

written by:
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AGAINST THE GRAIN

A new exhibit at the [Museum of Arts & Design](#) celebrates an enduring medium. *Against the Grain: Wood in Contemporary Art, Craft and Design* brings together 90 works from 57 artists, designers and craftsmen who work with wood. Examining contemporary methods of woodworking and the relationship between function and form, many of the pieces challenge preconceived notions of the ubiquitous material.

Q SLIDESHOW



Inspired by bird nests, artist Nina Bruun used curled strips of birch to mimic the organized chaos of a bird's home in her *Nest chair*. Birch, textile, foam, 2010. Courtesy of the artist, photo by Adam Dyrvig Tatt.

Curated by Lowery Stokes Sims, with assistance from Elizabeth Edwards Kirrane, *Against the Grain* features new works by Marc Andre Robinson, Sarah Oppenheimer, Martin Puryear, Alison Elizabeth Taylor, and Joseph Walsh, and recent works from Ursula von Rydingsvard and Sebastian Errazuriz. Sims hopes the exhibit reveals new potential for wood through the artists' individual approaches to the tried and true medium.

A seemingly primitive material in use since time immemorial, several of the featured artists sought unique and innovative applications of wood in their pieces. From manipulating the hard material into one with fabric-like draping capabilities, to the reuse of existing pieces, much of the works tread the line between functional object and work of art. Artist Gareth Neal says he is attempting to "define the space between design and art." (Another exhibit currently running at MAD delves further into this topic).

The exhibit is on view until September 15. [More information](#) can be found here.



Ai Weiwei's *Grapes* makes use of ten Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) stools. 2008. Courtesy for the artist; Friedman Benda, New York; photo by Bill Orcutt.

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Painter Alison Elizabeth Taylor found herself drawn to wood as a medium after considering the many possibilities of wood-grain-patterned contact paper and wood veneer. *Tap Left On* depicts the decaying architecture of an abandoned house — layers of peeling wallpaper and linoleum flooring. Wood, veneer, shellac. 2009-2010. Courtesy of the artist; James Cohan Gallery, New York.

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D.100 Wave Hill (Tree Struck By Lightning) by Gary Carsley. 2012. Courtesy of Thatcher Projects, New York. Photo: Courtesy of Thatcher Projects, New York.

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Sebastian Errazuriz's *Porcupine Cabinet* allows the user to open a variety of different quills to create their own form. Lacquered wood, steel, glass; Edition of 12. 2011. Courtesy of Cristina Grajales Gallery, New York
Photo: Courtesy of Cristina Grajales Gallery, New York.

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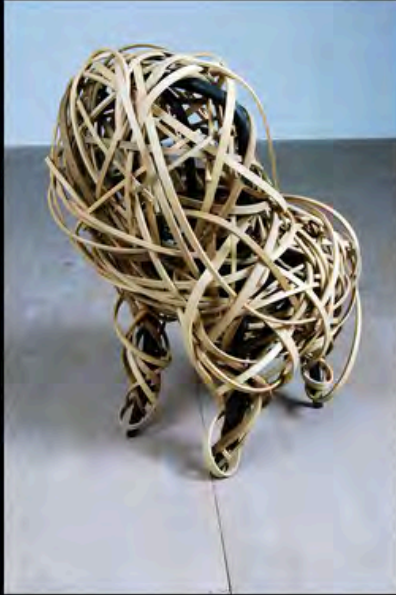
Designer Wendell Castle's work teeters on the line of functional and sculptural. *Ghost Rider*. Bubinga wood with oil finish. 2010. Courtesy of the artist; Friedman Benda, New York; Photo: Jon Lam Photography.

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A(typical) Windsor Form by Christopher Kurtz. Steam bent ash, white oak, pine, milk paint. 2004. Courtesy of Tomlinson Kong Contemporary, New York; Photo by Christopher Kurtz.

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An homage to the king of bentwood, *Thonet, No. 18*, by Matthias Pliessnig obscures the iconic café chair in a frenzy of bent ash. Thonet café chair, steam bent white oak. 2007. Courtesy of Museum of Arts and Design; promised gift of Mimi S. Livingston; Photo by Matthias Pliessnig.

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Working with cedar for nearly 40 years, Ursula von Rydingsvard is able to translate beams of cedar into flowing organic forms. Here, *Oddychhajaca* takes on the shape of a cape. Cedar, graphite. 2011. © Ursula von Rydingsvard; Courtesy of Galerie Lelong, New York.

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Architect Frank Gehry's signature fish appears here in the form of sculptural mahogany on *Pito*, a tea kettle for Alessi. Stainless steel, mahogany wood. 1992. Courtesy of Museo Alessi; Photo: Aldo Ballo; Photo: Studio Azzurro.

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Ricky Swallow magically recreates the folds and wrinkles of a beanbag in *Come Together*. Laminated jeutlong. 2002. Courtesy of the artist, Marc Foxx, Los Angeles, Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London; Darren Knight, Sydney; Photo: Fredrik Nilsen.

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Wooden Textile Walnut by Elisa Strozyk makes use of wood veneer remnants. Adhered to textile, the pieces find new life as they are formed into various shapes betraying their rigid quality. Walnut, viscose. 2011. Courtesy of the artist; photo by Elisa Strozyk.

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Gareth Neal uses the precision of 3D computer drafting and CNC to build a functional chest of drawers whose shape changes at every angle. At various viewpoints, the form of a more traditional bureau is revealed. *5 Draw George* by Gareth Neal. English Oak. 2012. Photo by James Champion.

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5 Draw George, Gareth Neal, 2012. English Oak; 50.5 x 38 x 27 in. Photo credit: James Champion