunday workshop is unique, and open to anyone ages 6 and up.

PERFORMANCE

Oscillating While Dreaming

Saturday, November 7, 2015 - 2:00 pm and 4:00pm

Free - Lobby / Outdoors, MAD

In *Oscillating While Dreaming*, choreographer Dylan Crossman creates a site-specific dance piece in response to an installation of outdoor bronze sculptures — *Wandering Mountain* (2014) and *Temptation* (2014) — by the noted sculptor and leading figure in American art furniture,

Wendell Castle. The performance is held in conjunction with *Wendell Castle Remastered* at the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) on view October 20, 2015 - February 28, 2016.

Oscillating While Dreaming is Crossman's attempt to animate the human hand in Castle's abstract sculptural works. Through an investigation of Castle's sculptural practice, Crossman explores his own creative process and in comparing the two, notes the need for art to acknowledge spontaneous accidents that lead the maker into new realms of discovery. Bridging sculpture and dance, Crossman simulates Castle's balance of organic and modern forms in a fluidly architectural performance that addresses "relative failure." Defining the limits of an idea, a concept, or a space becomes an integral part of the piece, even when it leads to dead-ends.

Joining Crossman is long-time Merce Cunningham Dance Company dancer Lisa Boudreau and new Shen-Wei Dance Arts recruit Russell Stuart Lillie. *Oscillating While Dreaming* was commissioned for *Wendell Castle Remastered* by Katerina Llanes, Manager of Public Programs at MAD. Costume consultation by Costello of Reid and Harriet Design.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE BY WENDELL CASTLE

In Conversation: Wendell Castle

Thursday, December 10, 2015 – 7:00 pm

Free with Pay-What-You-Wish Admission

Join Wendell Castle and MAD Director Glenn Adamson for a conversation exploring Castle's prolific six-decade career. Highlighting Castle's innovative and continuously evolving approaches to furniture design, the discussion focuses on Castle's groundbreaking achievements of the 1960s, which came to define his pivotal role as a leader in the field, as well as his latest practice of combining handcraftsmanship with digital technologies.

CINEMA AT MAD

Environment for Contemplation

Friday, December 11, 2015 – 7:00 pm

\$10 General / \$5 MAD Members and Students

In the late 1960s, a burgeoning group of counterculture artists and designers began to develop ideas around "free-form environments"—spaces inspired by organic forms and liberated from the conventions of traditional design and architecture. A leading figure in this movement, Wendell Castle's womb-like meditation chamber, *Environment for Contemplation*, serves as a point of departure for this series of environmental shorts reflecting on nature.

Three Encyclopaedia Britannica Films by Bert Van Bork:

In the years immediately following the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, Bert Van Bork made a series of 16mm educational shorts with various collaborators, including professors at the University of California, Davis and the American Geological Institute (now the American Geosciences Institute). With sweeping panoramas of the open West, colorful illustrations on the progression of microcosmic life, and powerful allegations about the rapid onset of pollution, these incredibly rare films provide an expansive view of the shifting American landscape.

"Aging of Lakes" (1971, 16mm transferred to digital video, 18min)

“Falling Water” (1976, 16mm transferred to digital video, 13min); musical score by Ray Lynch

“Evolution of Landscapes” (1986, 16mm transferred to digital video, 19min)
(Courtesy of the Chicago Film Archives)

“The Man Who Planted Trees”
1987, Dir. Frédéric Back
30min, 16mm

Considered by some to be the greatest animated film ever made, this Oscar-winning short was the astonishing culmination of Frédéric Back’s painstaking frame-by-frame talents. Back’s animation, based on Jean Giono’s allegory about a shepherd’s attempt to reforest the Alps, lifts the story into lyrical visual poetry.
(Courtesy of the Reserve Film and Video Collection of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts)

Environment for Contemplation is co-organized by Katerina Llanes, Manager of Public Programs, and Carson Parish, Audiovisual Coordinator.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields, presenting artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill to their work. Since the Museum’s founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum’s curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving 21st-century innovation, fostering a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design.

For high-resolution images, visit our press image archive:

<http://press.madmuseum.org>

User ID: mad

Password: media

#WendellCastle #MADMuseum

PRESS CONTACT

Museum of Arts and Design
Claire Laporte / Allison Underwood
[212.299.7737](tel:212.299.7737)
press@madmuseum.org

Third Eye
Molly Rowe/ Thomas Dewey Davis
molly@hellothirdeye.com
thomas@hellothirdeye.com