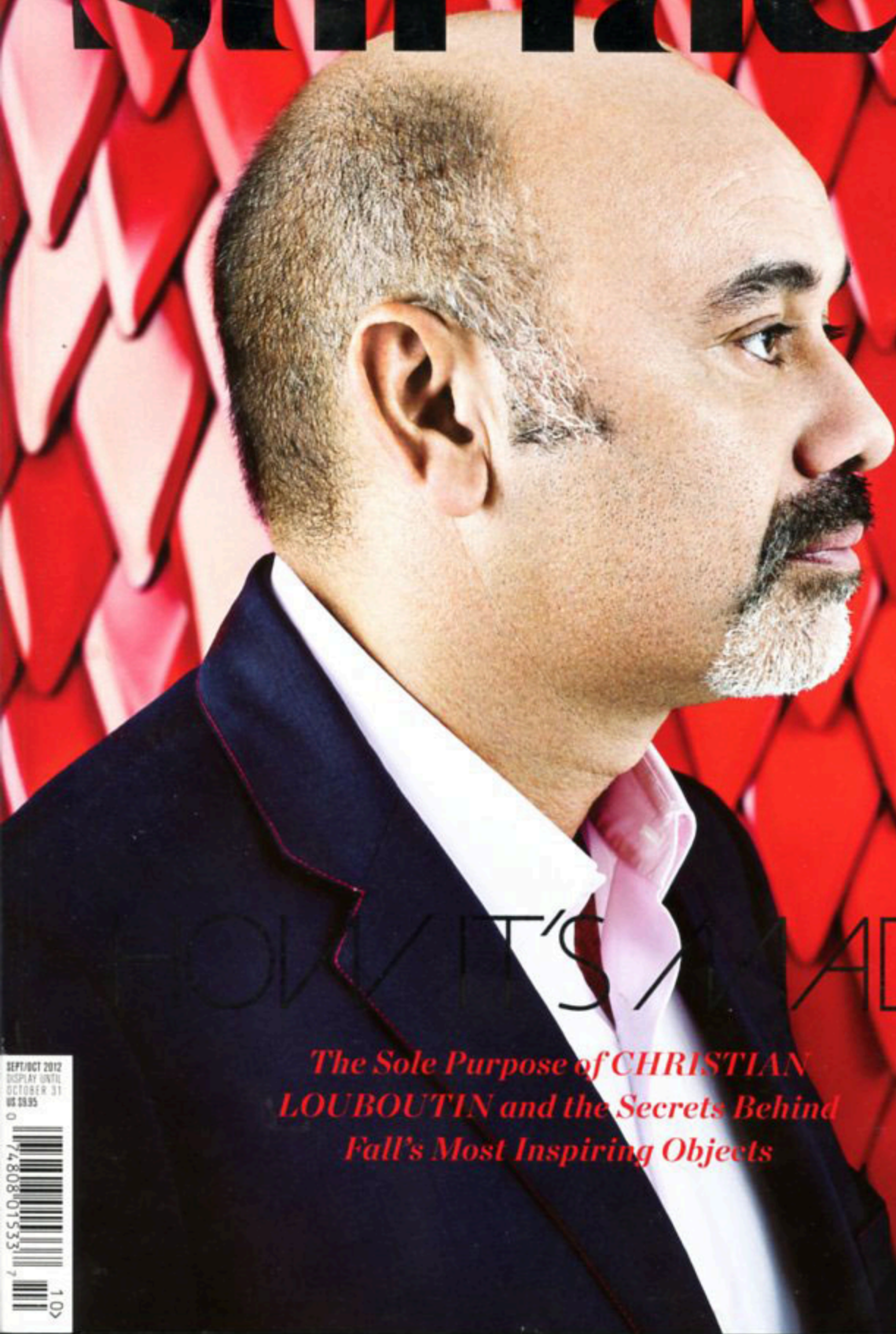


# Surface



HOW IT'S MADE

*The Sole Purpose of CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN and the Secrets Behind Fall's Most Inspiring Objects*

SEPT/OCT 2012  
DISPLAY UNTIL  
OCTOBER 31  
US \$9.95



Gaddy, James. "King of the Castle: Interview with Wendell Castle." *Surface*, September/October 2012.

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Wendell Castle, often called the "father of sculptural furniture," is reclaiming the stack-laminated process he initiated more than five decades ago to produce work that's more complex than ever. The designer has two exhibitions of new editions opening this fall: In October, a selection of pieces that use advanced laser cutting and modeling—including a grid of nine pedestal-sized tables—will be on view at Barry Friedman Ltd. in New York; in December, the adjacent gallery Friedman Benda will exhibit a two-story-tall sculpture, the largest of Castle's career, that will fill the space. "About six years ago, I came to the realization that what really identifies me are these organic shapes, and stack laminating in particular," he says.

Two museum retrospectives this fall, opening in October at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield, Connecticut, and in November at the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft in Louisville, offer a revealing counterpoint. Surface spoke with Castle from his studio near Rochester, New York, where he was skipping vacation in anticipation of his busiest season ever.

**Hi, Wendell. What are you doing right now?**

I've been drawing this morning. I usually have a cup of coffee and sit down at my drawing board and work on a few ideas. I finished a model yesterday and just put some paint on it. I make models of almost everything before we make the full-size piece because you can determine a lot more about the piece from the model than you can in the drawing.

**What model is this for?**

It'll be the biggest thing I've ever made, for the Friedman Benda show. It's about 30 feet long, with a floor made up of about 40 different sections, and a spiral staircase that goes up to an environment with a chaise lounge inside that's 14 feet up in the air.

**What do you have lined up for next week?**

We're getting very close to finishing a piece for a Carpenters Workshop group show in September. We'll start a new piece, too.

**Do you usually go on vacation in the summer?**

Yeah, but not this summer. My wife and I were supposed to go to Cape Cod next week. We have some friends out there with a house, but I've got too much to do.

## KING OF THE CASTLE

WITH A TWENTIETH-CENTURY SPIRIT, LEGEND WENDELL CASTLE DESIGNS FOR TODAY.

INTERVIEW JAMES GADDY  
ILLUSTRATION FRANK VON GRAFENSTEIN

**Did anything stand out to you when you looked back at some of your early works?**

Early on, I made pretty much everything out of wood, partly because that's all I knew how to do, and partly because I didn't really know how to make furniture. In the mid-to-late 1960s, I wanted to introduce color into my work, but to get really nice color that's permanent, I needed to work in something other than wood. So I got into fiberglass and did that for a few years. Since then I've worked in lots of materials: fiberglass, wood, cast iron, cast bronze, concrete. Now it's a nice mix.

**Have you become material agnostic?**

That would mean that no particular material is God, and yes, I do feel that way. All materials have characteristics that can be wonderful. You need to think of any material that you work with as being free, like clay. Just mud. It's what you do with it that gives it value.

**When you were creating fiberglass pieces in the '60s, it wasn't a very sexy material.**

It's really kind of a nasty material. But back then it was very cheap. When we first made the Molar chair, [George] Beylerian sold it in his stores for \$150.

**Have these retrospectives affected the way you approach your new work?**

No. Over the years, I've had lots of employees, some who were skillful at some aspect of construction or other. The reason I was able to make that grandfather clock ["Ghost Clock," 1985] was because I had an assistant here who was a genius at doing that kind of thing. But I've decided that the things I should be working on now are things I would be happy working on if I had no assistants.

**You once said that you had no idea what you would be doing five years down the road. Is that still true?**

I wouldn't want to plan that far ahead. Ideas need to be realized when they're fresh. Otherwise, they get stale like bread. But you don't want to jump on it too quickly, either—you want it to soak in a little bit.

**You also said you couldn't think of anything worse than to be retired.**

I enjoy what I do. And I truly wouldn't know what to do if I was retired. I have a couple hobbies, but I can't imagine them taking up the bulk of my time. As someone once said, "If you stop working, you rust." ☛

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