

# WENDELL CASTLE

## SUSPENDED DISBELIEF

LADBROKE HALL | LONDON



In *Suspended Disbelief*, a new exhibition from Carpenters Workshop Gallery, Wendell Castle – revered as the founding father of the American Art Furniture Movement – seamlessly intertwines sculpture and design, forging a unique discipline that continues to challenge the boundaries of artistic creation.

At the heart of this exhibition lies an exploration of Castle's sculptural works made between 2011 and 2015. Exemplifying his departure from the static nature often associated with modernism, this period was marked by fluid, organic sculptural forms that utilised digital methods, including 3D modelling, scanning and laser cutting.

Known as one of the first artists to blur the line between art and design, each piece demonstrates Castle's distinctive and organic approach to sculpture, notably his groundbreaking technique of carving into stacked wood, known as stack lamination. This innovative method begins with large wooden blocks meticulously glued and clamped together, only to be skilfully carved into functional sculptural works of collectible design.

The resulting creations vary in composition, from bulbous to sinewy and serpentine, yet consistently maintain a delicate balance that is a hallmark of Castle's artistic vision. His investigation into different shapes is not only a testament to his technical prowess but also imbues his pieces with a playful and imaginative quality, therein challenging traditional furniture-making norms and establishing Castle as a visionary in the field.

Embracing technological developments in his later life, Castle was able to use both stack-lamination and digital modelling techniques to maximise the abstract volume of his artworks. This is evident in *Suspended Disbelief* (2015), where spires counterbalance a long, gravity-defying cantilevered tabletop, spanning over four metres in total.

Other key works include *Keeping Promises* (2012), an anthropomorphic work that invites the viewer to take a seat in its cave-like cocoon and *Hope* (2013), a textural structure that's been meticulously crafted from stained ash into sensuous curves, reminiscent of tree trunks and lily pads.

Castle's taste for innovation emerged during his study of sculpture and industrial design at the University of Kansas in the late-1950s. Utilising walnut sourced from a nearby factory, he laid the groundwork for his organic approach to design, inspired by contemporaries like Finn Juhl and Carlo Mollino. Castle's artistic journey, from the gravity-defying structures of the 1960s to the later exploration of classical forms and experimentation with trompe l'oeil, reflects a consistent commitment to pushing artistic boundaries. The exhibition presents a unique opportunity to witness the evolution of Castle's work, showcasing his mastery of materials from wood to fibreglass, and culminating his use of digital methods in his later years.



## WENDELL CASTLE

KEEPING PROMISES

2012

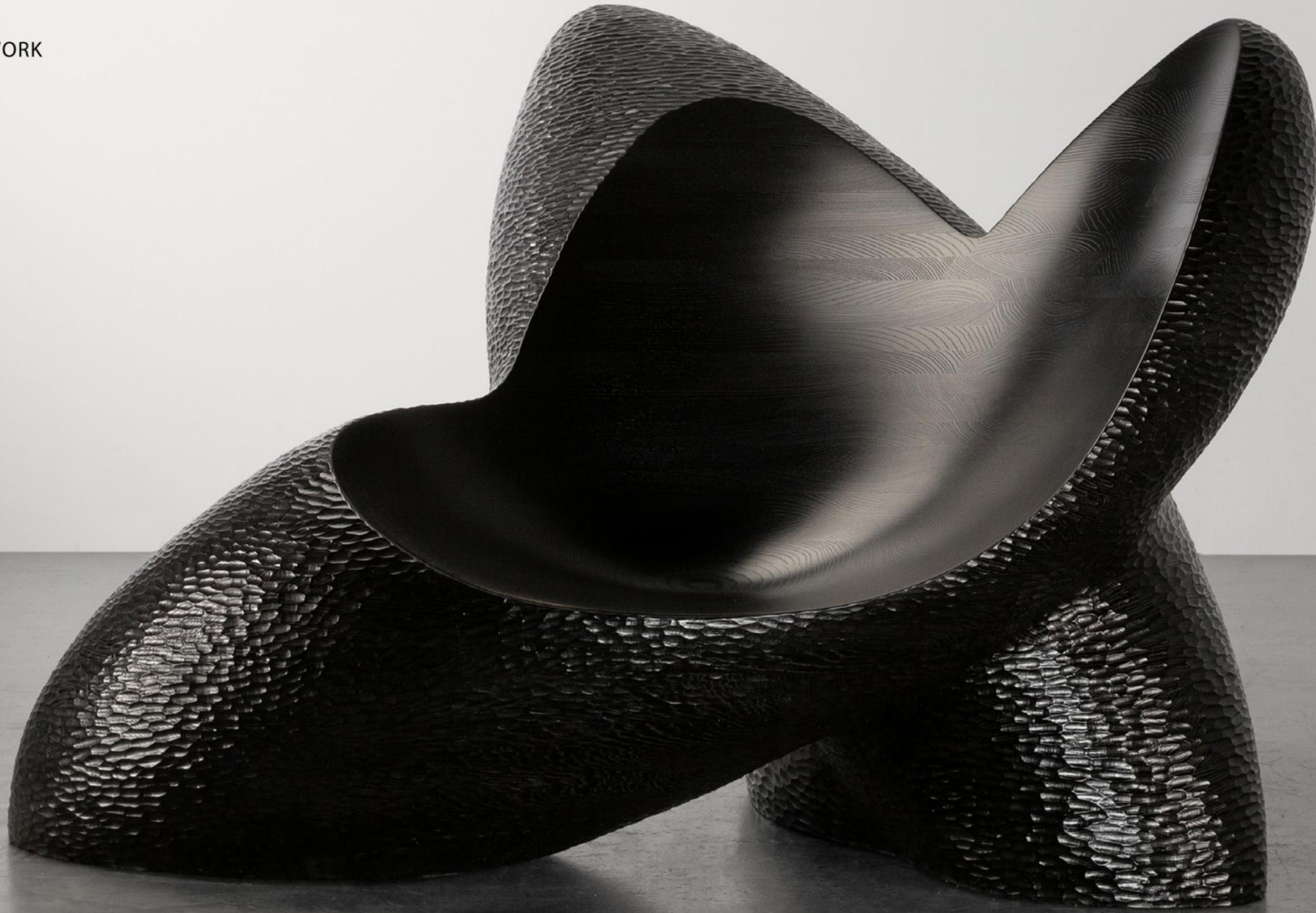
Stained Ash, Oil Finish

119.4 x 177.8 x 147.3 cm

47 1/8 x 70 x 58 in

Unique

[→ MORE OF THIS WORK](#)





Wendell Castle was among the first in the U.S. to merge the disciplines of sculpture and design, and he is credited with pioneering the American Art Furniture movement. He developed a technique called stack lamination, involving layering up wooden sheets into a block large enough to carve back into, on a scale those working before him could not achieve. The organic shapes and curved seat of *Keeping Promises* are a prominent feature of many of Castle's works and exemplify his mastery of wood.



## WENDELL CASTLE

SUSPENDED DISBELIEF  
2015

Stained Ash, Oil Finish  
177.8 x 401.3 x 210.8 cm  
70 x 158 x 83 in  
Unique

The spires of *Suspended Disbelief* counterbalance a long, suspended tabletop, spanning over four meters in total. Embracing technological developments in later life, Castle was able to use digital modelling techniques to maximise the volume and scale of his artworks, such as this unique table from 2015.

[→ MORE OF THIS WORK](#)





## WENDELL CASTLE

SEVENTH NIGHT  
2011

Stained Walnut, Oil Finish  
82.6 x 105.7 x 96.5 cm  
32 1/2 x 41 5/8 x 38 in  
Unique

Castle crafted unique, sculptural forms and experimented with everyday materials, as seen in *Seventh Night*, which stands as a testament to a lifetime's dedication to craft and the exploration of technique. The chair is made of stained walnut wood and is completed with an oil finish, accentuating the curves and sculptural quality of his work.

[→ MORE OF THIS WORK](#)



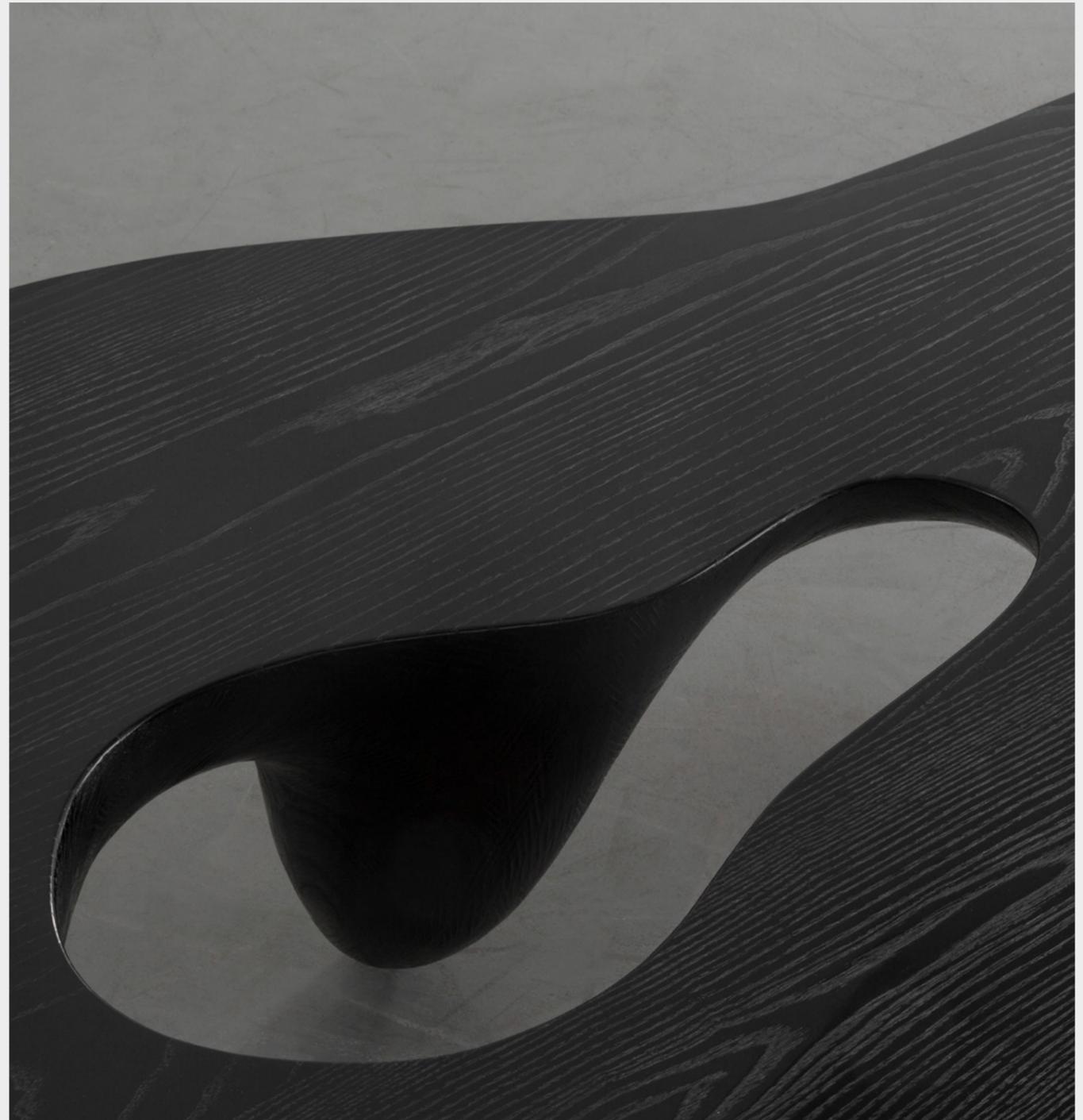
## WENDELL CASTLE

WANDER  
2015

44 x 153 x 94.5 cm  
17 3/8 x 60 1/4 x 37 1/4 in  
Edition of 3 with 2 AP

Formulated from stained ash, *Wander* is crafted in Castle's famous wood lamination technique but despite the many layers of wood that form the sculptural table, it remains light in form. The void-like hole in the centre helped Castle remove unnecessary weight without affecting the structure's integrity, therefore allowing him greater freedom to expand the artwork's overall volume.

[→ MORE OF THIS WORK](#)



**WENDELL CASTLE**

IS IT YESTERDAY LEFT  
2011

Stained Ash, Oil Finish  
99 x 140 x 117 cm  
39 x 55 1/8 x 46 1/8 in  
Edition of 8 with 4 AP

[→ MORE OF THIS WORK](#)



**WENDELL CASTLE**

IS IT YESTERDAY RIGHT  
2011

Stained Ash, Oil Finish  
99 x 140 x 117 cm  
39 x 55 1/8 x 46 1/8 in  
Edition of 8 with 4 AP

[→ MORE OF THIS WORK](#)





## WENDELL CASTLE

WHISPERING WINDS  
2014

Stained Ash, Oil Finish  
72.7 x 187.3 x 128.3 cm  
28 5/8 x 73 3/4 x 50 1/2 in  
Unique

The form of *Whispering Winds* is both physically and visually anchored by a stack-laminated collage of organic shapes at one end. The table-top is suspended outward, a design feature seen in many of Castle's designs. Castle's transformation of wood exemplifies his dedication to experimental design, blurring the lines between art and design.

[→ MORE OF THIS WORK](#)





## WENDELL CASTLE

THIS SIDE OF THE BLUE  
2014

48.3 x 163.8 x 85.1 cm  
19 1/8 x 64 1/2 x 33 1/2 in  
Edition of 3 with 2 AP

*This Side of the Blue* is an example of Castle's continuous experimentation with the possibilities of creating sculptures with wood. The five trunk-like columns that form the work are consistent with his recognised style of curved, biomorphic lines and whimsical undertones.

[→ MORE OF THIS WORK](#)



## WENDELL CASTLE

HOPE  
2013

Stained Ash, Oil Finish  
85 x 170 x 119 cm  
33 1/2 x 66 7/8 x 46 7/8 in  
Unique

The monumental *Hope*, one of Wendell Castle's masterpieces from his late career, shows two carved wooden seats, counterbalanced against amorphous spires that burst from the ground. As seen in the exposed grain of the wood, *Hope* is made via Castle's innovation with a lamination technique, involving stacking layers of wood on top of each other and carving directly into it. This gave the artist ultimate control over the unique shapes of his artworks and allowed him to expand the parameters of how it is possible to shape wood.

[→ MORE OF THIS WORK](#)







## WENDELL CASTLE

SOMETHING TO HIDE  
2012

Stained Ash, Oil Finish  
EACH: 73.3 x 92.1 x 46.4 cm  
28 7/8 x 36 1/4 x 18 1/4 in  
Edition of 3 with 1 AP

Wendell Castle's *Something to Hide* comprises of twin wooden sculptures, carved from the stained ash that distinguishes Castle's later works. Their abstract forms combine voluminous spires growing on top of one another, as Castle marries a whimsical aesthetic with a deep understanding of balance and composition.

Castle was among the first in the U.S. to merge the disciplines of sculpture and design, and is credited with pioneering the American Art Furniture movement, evidenced in his ability to elevate humble materials into artworks bordering on the anthropomorphic.

[→ MORE OF THIS WORK](#)



## WENDELL CASTLE

SECOND COMING  
2013

Stained Ash, Oil Finish  
104 x 248 x 130 cm  
41 x 97 5/8 x 51 1/8 in  
Unique

*Second Coming* exemplifies the unconventional forms that Castle injected into the American Art Furniture movement. Castle spent his 60-year career embracing new technologies so he could stay at the forefront of contemporary art and design, including his famed stack-lamination wood technique in which *Second Coming* is crafted.

[→ MORE OF THIS WORK](#)







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