

ARTS & CULTURE

# Wendell Castle furniture sculpture showcase coming to Nelson-Atkins

BY MATT CAMPBELL



Wendell Castle, American (1932-2018). *Motown*, 2016. Wendell Castle Studio and Friedman Benda

It's either art in the guise of furniture or furniture in the guise of art.

From either perspective, they are unmistakably the works of Kansas native Wendell Castle. Nine of the artist's last works go on display Saturday at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. The show will run through Jan. 27, 2019.

"Wendell Castle constantly pursued new ways of approaching art, making major conceptual leaps in the worlds of sculpture, design and craft," Nelson-Atkins Director Julián Zugazagoitia

"Wendell Castle furniture sculpture showcase coming to Nelson-Atkins," *The Kansas City Star*, June 22, 2018.

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said in an announcement of the new exhibit. "He was a master of articulating a presence in a void."

Castle was born in Emporia, Kan., in 1932 and died in January at age 85. The "Wendell Castle: Shifting Vocabularies" exhibit includes five large works in the Bloch Building and four on the lawn of the Donald J. Hall Sculpture Park.

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

Castle described his work for a 2016 exhibition at the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York.

"I invent, distort, deform, exaggerate, compound and confuse as I see it," he said. "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."

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