

Prized and Played: Highlights from the Jon Crumiller Collection

Exhibition at the World Chess Hall of Fame May 3 – September 15, 2013

April X, 2013 (Saint Louis, MO) – Treasures from chess culture across the globe are on display at the World Chess Hall of Fame (WCHOF) starting May 3 with the opening of *Prized and Played: Highlights from the Jon Crumiller Collection*.

The exhibition covers two floors at the WCHOF and is divided into two sections: *Prized* showcases ornamental and precious sets while *Played* includes sets and artifacts that have been significant to playing the game.

“Mr. Crumiller’s collection is extremely rare in that it has such a deep variety of both ornamental and playing sets. Our exhibition is organized in a way that allows visitors see to how different cultures have interpreted chess for centuries and expressed their regional character through the creation of unique sets,” said Susan Barrett, WCHOF director.

Mr. Crumiller is an avid chess player and collector who lives in Princeton, New Jersey. The WCHOF is proud to be the first institution to exhibit his collection.

Prized and Played includes over 80 exquisite sets as well as significant chess-related artifacts.

Prized The beautiful materials and imaginative forms of the ornamental chess sets testify both to the tastes of the original owners and the talents of the makers.

“These sets – often fabricated using rich materials like jade, pearls, and silver – were intended to be art objects. They perfectly highlight how art and chess influence one another,” Barrett said.

Most of the *Prized* sets date from the 18th and 19th centuries. One notable example is an East India “John” Company set that still has its original display case and glass dome.

“There is an element of whimsy to many of the ornamental sets. One set resembles beautiful birds, another pits symbols of good and evil against each other, and another features tiny dolls,” Barrett said.

Played The exhibition’s playing sets tell the story of the standardization of chess sets for competitive play, as well as highlighting chess culture in different regions of the world. Many are one-of-a-kind, made for notable figures such as Maharaja Bhagvat Singh and Lieutenant Colonel James Tod (officer of the British East India Company).

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“The first international chess tournaments took place in the 19th century, making it necessary to develop a standard chess set that players from around the world could recognize. Our exhibition shows the different styles of playing sets that proliferated in different countries before the tournament-standard Staunton set was created,” Barrett said.

The exhibition includes sets from numerous countries, including Great Britain, Germany, France, India, Italy, China, and Cambodia. Highlights of the *Played* section:

- A 15th century Embriachi chessboard plus an Italian chess set and Spanish chessboard from the 17th century
- A 16th century copy of *Libro de la Invención Liberal y Arte del Juego del Axedrez* (translation: *Book of the Liberal Invention and Art of the Game Chess*) by Ruy López; the book analyzes the famed Ruy López opening, which gained its name from the author of the publication.
- Boards signed by notable chess players and a timer used in the 1927 world championship match between Alexander Alekhine and Jose Raul Capablanca.

About the World Chess Hall of Fame

4652 Maryland Avenue St. Louis MO, 63108 (314) 367-WCHF www.worldchesshof.org

The World Chess Hall of Fame is a nonprofit organization committed to building awareness for the cultural and artistic significance of chess. It opened on September 9, 2011, in the Central West End after moving from previous locations in New York and Miami.

The WCHOF is housed in an historic 15,900 square-foot residence-turned-business and features the U.S. and World Chess Halls of Fame, displays of artifacts from the permanent collection, and temporary exhibitions highlighting the great players, historic games, and rich cultural history of chess.

Currently, the WCHOF is also pleased to present *Bill Smith: Beyond the Humanities*. Smith’s art explores how rules guide the creation of our world’s structure and behavior. Like Smith’s work, chess is defined by patterns, interactions, and rules analogous to the laws of nature.

The WCHOF partners with the Chess Club and Scholastic Center to provide innovative programming and outreach to local, national, and international audiences.

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