

## ▶ DON'T MISS: WENDELL CASTLE



Wall Table No. 16., 1969

Wendell Castle, the influential American furniture maker, turns 80 next month. While he's still prolific—he just showed some curvaceous new chairs at the Maison & Objet fair in London last month—it's Castle's early work with wood and fiberglass during the Sixties and the Seventies that shaped the American studio furniture movement and, more recently, the organic forms of industrial designers like Karim Rashid and Marcel Wanders. Castle has experienced a bit of a renaissance in recent years among both contemporary design aficionados and collectors, and on Saturday the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum will open *Wendell Castle: Wandering Forms—Works from 1959–1979*, an overdue first survey of that important, formative early period.

Fan Zhong. "Don't Miss: Wendell Castle." *W Magazine*, October 19, 2012.

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From left: "Fat Albert" floor lamp, 1969, and Two-headed Table, 1969.

"I was fortunate to have a strong beginning," Castle says. A Kansas native, he graduated from the University of Kansas in 1961 with a MFA in sculpture. By then, he'd already begun making furniture—a pursuit his fine-arts instructors balked at, but Castle didn't see the distinction. "I thought, 'Gee, why is *furniture* a nasty word?'" Castle recalls. He entered a chair that he'd carved out of wood into an art competition at the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City, where it was accepted—a validation for Castle. He would continue to work along this divide between art and furniture-making for much of the rest of his long career, producing his handmade pieces in very limited editions, as an artist would. The recent collectors of Castle's work are a devoted cult group, and while the relative rarity of his pieces certainly helps stoke those enthusiasms, it's also because his early work was so far ahead of its time that only recently have the pieces from that period experienced such a strong revival of interest. Says Castle: "You wouldn't know whether one of these was made yesterday or 40 years ago."

*Wendell Castle: Wandering Forms—Works from 1959–1979 runs from October 19 – February 20, 2013, at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, 258 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT.*

Photos: courtesy of the artist

By [Fan Zhong](#)

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