

Wendell Castle: *A New Environment*

Friedman Benda, New York, NY

January 10 – February 9, 2013

Friedman Benda will open *Wendell Castle: A New Environment*, January 10 – February 9, 2013. Castle has produced a major work – an installation of stack-laminated pieces spanning two-stories. Inviting dreamers to imagine, Castle incorporates seating pieces, a table, a lamp, and a spiral staircase leading to a nest resembling a tree house. A culmination of Castle's own history of ideas and the resolution of formidable technical challenges, this dynamic environment offers Castle's public a bewitching play of abstraction, function, and fantasy.

Self-referential and set into its own floor, the environment is a room without walls, a gesamtkunswerk, where elements relate to each other, invite interaction, and are rife with repeating aesthetic motifs.

In 1969, Castle produced an “environment for contemplation,” a stack-laminated pod-like chamber with a hinged door where one could ensconce and reflect. The new environment, 43 years later was exponentially more complicated to craft; the spiral staircase for example, appears to have regular step intervals but in fact will be built on a zigzag so that it can be hooked into the nest above. With this environment, the formula of the sixties work is reversed. Castle opens his work up to the public, seeking to redefine and re-set relationships.

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Kansas in 1932, Wendell Castle received a B.F.A. from the University of Kansas in Industrial Design in 1958 and an M.F.A. in sculpture, graduating in 1961. He moved to Rochester, New York to teach at the School of American Craftsmen and established a permanent studio in the area, which is where he still works today.

Wendell Castle's work can be found in the permanent collections of more than 40 museums and cultural institutions around the world, including: the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, NY); Museum of Modern Art (New York, NY); Art Institute of Chicago, (IL); Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington D.C.); Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal (Quebec, Canada); Museum of Art and Design (New York, NY); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, (MA); Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum (Trondheim, Norway); Philadelphia Museum of Art (PA); and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Castle has been the recipient of many honors and awards, including four National Endowment for the Arts grants, three honorary degrees, a Visionaries of the American Craft Movement Award from the American Craft Museum (1994), the American Craft Council Gold Medal (1997), Master of the Medium Award from The James Renwick Alliance of National Museum of American Art, (1999), and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Brooklyn Museum of Art (2007).