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Mr Robot-o: Wendell Castle goes digital to take his sculptures to new heights



'Wendell Castle Remastered' which opens this week at New York's [Museum of Arts and Design](#), showcases Wendell Castle's recent embrace of digital technologies and robotics to fabricate his work

For nearly 60 years, [Wendell Castle](#) has been working in a creative territory very much of his own making, hybridizing furniture and sculpture.

With 'Wendell Castle Remastered,' which opened this week at New York's [Museum of Arts and Design](#), curator Ron Labaco explores yet another innovation in Castle's very singular career: his recent embrace of digital technologies and robotics to fabricate his work. From his studio in Scottsville, New York, Castle has spent much of his career wielding chainsaws and awls, achieving his trademark forms by stack-laminating planes of wood together, then hand-finishing them into the organic forms for which he is so well known. But back in 2011, he bought a six-axis robot

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(now affectionately known in the studio as Mr. Chips) as a way to assist in the fabrication of initial forms.

It was this transition that Labaco set out to capture. 'He's not necessarily remastering early works or reinterpreting earlier forms,' Labaco explains. 'But this technology has allowed him to create things on a larger scale with more complex forms.'

Throughout the exhibition, which spans two floors, early works are interspersed with those more recent projects made with the assistance of Mr. Chips. The presentation, which spans the full arc of his career, pairs early productions with later ones, allowing visitors to appreciate his evolution. A walnut dining table from 1966 sits adjacent to 'Suspended Disbelief,' another take on a table, finished just this year. Though one was realized with computer-assisted robots and the other just simply with hand tools, consistencies abound: a perforation at the center, seeming weightlessness, and an organic shape. Many works have never been exhibited before, and several, including the walnut dining table, are on loan from Castle and his wife, Nancy Jurs.

Even as he continues to explore the possibilities of new technology, for Castle, now 83 and still waving chainsaws, the core principles of his process remain steady. 'I still believe in doing all my design thinking by drawing,' he says, emphasizing that he still finishes everything by hand. In this way, the computer and Mr. Chips are just a means to an end. 'The computer has a mind of its own,' he says. 'It always wants to fix things that it thinks are wrong.'



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