

*Last Works Created By Wendell Castle Featured at Nelson-Atkins*



*Wendell Castle: Shifting Vocabularies*, an exhibition of the latest and last works created by Castle, will be shown at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City beginning June 23. Castle, hailed as the most important postwar American furniture designer, died in January at the age of 85. *Wendell Castle: Shifting Vocabularies* includes five large works in the Bloch Building and four on the lawn of the Donald J. Hall Sculpture Park.

“Wendell Castle constantly pursued new ways of approaching art, making major conceptual leaps in the worlds of sculpture, design and craft,” said Julián Zugazagoitia, Menefee D. and Mary Louise Blackwell CEO & Director of the Nelson-Atkins. “He was a master at articulating a presence in a void.”

Castle, whose first work in an exhibition was shown at the Nelson-Atkins in 1960, considered form and function equally, defying categorization by generating creations that skirted the boundaries of both art and furniture. His work, intentionally enigmatic, could be a chair from one perspective and a sculpture from another.

“Last Works Created By Wendell Castle Featured at Nelson-Atkins,” *Artfix Daily*, June 12, 2018.

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“Wendell Castle was an innovator who turned furniture into an art form and an experience,” said Stefanie Kae Dlugosz-Acton, Assistant Curator, Architecture, Design & Decorative Arts. “The strength of his work lies in subtlety, and there’s a coyness about it that’s so interesting. The organic nature of his art is a clear response to both materials and form.”

Born in Emporia, Kansas in 1932, Castle is considered the father of the art furniture movement, and he continually pushed boundaries during his prolific career of more than 60 years. Trained as an industrial designer and sculptor at the University of Kansas, Castle moved to New York in the early 1960s to teach at the School of American Craftsmen at the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York. He set up a studio in nearby Scottsville, and began his professional career making sculptural furniture with a chainsaw. Castle developed a stack lamination process, allowing him to create virtually any shape out of wood.

Castle published *10 Adopted Rules of Thumb* in 1996, which served as creative advice both for him and other artists. The list included “If you are in love with an idea, you are no judge of its beauty or value,” “The dog that stays on the porch will find no bones,” and “If you hit the bullseye every time, the target is too near.” He rarely let his imagination, or technology, stop him.

For a 2016 exhibition of his work at the Rochester Institute, Castle wrote: “I invent, distort, deform, exaggerate, compound, and confuse as I see it. I obey only my own instincts, which often I do not understand myself. I often draw things I do not understand, but am secure in the knowledge that they may at some point become clear and meaningful.”

*Wendell Castle: Shifting Vocabularies* closes Jan. 27, 2019.

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