



MEMORIAL ART GALLERY COMMISSIONS WENDELL CASTLE SCULPTURE FOR CENTENNIAL SCULPTURE PARK



ROCHESTER, NY, December 6, 2011 — During more than five decades as a sculptor and furniture maker, Rochester's own Wendell Castle has been called a "trailblazer," "an American phenomenon," "a leading figure in American craft" and "the father of the art furniture movement."

The Memorial Art Gallery has commissioned a monumental cast-iron sculpture by Castle as one of the anchor installations of its planned Centennial Sculpture Park, director Grant Holcomb announced today. The piece (working title *Unicorn Family*) will measure 22 feet in diameter and consist of a gathering area with a table and three chairs and a 13-foot LED lamp. A maquette of the work, which is scheduled to be installed in late 2012, will go on view in the Gallery's Vanden Brul Pavilion in mid-December.

The sculpture and installation are made possible by an anonymous donor.

It's not the first time that MAG has showcased Castle's work. In 1990, the Gallery hosted *Furniture by Wendell Castle*, a major retrospective organized by the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts. Castle was also one of only four artists from our region included in the 1995 exhibition *The White House Collection of American Crafts*. And from 2004 to 2006, the Gallery exhibited work from all phases of his prodigious career in the long-term installation *Wendell Castle in Rochester*.

In addition, MAG's iconic *Music Rack* (1964), once the subject of a documentary film, is included in the traveling exhibition *Crafting Modernism: Midcentury American Art and Design*, which was organized by the Museum of Art and Design in New York City and opens at MAG in February 2012.

Unicorn Family joins twelve works by Castle which are already in MAG's permanent collection. In addition to his *Music Rack*, these include such visitor favorites as the *Dr. Caligari* clock (1984) and *Lord Dragonfly Chair* (2003).

"As Wendell is both a long time friend of the Memorial Art Gallery and an artist of international stature, we are delighted that his work will become a vital part of our new Centennial Sculpture Park," says Holcomb.

About the artist

Born in Emporia, KS, in 1932, Wendell Castle was educated at the University of Kansas, where he earned a BFA in industrial design and an MFA in sculpture. He was already a rising star in 1962, when he was recruited to teach at Rochester Institute of Technology's School for American Craftsmen (today the School for American Crafts). He has made Rochester his home ever since.

In addition to RIT, where he has been Artist-in-Residence since 1984, Castle has taught at the University of Kansas and at the State University of New York at Brockport. From



1980 to 1988, he ran his own woodworking school at his studio in Scottsville, NY. Many of his students have gone on to enjoy successful careers in the art and design field and in teaching.

Castle's sculptural and functional works are represented in the permanent collections of such prestigious institutions as the Art Institute of Chicago; the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Museum of Modern Art, New York City; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Among his commissions are indoor and outdoor site-specific works for public and private organizations. These include *Full Moon*, a 19' clock created for Hammerson Canada, Inc. in Toronto; and *Metamorphosis*, a 45' x 12' wall sculpture of wood, neon and acrylic for the Bausch & Lomb headquarters in Rochester.

In 1999, Castle launched the Wendell Castle Collection, a line of contemporary wood furniture represented in showrooms across the country.

He is the recipient of numerous awards and honors including three honorary doctoral degrees, the 1994 "Visionaries of the American Craft Movement" award sponsored by the American Craft Museum, a 1997 Gold Metal from the American Craft Council, and the Modernism Design Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 2007.

Castle shows no signs of slowing down. In a recent Wall Street Journal Magazine article titled "Famous, Again," Alastair Gordon reported that "the surprise star of the Design Miami fair was 78-year-old furniture maker Wendell Castle, who's been honing his craft for 50 years."



About Centennial Sculpture Park

Centennial Sculpture Park, a community space on the grounds of the Memorial Art Gallery, is scheduled to be open in time for the Gallery's 100th anniversary celebration in October 2013. The strategic location of the park, along with the removal of portions of decades-old wrought-iron fencing, is expected to make the Gallery a more vital part of the Neighborhood of the Arts, open up the grounds for the public to enjoy, and attract tourism.

Wendell Castle is one of three major artists already commissioned to create work for the park. Tom Otterness, known internationally for his engaging installations, is creating a major new work—a female sculptor carving a male figure from a block of stone, not far from a "quarry"—to be installed near the intersection of Goodman Street and University Avenue. Jackie Ferrara, whose geometric pathways have been commissioned for sculpture parks and landscapes around the country, is designing the path leading from the quarry to the front entrance of MAG. A fourth commission, still under wraps, will anchor the Goodman Street entrance.

In addition to these commissions, Centennial Sculpture Park will showcase works from the MAG collection by such national and local artists as Deborah Butterfield, George Rickey and Tony Smith.

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