A LONG ENGAGEMENT:
WENDY MARUYAMA AND HER STUDENTS
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The Furniture Design and Woodworking program is part of the School of Art + Design at San Diego State University. It is one of the top furniture design and woodworking programs in the country and has a record of training accomplished artists, designers and makers. Additionally, many of our alumni have set up practices across the country and are making custom and production furniture projects of the highest quality. Many also hold teaching positions at the finest art and design programs in the country.

The Furniture Design and Woodworking curriculum puts equal focus on the art, design, and craft of furniture and material-driven sculptural objects. This allows for an incredible diversity of work to be produced by our students. I invite you to look through this catalog and see for yourself. I think you will see that our program’s focus on helping students discover and develop their individual passion has led to some incredible work.

Matthew Hebert
Associate Professor - San Diego State University
For more than 30 years Wendy Maruyama has created works that push the envelope, challenge perceptions, and introduce ideas that take direct aim at the status quo. When Wendy emerged on the furniture scene in the 1980s, she presented works in abstract form that used non-traditional materials and often included popular culture references. At the time, woodworking was a traditional field in which conventional reverence for wood was expected and adhered to by all in the field—and the field consisted primarily of men. Wendy was one of the first two women to enroll in an MFA program in furniture making in the United States.

When Wendy joined the faculty at San Diego State University in 1989, she brought with her a capacity to include all disciplines of the visual art world, and a work ethic second to none. Her expectations for herself and her students are often mentioned by her peers. Her students will tell you that she expected excellence of them, with feedback and criticism delivered in an honest and supportive manner.
Wendy’s commitment to her students is key to the stellar reputation of the SDSU Furniture Design and Woodworking Program. For 26 years Wendy never took “no” for an answer, and her tireless efforts to develop rigorous curriculum, better facilities, and secure funding for the program and her students are the cornerstone of her legacy. By developing a longstanding relationship with the Windgate Charitable Foundation, Wendy was instrumental in developing an endowed recruitment scholarship and the Windgate Artist-in-Residence program that enables an established artist to work alongside and mentor students each semester.

Today, the SDSU Furniture Design and Woodworking Program is part of a comprehensive arts program in applied design, grounded in the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary art practice. It is a nationally recognized program with an impressive list of successful alumni well-known in studio furniture design, gallery ownership, and university faculty.

As the Dean of the College, and a friend of Wendy’s, it is indeed a privilege to share with you the work in this catalog. Wendy’s uncanny ability to connect with students and inspire their creative genius is on view here. While only 36 former students are highlighted, it is only due to time and resource constraints. I have no doubt you will be awed and inspired by the work of these artists.

Along with them, I am grateful to Wendy for her dedication to her craft, and to her students, all these many years.

Regards,

Joyce M. Gattas, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Professional Studies and Fine Arts
Breaking News: Wendy Maruyama has left the building (sort of)! It is a joy and an honor to have the opportunity to craft this introductory essay for *A Long Engagement: Wendy Maruyama and Her Students*. Wendy Maruyama is one of the rarest of birds, the full-time-educator-full-time-artist. At some point, probably very early in her career, Wendy discovered a means to fold both time and space in order to excel as both an artist and an art educator. By the time I became Wendy’s colleague at San Diego State University in 2007, she had already created a powerhouse program and international recognition for her art. Graduates of her program had established prolific studio practices across the country (and beyond), secured teaching positions in established programs, some even creating new educational programs from the ground up. Her students have continued to work at the forefront of studio furniture, consistently making major contributions to the field. Strikingly, this commitment to her professorship at SDSU had seemingly little negative impact on her art career. Wendy has always been famously productive, and is one of the most important studio furniture artists in the world. Between my efforts and the writing of Holly Gore, it is my hope that we can effectively honor the work of all involved in the exhibition.
The aim of this exhibition and the catalog in your hand (or screen) is to celebrate the astounding tenure of Professor Wendy Maruyama as evidenced by the work of a selection of her most accomplished alumni. Wendy served the university through her teaching, leadership, and research for 26 years. For each and every one of these years, she ran at full steam. After taking the reigns from Professor Larry Hunter, she was able to propel the recognition of the SDSU Furniture Design and Woodworking program well beyond the borders of San Diego County. During this time she was able to raise the enrollment of both undergraduate and graduate students. Wendy came to a program with two graduate students and was able to develop the program to such high stature, that its graduate cohort reached an apex of 14 students. This development of the graduate and undergraduate programs propelled SDSU into the highest echelon of Furniture Design and Woodworking programs, now considered to be on the top tier alongside Rhode Island School of Design and University of Wisconsin - Madison. This couldn’t have been accomplished without Wendy’s tireless efforts to strengthen the curriculum, facilities, and funding for the program and the larger School of Art + Design. In addition to securing external gifts to build a new classroom and spray booth, she also developed a strong and enduring relationship with the Windgate Charitable Foundation. That relationship led to an endowed recruitment scholarship, that benefits many programs within the School, as well as the Windgate Artist-in-Residence program which places a unique established artist in the studio each semester.

While I know that Wendy has derived an immense amount of satisfaction out of her post at SDSU, I am also aware that she is a tirelessly inquisitive artist. Shortly after my arrival at SDSU, Wendy had the good fortune to use a sabbatical leave to act as Artist-in-Residence at State University New York - Purchase (SUNY-Purchase). Wendy’s art practice has had several points of inflection, but this residency marks what has got to be one of the most significant. Wendy has long dealt with issues of identity in her work, but with the Tag Project she took these interests and broadened them well beyond the confines of the static studio furniture object. A simple task, the recreation of 120,000 identification tags that Japanese internees were forced to wear, takes the form of a massively-scaled act of publicly-engaged art. This change in scale and form is a testament to Wendy’s ever developing approach to art and is all the more impressive when considered alongside her successful teaching career.

When passing your judgment on the success of Wendy as an educator, please consider the contents of this catalog as Exhibit A. The pages you are about to thumb through contain the works of 36 people profoundly impacted by time spent working with Wendy. These alumni and current graduate students of the program, demonstrate the breadth and depth of Wendy’s approach to the subject. What you will undoubtedly notice is the wide range of technique and form found in the alumni work.
This is a powerful testament of Wendy’s ability to cultivate an intense personally motivated approach from her students. There is no “school of thought” on display here; instead Wendy has an amazing record of inculcating the most rigorous sense of exploration and risk taking in her students.

Wendy’s ability to give her all to both her professorship at SDSU and her art career is perfectly captured in the following episode. The year: 2008. The setting: A large multi-purpose room at SUNY-Purchase, packed to the gills with attendees of the annual Furniture Society Conference. The members of the audience vary greatly in age and have come from as far away as New Zealand for this annual meeting of those engaged and/or enamored with furniture. The membership of the Furniture Society includes makers, crafters, designers, students, historians, and collectors of all things furniture. Wendy Maruyama is about to receive the organization’s annual Award of Distinction (fig. 1 & 2). As Wendy is invited to take the stage to receive the award (whose physical form is a perfectly idiosyncratic Gord Peteran production), about 30 members of the crowd all rise from their seats wearing goldenrod t-shirts (fig. 3) featuring the slogan, “Wendy Maruyama: Terrorizing Tradition Since 1975,” above which can be seen a menacing likeness of Godzilla kicking over chairs, while a friendly Hello Kitty takes cover on the sidelines. This moment is crystallized in my mind. The extreme devotion that Wendy has whipped up in her alumni coupled with the incredible respect within her field is jaw-dropping. But don’t take my word for it. We now turn to our mnemonic corespondent, Heather McCalla (designer of the t-shirt mentioned in fig. 3), who, when asked to recall the event, remarked:
“You could see it on her face - she was totally overcome with emotion, which she probably would have been anyway, but we really pushed her over the edge. I remember thinking to myself—Wow! If only we could all be so lucky; to affect the lives of so many people in such a meaningful way; to incite the kind of adoration that compels people to don ugly yellow shirts together and stand up and cheer for you, teary-eyed. It's certainly something to strive for. I was crying like a baby...of course.”
It is with all of this in mind that I labor to carry this torch. This is a moment of great anxiety and excitement for me, but I am filled with hope. News Flash: We embark to hire a new full-time faculty in the Fall of 2015. This move is a testament to the value placed on the Furniture Design and Woodworking curriculum by the School of Art and Design, the College of Professional Studies and Fine Arts and the whole of SDSU. It is my hope that we can find a dynamo with anywhere near the tenacity, intellect, and phenomenal wit of Wendy Maruyama. If so, in another 26 years, we will see another catalog of amazing alumni and student work from SDSU. I am well aware of the tallness of this order, but if Wendy is Godzilla, maybe Gamera is available. Stay tuned for further updates...

Fig. 3, Wendy Maruyama T-shirt, Photo: Matthew Hebert

1 Thanks to Del the Funky Homosapien for this line, though I had to substitute Godzilla for Gamera, for reasons you will discover in this essay.

2 Gord Peteran is a Canadian sculptor who has coined the term “furnitural” to describe his work. When I asked him for a photo of the award for this essay he remarked, “the interior... a lot of my work is about what’s not so visible in the visible... the absence of the object, (hand plane) but also about how people make an impression within the flow of things. The river temporarily widens. Then when they “retire” the stream goes back to normal . . . . . . almost.”.

3 Heather McCalla received her BA from SDSU in 2006, went on to earn an MFA in Wood/Furniture at University of Wisconsin - Madison in 2013. Most recently she was the recipient of the Fountainhead Fellowship in Craft and Materials Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University for 2014-2015.
Matthew Hebert has been working under the studio name eleet warez since shortly after completing his undergraduate studies in the mid-90s. The name is borrowed from hacker culture and suggests the technical sophistication, improvisational spirit, and freewheeling appropriation that is essential to his work. Matthew Hebert’s work has been exhibited at venues including The Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, The Berkeley Art Museum, The Milwaukee Art Museum, The Museum of Craft and Folk Art; The Albuquerque Museum; The Chicago Cultural Center, and Core77 in New York. He is currently an Associate Professor of Art at San Diego State University.
For three and a half decades, Wendy Maruyama has created works that explore and expand the possibilities of studio furniture. She was first exposed to woodworking during the 1970s, at Southwestern Junior College in Southern California, and cites Fantasy Furniture by Thomas Simpson as having stoked her enthusiasm for furniture design. Steeped in 1960s idealism, Simpson’s book presents a freewheeling approach to craft that contrasts the conservatism Maruyama would encounter in the field of woodworking as she pursued a career as a designer-craftsperson. Then, the ethos of studio furniture demanded reverence for wood, and the exclusion of anything that could be considered popular, frivolous, processed or faux. Maruyama emerged in the 1980s as a maker of furniture whose abstract forms and painted surfaces were embedded with surprising and often humorous references to popular visual culture. Since the 2000s, she has expanded her practice, using furniture as an evocative element in works that lean towards conceptual sculpture, and employing craft as a means to political activism and community engagement.
One of Maruyama’s best-known early works is Mickey Mackintosh (1981), a chair that challenges conventional hierarchies with brevity and wit (fig. 1). The piece has an elongated profile that references the lines of Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh’s Arts and Crafts chair designs. Its backrest, however, is topped with a double circular cutout that is unmistakably a pair of oversized Mickey Mouse ears. Maruyama synthesizes this unlikely combination into a graceful silhouette, which is further unified by an all-over finish of dark gray paint flecked with white.

As the viewer recognizes and reads the motifs, s/he supplies the dissonant associations that make the piece funny. Thus, Mickey Mackintosh presents earthy Arts and Crafts and popular Disney as familiar features of a common cultural landscape, calling to question any assumption that the two belong to discrete, separate worlds.

In the environment where Mickey Mackintosh was made, the culture clash it presents resonated with debates over what kinds of new materials and designs were admissible in the tiny field of fine furniture. In the early 1980s, studio furniture was largely governed by the modernist idiom in which it had emerged in the years following the Second World War. The first generation of studio furniture makers, active during the 1950s through the 1970s, favored a spare approach to design and construction that banished nearly all traces of popular commercial culture. Traditional solid wood construction was the standard, and innovation often occurred in the contours of the works, where the influences of modern design and sculpture prevailed. Although this approach eschewed the weightiness and applied decoration characteristic of Arts and Crafts woodwork, its emphasis on natural finishes and hand-cut joinery extended the latter’s code of “honest”

Fig. 1, Mickey Mackintosh, 1981, (polychromed wood)
Photo Credit: David Harrison
materials and reverence for pre-modern craft. In light of this ethos, Mickey Mackintosh, with its painted surface, popular imagery, and wry irreverence towards tradition, represents an outward push on the parameters of studio furniture. Seen in hindsight, the geometric forms, punchy colors, and playful attitude that characterize Maruyama’s early furniture locate her squarely within the second generation of studio woodworkers. But at the outset of her career, the acceptance of such an aesthetic was far from inevitable. Whereas Maruyama’s designs emerged from shapes, colors, and ideas, the prevailing philosophy in college woodworking programs maintained that creative freedom began with mastery of technique. For example, at the College of the Redwoods in Northern California, James Krenov assigned new students a project he called “the perfect board.” Given a rough slab of wood, the student would shape its surfaces flat, parallel, and square using only hand tools. Next, s/he would cut the board crosswise on the bandsaw, leaving a pair of jagged edges. The final phase was to clean up the rough cuts—again using hand tools—and rejoin the two segments with a near invisible seam. Maruyama recalls that when she was in school, many East Coast institutions had a similar introductory project, in which students would create their perfectly planed boards, and then use them as a ground for cutting their first rows of dovetails.1

After completing her undergraduate studies in 1975, at San Diego State, Maruyama studied furniture making with Alphonse Mattia at Virginia Commonwealth University, and then with Mattia and Jere Osgood at the Program in Artisanry at Boston University. During this period she expanded her range of cabinetmaking techniques—learning dovetails, mortise and tenon, double tenon, and finger joints to name a few—while striving to create works that felt like her own. In developing her sense of design at the MFA program at the School for American Craftsmen at Rochester Institute of Technology, she looked to friends who were painters, printmakers, and ceramists. She recalls the expanded outlook this group brought to her practice:

> They didn’t think in terms of woodworking. So when I used to get feedback, it had nothing to do with joinery or thickness of material or types of wood, it was mostly about shapes and colors and forms. That was important to me. We just didn’t talk about those kinds of things in furniture making at BU and RIT.²

In taking an inclusive approach, Maruyama moved between disciplines that convention deemed separate. Just how rigid the boundaries she was crossing were is evident in a controversy that surrounded another one of her early works.

In 1980, while at RIT, Maruyama created Writing Desk (fig. 2). An asymmetrical assemblage of maple slabs, it is supported on one end by traditional tapered legs, and on the other, by two rectangular uprights. Maruyama joined the desktop to the uprights with
a series of through mortises, whose red-tipped ends create a colorful pattern on the blonde writing surface. Lastly, she scribbled her initials across the top in purple crayon, giving the work a graphic flourish that plays on the fact that the desk is for writing. This detail provoked the editors of the field’s most prominent journal, Fine Woodworking, to pair Writing Desk with Garry Knox Bennett’s Nail Cabinet on the back cover of the September-October 1980 issue in a pictorial entitled “Decoration vs. Desecration.”

Nail Cabinet (1979) is an elaborately constructed and highly polished Padauk display cabinet Bennett created as a statement against an emphasis on virtuosity in studio furniture that he perceived as the promotion of technique for technique’s sake. Upon completing the work, he drove a nail into one of its door fronts, thus demonstrating that furniture can deliver a message, and that its content is not determined by skill alone. Maruyama, by contrast, asserts that with Writing Desk she had no confrontational or destructive intent, but was simply using the materials she saw fit to finish the piece. She comments, “To me, it wasn’t any different than somebody applying a glaze to a ceramic pot or painting on fabric.” For her comparatively quiet approach to challenging the conventions of studio furniture, Maruyama has received less attention than the outspoken Bennett. Nevertheless she has played a significant role in defining the course of furniture design.

Besides having been instrumental in coaxing studio furniture towards a more inclusive aesthetic, Maruyama has Fig. 2, Writing Desk, 1980, (maple, epoxy resins, crayon) Photo Credit: Tennessee Tech University
moved the discipline away from monolithic masculinity. One of two women who were the first to enroll in an MFA program in furniture making in the United States, she is among the first to make a mark as a furniture maker. Some of what this shift has to offer is evident in a series entitled Turning Japanese (2003-2006), a body of conceptual works in which she explores her Japanese-American heritage, and in some instances, articulates female identity.

Turning Japanese takes its name from the chorus hook of a 1980s British pop song. The series comprises an assortment of furnishings—chests of drawers, display cases, mirrors, and a teahouse—that are suffused with references to Japanese culture. The latter appear in the design of the furniture, and in the items housed within. Some visual elements correlate with an American view on the East, such as a plastic Godzilla figurine, the painted likeness of Hello Kitty, woodblock prints, and door latches with round, decorative faceplates. Others, being more localized to Japan, may be less recognizable to viewers in the United States.

While in much of her furniture Maruyama forgoes conventional forms, in Turning Japanese she invites viewers to consider how commonplace domestic objects shape identity, for instance, the glass cases that are used to display Ningyo dolls. Popular as tourist souvenirs from Japan, Ningyo dolls depict women, often geishas, in traditional dress and hairstyle. King of the Monsters (2003) and Angry Asian Women (2003) are two works from Turning Japanese that incorporate typical Ningyo display boxes (fig. 3, 4). Each is a floor cabinet having a pair of doors embellished by round steel medallions, and each supports a glass doll box. In both, Maruyama upends the geisha ideal of woman as a servile beauty and provider of male pleasure by replacing the dolls with modern figures whose affect is fierce. In King of the

Fig. 3, King of the Monsters, 2003, (polychromed wood, glass, stainless steel)
Photo Credit: Larry Stanley
Monsters, she transforms the box into a diorama of Godzilla in the wild. In Angry Asian Women, the glass case contains two action figures with female torsos and menacing talons for hands and feet. This play on the notion of dangerous women is carried over into the lower cabinet, where it takes a sexual dimension. Centered on the face of each of the doors is a circular medallion that is laser-etched with the image of a geisha whose hand reaches inside her kimono.

In the case of the doll box, the unfamiliarity of the article invites viewers to look with fresh eyes at the ideals embedded within, and to extend this curiosity and acumen to everyday domestic objects. In her current work, Maruyama continues to widen the parameters of studio furniture through the expansion of her practice. In 2008, she embarked on an inquiry into an event in American history where, owing to a warped vision induced by racism and paranoia, people were categorized as things. In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, an order for the mass deportation of all Japanese-Americans from the West Coast of the United States, which resulted in the removal of 120,000 residents of Washington, Oregon, California, and Colorado to internment camps. Photographer Dorothea Lange captured the inhumanity of the camp transports. Her images of families dressed and assembled for travel document the fact that every man, woman, and child had affixed to their person a government issued identification tag—the same tags used to mark their suitcases. Working from historic photographs, family history, and government documents, Maruyama created two related projects that confront this event: E.O. 9066, a series of wall-mounted dioramas similar in format to Turning Japanese, and the Tag Project, a radical departure from her previous works.
In E. O. 9066 the function of a cabinet as a place to tuck things away becomes a metaphor for how histories may be suppressed. Manzanar (2009) is a diorama housed in an elongated cabinet whose horizontality evokes the barrenness of the desert where the Manzanar camp was located (fig. 5). The back wall of the box is printed with an image taken from one of Lange’s photographs—the American flag flies against the majestic backdrop of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and over the Manzanar barracks. An added strand of real barbed wire punctuates the irony of the scene. The cabinet has two sliding doors, which depending on their position, may reveal isolated segments of the diorama, or hide its contents entirely. As such, Manzanar invokes the possibility histories kept private becoming fragmented or lost.

The Tag Project approaches the same history from another angle. Its material aspect consists of the recreations of 120,000 government identification tags worn by Japanese-Americans as they were evicted from their homes and moved to the camps—one for each person interned in 1942. The paper facsimiles are gathered by their strings, and suspended above in feathery masses (fig. 6). The spark for the project came from Maruyama’s insight, while working on E.O. 9066, that “the tags were emblematic of the experience” of Japanese-American internment. But the work is more than a memorial. To create the tags, Maruyama engaged hundreds of volunteers in the step-by-step process. Seated at communal work tables, church, school, and heritage groups found opportunity to discuss the direct legacy of Executive Order 9066, but also its implications for current issues such as immigration law and the treatment of Muslim-Americans in the wake of 9/11. Therefore, while the hanging bundles of handwritten names are reminders of so many untold stories, they are also the artifacts of a process of community awareness and engagement. As stand-ins for suppressed histories, Maruyama’s tag sculptures have a place among works by contemporary artists such as Judy Chicago, Kara Walker, Fred Wilson, Zoe Leonard, and
Cheryl Dunye, whose works call attention to the missing accounts of persons who have been marginalized due to gender, race, religion, or economic status. But it also has implications within studio furniture.

In an environment where DIY and skilled craft are often characterized as mutually exclusive approaches, the combined display of E.O. 9066 and the Tag Project puts forth a scenario where we can have both. The tags engage the immediacy, populism, and upstart attitude associated with DIY, while wall dioramas shine as works of consummate craft.

Throughout her long career, Maruyama has continually created works that challenge conventional hierarchies. She does this not so much by overt declaration, but by offering the fruits of inclusiveness. In all her works, Maruyama allows contradictory elements to rest side by side, and in doing so draws attention to the significances we invest in cultural signs. As such, her works urge a reexamination of not only the design and craft of furniture, but of histories and identities as well.


Holly Gore is a second-year doctoral student in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she specializes in modern and contemporary craft. Her research interests include twentieth-century American art, contemporary art, visual culture, craft histories, and museums. She is currently working on a minor in the history of American museums from the nineteenth century through the present. Prior to coming to UCSB, Holly earned a Master of Liberal Arts from Stanford University and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Cooper Union.
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SDSU
ALUMNI
Swaddle Stool (Boots), 2015, (self-drying terra-cotta, canvas, wool) 18” x 18” x 22”
Photo: Tanya Aguñiga
“Wendy Maruyama taught me the value of incorporating issues of identity, gender, and the highly personal in my own work, which are all skills I now try to pass down to my own students. She proves that adversity or gender should never be a detriment to one’s career and the power of an individual’s voice.

Wendy treated all of her students like family and became personally invested in our educations and careers. She instilled within us a care for each other, for tradition and for craft, as a result many of us became craft educators who are still connected to each other and remain in support of each other’s work. In my current life as an educator, having worked in multiple institutions, I now see the rarity in this. Wendy is a unique combination of role model/artist/maker/educator/community builder/bad ass that positively affects the lives of all who cross her path.”

Tanya Aguiñiga
Eames Study #1, 2012, (Mud, Steel), 22” x 26.5” x 24.5”
Photo: Jason Anderson
“My time studying with Wendy has had such a huge impact on my career that it’s difficult to put into words. She leads by example: teaching, earning grants, creating work. She never seems to stop. I can’t think of a better mentor and friend.”

Jennifer Anderson
“Wendy showed me how putting yourself out there and taking risks while always working would eventually pay off even in the tough world of studio furniture and good teaching jobs. She continues to inspire me with the work she has done in the last 10 years, which I think is some of her best ever.”

Russell Baldon
Drone Watcher, 2014, (Wood, Metal), 11” x 4” x 13.5”
Photo: Russell Baldon
“It is hard to sum up how Wendy has influenced me, my career and my art because she continues to have an impact on me all the time. I am so grateful that I can consider myself ‘a lucky one’ who has had the opportunity to know and study under Wendy Maruyama. She is influential in so many ways, but what speaks to me most about her, is that she is a strong, independent and powerful woman.”

Erin Behling
Tufted, 2011, (Concrete, Plywood), 30” x 18” x 14”
Photo: Erin Behling
Coffee Table, 2011, (Wood), 20” x 48” x 24”
Photo: Matthew Hebert
“Wendy has always brought a smile to my face every time I see her. She has helped me in so many different ways in becoming a better artist and person. I know if I need someone’s opinion, she will always be there and give me an honest answer. I loved the time I spent in Wendy’s class at SDSU and I will never forget it.”

Michael Broomell

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Travel in Style, 2013, (Wood), 27.5" x 23" x 17"
Photo: Matthew Hebert

Keep it Safe, 2012, (Wood), 13" x 13" x 13"
Photo: Matthew Hebert
Maple Entry Table, 2014, (Hard Maple), 67.5" x 34" x 16"
Photo: Chance Coalter
“Wendy supported me after I graduated and always showed that she believed in my viability as a designer and craftsman. It’s easy to be confident in yourself when you have backing from one of the masters in our field. She continues to adapt through the different phases of her career and make meaningful work. She is an inspiration.”

Chance Coalter
Fiona Desk, 2014, (Walnut, Aluminum), 65” x 30” x 28”
Photo: Barry Calhoun

FV-01 Chair, 2014, (White Oak, Danish Cord), 23” x 33” x 19”
Photo: Barry Calhoun

“Wendy is a wonderful educator, fantastic artist and inspirational friend. She always cared enough to give you her honest and unvarnished opinion. I deeply cherish my time in her department and our ongoing friendship. She is truly, truly an exceptional person.”

Forest Dickey
Freyr Lounge Chair, 2013, (White Oak, Danish Cord), 27" x 30" x 27"

Photo: Barry Calhoun

FOREST DICKEY
SEATTLE WA, MFA 2007

Freyr Lounge Chair, 2013, (White Oak, Danish Cord), 27" x 30" x 27"
Photo: Barry Calhoun
REUBEN FOAT
SAN DIEGO CA, MFA 2012

Surrender, 2012, (Ciaro Walnut, Hard Maple, Poplar, Ebony, Graphite), 48” x 54” x 16”
Photo: Rizzhel Javier
“Working with Wendy was fantastic. I am especially fond of a time when I began experimenting with color in my work and asked Wendy for some input. She and I spent several minutes at my bench mixing milk paint until we got the red for my piece just right. I appreciate her lightheartedness while making and teaching. She led by example and helped foster a sense of play in all aspects of my practice.”

Reuben Foat
“One of the great things about Wendy is her willingness to support and be a mentor to her students far beyond graduate school. Living in San Diego I am fortunate to see Wendy fairly often and count her as one of my most beloved friends.”

David Fobes
Library Chair, 2013, (Library Cards Pasted on Found Wood Chairs), 48” x 32” x 24”
Photo: David Fobes
Scallop Chair, 1998, (Polychromed Poplar, Silk), 50” x 31” x 42”
Photo: Bill Bachuber
“I owe all my success as a furniture maker and as an educator to Wendy. She taught me the idea of “good enough” was a recipe for failure. My years at SDSU shaped me into the human being I am today.”

Richard Ford Jr.
“My time with Wendy instilled in me a desire to keep moving forward with my work and to never be satisfied. She also changed my definition of a furniture maker. It is an outlook on life and art, not someone who just makes tables and chairs.”

Jordan Gehman
“Duncan, your shipping package is horrible. It looks like your table was shipped in a burrito.”

Wendy Maruyama
Platter with Branches, 2008, (Ash, Stain), 16” x 16” x 2.5”
Photo: Dean Powell
“For me, wanting a career in academia, Wendy quickly became a role-model. 
Watching her work, one of the very few women running a furniture design 
program, constantly bringing attention to the program, and the students and 
as a result bringing in some incredible grant-funding, was inspiring. If I have 
to sum it up, Wendy taught me that if you want something for your program, 
find an inventive way of getting it done. Never take no for an answer and 
ever take crap from anyone. Especially if it is because you’re a woman!”

Mia Hall
Stools, 2014, (Cast Concrete), 14” x 17” x 14”
Photo: Joli Livaudais

Still Life, 2014, (Cast Concrete), 42” x 39” x 14”
Photo: Joli Livaudais
“From the first time I met Wendy (when applying to grad programs) to now, she has always been warm, light-hearted, and an inspiration to be around. Wendy has worked incredibly hard as a teacher, developing her students and program at SDSU. She has always maintained a very active art practice and career with professional networks worldwide. This has provided myself and other students that have gone through her program incredible opportunities. Wendy has always been very supportive and works very hard to bolster her students in their own professional pursuits. We are all forever in her debt.”

Barbara Holmes
Untitled No. 5, 2012, (Reclaimed Lath), 15" x 100" x 20"
Photo: Barbra Holmes
Crop Circle: Mirror & Cabinet, 2014, (White Oak), 34” x 34” x 5.5”
Photo: Michael Wilson
“Wendy’s influence and my time at SDSU have been the catalyst for a successful career in the field of craft. She has inspired, empowered and led me, and many others in a genuine and professional way throughout her prolific career. I am honored to call her my mentor, colleague, and friend.”

Matt Hutton
Courage, 2011, (Ash), 115” x 20” x 11”, Photo: Jason Ramey

Whisper, 2013, (Ash), 48” x 20” x 20”
Photo: Mark Juliana

YURI
KOBAYASHI
WESTPORT POINT MA, MFA 2006
“Wendy is my role-model as a teacher and artist. She’s never ceased to amaze us.”

Yuri Kobayashi
“Wendy has been, and continues to be, one of the most significant influences in my life. Thank you so much Wendy!”

Christine Lee
“Wendy’s support of her students, current and former, was inspiring and her personal work’s constant growth and development set a high bar for us as her students. Working with Wendy was an honor and a privilege and seeing her post-SDSU trajectory just reinforces that. Wendy teaches by example. As a student at State, this example pushed me to be the best artist I could and never settle or get too comfortable.”

Adam Manley
Adrift (Photographic Print), 2010, (Archival Print Mounted), 4’ x 6’, Photo: Adam Manley
Education Comes in Many Forms, 2015, (Cast & Fabricated Aluminum, Rubberized Undercoating, Radio Flyer), 46" x 24" x 30"

Photo: Bob Marsh
“When I reflect back on the three years I spent at SDSU with Wendy, a smile inevitably crosses my face. I often use that experience as a litmus test to measure the opportunities I’ve participated in subsequently. The studio produced individuals and work that were open, risky, and diverse. And by default, it bred commitment, criticality, and camaraderie. I think of those three years as an immersive experience that directly taught productivity being married to play.”

Bob Marsh
“My time with Wendy at SDSU shaped me into the artist and educator that I am today. Like any good parent, she praised me when I deserved it, scolded me when I needed it, and encouraged me to do my very best in all things. She will always be my “Mamayama”, and I am eternally grateful for her mentorship, friendship, and love.”

Heather McCalla
Circa 1987, (Found Chairs), 60" x 20" x 36"
Photo: Heather McCalla
Christy Oates

Bloomington WI, MFA 2009
“Wendy impacted my art career before I even met her. I knew her as a strong female artist unafraid to take risks by painting on wood. Wendy was my sole draw to attend SDSU. During my relationship with Wendy, she has given me a great deal of guidance and encouragement to pursue digital woodworking - a field that continues to be controversial among traditional woodworkers. Wendy is a great friend and mentor whose resonance on myself and all of her students will never diminish. Her courageous example will always be a driving force to move forward with risks in my artwork.”

Christy Oates
“Wendy is an incredibly passionate person, teacher, and artist. She is always insightful and unafraid of being honest, which can sometimes sting a bit if you’re on the wrong side of a critique. But that’s one of the things that’s great about her—she demands and expects the best out of her students. More importantly though, she genuinely cares about her students and has fostered an incredible number of genuine friendships through the years. And she does it all with a twinkle in her eye, a fantastic sense of humor, and of course, a flattering choice of fashion accessories.

To this day, I often think about what Wendy would suggest while I’m designing a piece. And as a teacher myself, I try to emulate Wendy’s ability to connect with her students, challenge them, and make them laugh...but she’s a real tough act to follow.”

Mike Oleson
Signature Mirror, 2014,
(Painted Wood, Mirror), 20" x 20" x 1'
Photo: Mike Oleson
“I love that she made it okay that a piece of furniture doesn’t have to be ridiculously complicated in its construction. Sometimes when I get ahead of myself I have to channel my inner Wendy and reel the design back in.”

Katherine Ortega-Ford
Lingerie Chest of Drawers and Detail, 2008,
(Mahogany, Birch, Plywood, Silk), 26" x 65" x 21"
Photo: Resolusean Photography
Sinuous Floor Lamp, 2015, (Walnut, Carbon Fiber, Aluminum, Electricity) 24” x 65”
“Wendy has a powerful way of encouraging people to look deeper into the things we see and use every day. When I first started my MFA I was just a furniture maker. When she was done with me I had a much richer sense of the meaning of craft and why we make the things we make.

Her strategy is to thoroughly confuse you until you reach an out of body experience and subliminally channel brilliance into your work.”

Marcus Papay

Candle Stand, 2009, (Carbon Fiber, Cherry), 14” x 30”
“The most productive three years of my life. Wendy showed me how to push myself beyond my perceived limits.”

Todd Partridge
There are many, too many, thoughts to synthesis down into a single meaningful statement. It is honestly a time of my life that I think of every day and miss the validation, critique and honest assessment of how my studio and teaching efforts were being received. Wendy’s sincerity and no-holds-barred approach to feedback follow me to this day and have allowed me to be an effective teacher and leader in art education. I feel so lucky to have been in the program during a time of real renaissance, with so many talented both preceding and following our group. The teaching, the place, the family-like studio environment and forged-in-fire friendships made this a time of immense personal and professional growth that continues to shape me everyday. Love this woman!!

Cory Robinson
New Antique Vol. 2, 2011, (Reclaimed Lumber, Acrylic, Stain), 50” x 17” x 17”, Photo: Caleb Charland

Forever After She Is Gone, 2011, (Steel, Reclaimed Wood, Lace, Polyester Resin, Paint), 42” x 17” x 17”, Photo: Caleb Charland
Castaway, 2013, (Mixed Hardwoods, Resin, Paint), 60" x 48" x 35", Photo: Vincent Robles
“Words cannot begin to express the extent that Wendy’s influence has had on me professionally as well as personally. It is her uncanny ability to connect to people on a humanistic level that has been such a source of true inspiration for me. I have been beyond lucky to have had the privilege to work with Wendy Maruyama, not only as one of her students but also as a friend. Out of the classroom Wendy continues to stay true to who she is, where she has come from and where she is going, she has truly set the standard for others to follow. I can honestly say that I would not be who I am today if it was not for Wendy Maruyama.”

Vincent Robles
120 Degrees, 2015, (Corrugated Cardboard, Glass), 30" x 16", Photo: Jason Schneider
"I would not be where I am today without Wendy. She has been the best mentor anyone could have. All of her kids (grad students) are in successful positions because of her. She is our “Mamayama” – and a great friend!"

Jason Schneider

His and Her Cabinets, 2005, (cherry, white oak), 46” x 25” x 13”
Photo: Jason Schneider

JASON SCHNEIDER
RINGWOOD NJ, MFA 2005

Olesen Bench, 2003, (Mahogany, steel, cement), 84” x 34” x 17”
Photo: Jason Schneider
"When another craft person asks me how I was trained, I never say I went to SDSU, but simply respond that I studied with Wendy Maruyama and there is immediate recognition. I am just really grateful that she gave me a chance to try something I was not convinced I could do at the time."

Lynn Szymanski

Pour, 2013, (Wood), 16” x 16”, Photo: Lynn Szymanski
Three Cups, 2005, (Mahogany), 3" x 3", Photo: Doug Prince
Here/There Shelves (Pair), 2012, (Polychrome Poplar, Cherry, Aluminum), 40” x 8” x 8”
Photo: John Catalano

The Cat's Meow Tall Pedestal Table, 2013, (Polychrome Poplar, Maple), 36” x 18” x 18”
Photo: John Lucas

“I cannot deny, nor would I ever want to, that Wendy has served as an incredible educator, role model, mentor and friend to me both during my time as a SDSU furniture graduate student (1998-2002) and in the many years since. While as a student she pushed me far beyond my comfort zone (I was initially a ceramics grad student), which led me to great growth. She was an excellent professor who led by example and who set the bar high, however she was also incredibly caring and displayed genuine concern for the well-being of her students.

Post graduation, she has continued to display her concern and professional support to me over the years, for which I am endlessly grateful. I know without a doubt that my SDSU education under Wendy’s tutelage has helped me attain much of my artistic and academic success. Words cannot express my gratitude for her strong leadership, giving nature, supportive attitude and faithful friendship.”

Kimberly Winkle
Odd Man Out Table, 2011, (Polychrome Poplar, Mahogany), 22" x 58" x 20", Photo: John Lucas
Sitting at Six Feet, 2015, (Red Oak, leather, steel, rubber), 50" x 22" x 52", Photo: Joshua Torbick
GOOD TO THE LAST CROP:
WENDY MARUYAMA’S LATEST BROOD

MFA STUDENTS
“I never told Wendy this story, but when I was studying at Purchase College, I briefly dated a guy that had taken her class while she was a resident there. Every now and again, he would mention how Wendy gave him a “C” on his final project and he would go on to explain why he thought he deserved a better grade. For the sake of his ego I agreed with him, but having known Wendy’s reputation (without actually meeting her), I assumed she must’ve had a good reason to give him the grade she did. When I was applying to graduate schools, I knew I wanted to meet Wendy, and see for myself what she and the program were really like.”

Sophie Glenn
Collapsible Stool/Tables, 2015, (Powder-coated steel, various hardwoods, hardware) Varying Sizes

Photo: Sophie Glenn
“Wendy has been an inspiring figure to so very many at SDSU and abroad. She is the reason our program exists and continues turning out so many talented makers. Personally, her passion for the craft and sense of humor will always bring one very specific memory to mind: When Wendy would say, “The wood proctologist is in.”

Nathaniel Hall

Pillow Stool, 2015, (Cone 6 Porcelain, Maple, Castors), 18″ x 14″ x 22″

Photo: Nathaniel Hall
The Assaulting Light, 2015, (Maple, Steel, LED's, Hardware), 6” x 25” x 8”
Photo: Nathaniel Hall
“When I saw Wendy’s show, E.O. 9066, it changed the way I viewed wood and furniture forms. I was struck with the emotional and conceptual power of the show. I stopped thinking about my own woodworking as a guilty pleasure, and it became the central focus of my studio practice. Three years after this change of focus, I applied to graduate school, quit my teaching job, and moved to San Diego. I feel privileged to be a part of Wendy’s last class.”

Phil Rowland
Neon Low Back Shaker Chairs, 2014, (Ash, Nylon Webbing), 16” x 19” x 28”
Photo: Peter Scheidt
Peter Scheidt

SAN DIEGO CA, MFA 2017

“Wendy’s love of craft making, and her continual artistic self-reflection is the same. She tirelessly and selflessly seeks to inspire her students. Her entire creative being seems to thrive in the academic setting and I think she has been inspired herself by those she has taught. Wendy’s creative energy is immediately apparent and extremely contagious! I’ve been incredibly honored and inspired by Wendy and cannot think of a better example of what it truly means to be an artist and a teacher.”

Peter Scheidt

Handmade Plastic Newport Adirondack Chair, 2014, (HDPE plastic, stainless hardware), 38” x 38” x 38”
Photo: Peter Scheidt

Repaired Oak Chair, 2015, (Found chair, oak), 21” x 25” x 35”
Photo: Peter Scheidt
"The way Wendy has demonstrated so much personal and creative strength, in forging her own place in studio furniture, has inspired me to look beyond the current limits of our field and create a new context for the work I do. Wendy pushed me from the beginning to explore my personal motivations and helped me to find my artistic voice. As a result, I am leaving her graduate program as a more focused artist and a stronger person."

Joshua Torbick
Sitting at Six Feet, 2015, (Red Oak, leather, steel, rubber), 50” x 22” x 52”, Photo: Joshua Torbick

Standing Wedge, 2015, (Walnut, leather, steel, rubber), 25” x 16” x 45”, Photo: Joshua Torbick
Thank you
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Acknowledgments by Matthew Hebert:

There are many people we would like to thank for their assistance with the exhibition and catalog. None of this would have been possible without the generous support of The John and Robyn Horn Foundation. Thanks to Professor Emiritus Wendy Maruyama for giving us an excuse to put together such an awesome show and catalog. Huge respect and gratitude goes out to all the SDSU alumni and current students who contributed their work, it is truly mind boggling how prolific and talented you are. Thanks to Dean Joyce Gattas for setting the stage so well with her foreword. Thanks to Professor Kotaro Nakamura for his support of the project through the entire process. The catalog would have been much less if it wasn’t for the thoughtful words of Holly Gore. The fun that was had at the opening reception was greatly increased by the support of the SDSU Art Council. Sophie Glenn (MFA, 2016) should be given a medal for her achievements as my right-hand-man on this project. Thank you to all who have contributed personal time and support to make this show a memorable one!

For information on supporting this important program, please call 619-594-4548.