

As well as being a beautiful game, chess impresses a metaphorical model and mode of thinking that has been ever-present in my life and art since I first learnt to play as a child.

Tom Hackney

Tom Hackney

Corresponding Squares

Painting the Chess Games of Marcel Duchamp

Tom Hackney's paintings are geometric abstractions based on the movement of chess pieces in games played by the French artist, Marcel Duchamp, from the early 1920s through the 1960s. Duchamp once said that playing a game of chess was like making a drawing: 'The chess pieces are the block alphabet which shapes thoughts, and these thoughts, although making a visual design on the chessboard, express their beauty abstractly, like a poem.'



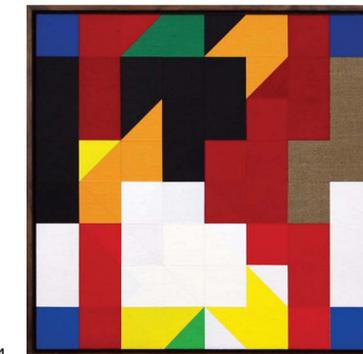
1



2



3



4

Duchamp sank himself so deeply into the game of chess that many were convinced he had actually ceased to be an artist. While his chess achievements were modest by grandmaster standards,

they were remarkable for a largely self-taught player who did not enter into the competitive arena until his mid-thirties, achieving master status at the relatively advanced age of 38.

It was Duchamp's renunciation of art for chess that most inspired Tom Hackney to engage with the former artist's unusual path to chess mastery. In Hackney's pictures, the beauty of those games is made visible in a single static image. It was Duchamp's goal to elevate art from the purely visual to something more cerebral, an aspiration that Hackney unquestionably accomplishes in these paintings, whose beauty is generated entirely by ideas that took place on the 64 squares of a chessboard. Some paintings are in black & white, like opposing pieces in a game of chess, while others are inspired by a colour-coded chess set that Marcel Duchamp designed in 1920.

Opposite page

Chess Painting No 62

(Grimme, Luuring, Ree & Krabbe versus Duchamp, correspondence game, 1961)
2016, Oil on linen, walnut frame

31.75 x 31.75 cm

Collection of Steve & Terri Hoffman

1

Chess Painting No 69

(Suren versus Duchamp, Strasbourg, 1924)
2016, Oil on linen, walnut frame

41.9 x 41.9 cm

Courtesy of Tom Hackney

2

Chess Painting No 2

(Duchamp versus Crepeaux Nice, 1925)
2009, Gesso on linen, oak frame

31.75 x 31.75 cm

Collection of Dr Ed Krčma

3

Chess Painting No 54

(Michel versus Duchamp, Strasbourg, 1924)
2015, Gesso and acrylic on linen, walnut frame

41.9 x 41.9 cm

Collection of Andrew Molyneux

4

Chess Painting No 61

(Duchamp versus Hanauer New York, 1952)
2015, Gesso and acrylic on linen, walnut frame

41.9 x 41.9 cm

Courtesy of Francis M Naumann Fine Art, New York