Forms of Belonging

EGEVÆRK
June 26 – August 14, 2026

Opening Reception: Friday, June 26, 6–8pm
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HB381 is pleased to announce an exhibition by the Danish design studio Egeværk. The exhibition follows Egevaerk's recent residency at the Wendell Castle Workshop, and also features a Castle work, presented in collaboration with Friedman Benda. Founded by Mette Bentzen and Lasse Kristensen, Egeværk has been recognized internationally for their thoughtful contributions to contemporary Danish design and furniture making. They are especially known for their expressive hand-carved furniture inspired by the natural forms and muted tones of the Scandinavian landscape. Frequently, their designs appear frozen in moments of flux, drift, and erosion, embracing the fluidity and incremental transformation of nature: the tides, the strata of slow-melting ice made visible in a disintegrating glacier, the gradual buildup of lime deposits in stalagmites, or the undulating motion of marine life.

Throughout the exhibition, Bentzen and Kristensen's design sensibility is expressed in sculptural artworks as much as in functional objects constructed using the stack lamination technique from planks of white Danish ash, North American white oak, and maple. In their newest body of work, the designers trace the contours of glacial flows and melting ice and examine the cratered surfaces of natural satellites distantly scattered throughout the solar system, evoking a variety of terrestrial landscapes and inaccessible terrains. The expansive wall work *Isbrae / Glacier No. 1,* which took over a year and half to complete, borrows its name from the old Danish word for a glacier. Its staggered wooden panels lick like flames across the wall, leaving a vertiginous impression of the monumental mass of glacial pinnacles known as seracs. Conversely, works from their *Glacier Shapes* and *Is Shapes* series recall the subtractive forms of melting ice, elegiacally marking our moment in time amid the rapid transformation of northern landscapes across the globe.

Dione, a tondo of black-stained Danish ash backed with silver leaf, hovers against the wall, mythic and enigmatic. Its name derives from one of the moons orbiting Saturn, first discovered in 1684 by Italian astronomer Giovanni Domenico Cassini. The sculptural relief's restrained palette and subtle surface summon visions of the palely-lit twilight of deep winter in the Nordic region. Although darkened to an inky black as though obscured amid the empty void of space, the sculpture's illusory contours and shadowy concavities share something of the beguiling presence of our own moon's luminous surface.

The centerpiece of the current exhibition takes the form of two sculptural works, *The Ontario Stones,* which build on an ancient saga of migratory rocks and continental drift. During a residency in Scottsville, New York, Bentzen and Kristensen sought to unearth stories within the stones of Lake Ontario, alighting on notions of home, history, and migration in the long timeframe of the land itself. Stones carried by glaciers are known as "erratics," a geologist's apt moniker that speaks to the wandering course of much of the earth underfoot. Transported by the advance and retreat of glaciers, these erratics offer traces of a history visible in the etched valleys and drumlins, deposits, moraines, and debris that are present today. For *The Ontario Stones,* Egeværk honed in on the smallest of geologic elements, pebbles that broke away from larger masses of rocky cliffs, to expose something of this history. The designers took the pebbles' minute forms and rough textures as the basis for much larger pieces of furniture whose surfaces are hammered, indented, and striated to resemble the surface markings of the original stones. Provisionally identifiable as furniture — a cabinet and table — the *Ontario Stones* are poetic explorations of belonging to a landscape that won't stay still. A

“There is a specific type of stone right in front of our cabin in northern Sweden. Many of them,” the designers write. “It amazes us that you can find the same shapes of rock on the shores of Lake Ontario. The stones migrated with the movement of the ice sheet. The ice covered a vast area stretching from Scandinavia to North America 20,000 years ago during the Last Glacial Period. Exploring these testaments to a shared geological history gives us a deep sense of belonging in a world marked by fragmentation and unrest.”

The two *Ontario Stones* were created during the winter and early spring of 2026 while the designers were in residence at the prestigious Wendell Castle Workshop, an educational center and studio space named for the forefather of art furniture whose wood shop and work space on the premises are still intact and available to designers. Castle received renown for his whimsical and poetic furnishings which channeled the curved lines and freeform architecture of tree branches, fallen boulders, and other natural forms into an organic and imaginative output. The opportunity to produce new work at the storied institution allowed Bentzen and Kristensen to delve into a critical exploration of the rich geographical and cultural connections that have long existed between Scandinavia and the Great Lakes. Taking cue from their Scandinavian roots, Egeværk looked to their American counterpart to identify the qualities that inform their artistic practice: a reverence for transformed nature, an understanding of water’s ancient influence, and an appreciation of mystery and paradox within the natural world.

In homage to the pivotal role of Castle’s work in the design field today, the exhibition includes a late work from 2017, *Hurry Down Sunshine*, in which black-stained ash is transmuted into a nearly five-foot tall pleated wall of wood vibrating with the marks of the chisel and gouge; a curved seat projects out into space, offering a moment of visual solace and reprieve.

What the designers’ multi-pronged investigations share is a geological imagination of the past and present: how history has a geography and seasons too; and how space and place are bound up with human subjectivity, with concerns of otherness and belonging, and with the long trajectories and shifting boundaries of continents and nations, seas and soil. “Our research into the stones and their migratory story has been an intellectual adventure,” Bentzen and Kristensen note, “while our time at the Wendell Castle Workshop also gave us a profound emotional sense of belonging through community, love, and shared passions.”

On view in the downstairs gallery, the documentary video *Sti (Path),* directed by Kristoffer Linus, follows the gradual development of the *Ontario Stones* at the Wendell Castle Workshop alongside the change of the seasons, various glimpses of the landscapes of the Great Lakes region, and the wandering explorations of the designers. Unlike so many evocations of place, which use landscapes to situate us and convince us of a fixed and stable ground, Egeværk’s body of work explores the unavoidable challenge of negotiating our position and relationship with others, with the land, and with our shared histories in all their complexities. As Glenn Adamson writes in his essay for the exhibition, “Egeværk are inviting us to notice the evidence of nature’s power, which lies all around us on the ground.”

Egeværk (Mette Bentzen, Danish, b. 1978 and Lasse Kristensen, Danish, b. 1985) have achieved the highest level of recognition within the Danish guild system and their studio has received numerous awards for excellence, including the Carpentry Prize (Kirsten and Freddy Johansens Foundation and the Copenhagen Carpenters’ Guild), the Danish Design Award (Best in Arts & Crafts), and the Peter, Ingrid, and Ralph Hernoe Honorary Grant. In addition, Kristensen was selected as the winner of the Danish and Nordic championships in cabinetmaking and has represented Denmark in the World Cup in Japan, for which he received the Mærsk Grant and the Poul & Gurli Madsen Grant. Egeværk’s works are in the collections of the Trapholt Museum, Imagine Museum, Lune Rouge Collection, and the collection of Thierry Barbier-Mueller.

HB381 gratefully acknowledges the Consulate General of Denmark in New York, the Danish Arts Foundation, Friedman Benda Gallery, and the Wendell Castle Project for their support of this exhibition. Tilde Heding, Matt Kresling, and Kristoffer Linus were all instrumental to realizing the video project *Sti (Path).* Castle’s work *Hurry Down Sunshine* is presented in collaboration with Friedman Benda, New York.

Download Glenn Adamson’s Essay “Moving Mountains”

Path

Filmfolket

29:42

Sti (Path), 2026
Documentary Video
Director: Kristoffer Linus
Cinematography: Matt Kresling & Kristoffer Linus
Idea: Tilde Heding

Egeværk (Mette Bentzen and Lasse Kristensen)