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Tradition with a Twist: New Exhibition at the World Chess Hall of Fame Features Chess Sets by International Artists from Purling London

Exhibition features bespoke, hand-painted chess sets by contemporary artists including celebrated painters, illustrators, sculptors and street artists from around the world.

SAINT LOUIS (March 22, 2018)—A new exhibition at the World Chess Hall of Fame (WCHOF), *Painted Pieces: Art Chess from Purling London*, will make its debut Thursday, April 12, 2018.

In this unique global collaboration, the WCHOF and the critically acclaimed games maker Purling London will present multimedia chess sets, pieces, boards, and interactive experiences produced by artists from around the world. The exhibition will feature exquisite artwork created for Purling's established line of games as well as debut chess sets and boards created especially for the WCHOF show. The traditional Staunton chess set—which was introduced in 1849 for chess tournament play and named after one of the best players of the 1840s Howard Staunton—serves as an unconventional “canvas” upon which 20 celebrated international contemporary artists created one-of-a-kind, hand-painted works. Purling names this line of their collection “Art Chess” as they create a diverse line artistic gaming sets.

Purling London's founder, Simon Purkis conceived of the company's Art Chess line. “I was playing chess on a beach against an old school friend of mine,” he explains. “As the sun set over the sea, it became more and more difficult to differentiate between the chess pieces. I thought about an illuminated chess board and questioned why so many Staunton chess sets are brown-varnished wood—it seemed a wonderful opportunity to revamp the paradigmatic design with color! I discovered the long history of art and chess (from historic Indian and Islamic games to modern artworks by Damien Hirst and Yayoi Kusama), but found that many artist designed chess sets were exquisitely beautiful, but impractical to play. I was inspired to collaborate with artists to create

meaningful and handsome artworks based on the iconic Staunton shape. Tradition with a twist”

Several of these inspiring artists in the exhibition have a unique tie to the chess world or Saint Louis: Crystal Fischetti, Daniela Raytchev, and Sophie Matisse were all exhibited in the WCHOF’s 2016 exhibition *Ladies’ Knight: A Female Perspective on Chess* and Matisse is the step-granddaughter of the legendary artist and French chess master Marcel Duchamp. Tom Hackney had a 2016 solo exhibition of paintings at the WCHOF, and both he and Matisse began collaborating with Purling as a result of their WCHOF projects.

A total of 20 sets and boards from Purling’s “Art Chess” line as well as additional pieces will be featured among other products from Purling London, for example—“Bold Chess,” “Neon Chess,” and an exciting new experience where the visitors are *encouraged* to play with select chess sets through Virtual Reality. Purling’s collaboration with cutting-edge VR videogame “Chess Ultra” will launch at this WCHOF show. Together with Purling, game developer Ripstone scanned and modeled exhibited sets from Olivia Pilling and Mr. Jiver in stunning 4K detail for an immersive, breathtaking and interactive user experience. In addition, a live Instagram station will tag posts about this exhibition in real-time on a monitor in the gallery.

“It is an honor to partner with Purling London to share the beauty of these diverse works of art,” said Shannon Bailey, Chief Curator of the World Chess Hall of Fame. “These sets are not only exquisite, but unique and functional. Chess set makers for centuries have been expressing their own culture’s games within the creation of a chess set and Purling has taken this tradition into our own time. I became instantly fascinated by Simon’s company as it was founded one year after the WCHOF opened and though we have been fortunate enough to have collaborated with Purling in the past, I knew that we ultimately had to have an entire exhibition dedicated their celebration of the merging of chess and art as it is a huge part of our own mission.”

Q Boutique—the award winning gift store at the WCHOF—was the first retailer of Purling London in the U.S. Though several of the sets featured in the exhibit are available for sale through Purling, sets from Purling’s Bold Chess, Darts, Checkers, Playing Cards, Turn Tokens and more will be available at Q Boutique during the run of the exhibition.

Painted Pieces: Art Chess Sets from Purling London opens at the WCHOF in the Central West End on **April 12, 2018**. (Opening Reception from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.) and will be on display through September 16, 2018. Purling Founder, Simon Purkis, will

be attending the event. To attend the opening reception, please RSVP to events@worldchesshof.org. Two other groundbreaking exhibitions—both with ties to *Painted Pieces*--opening on April 12 include:

- [The Staunton Standard: Evolution of the Modern Chess Set](#)
- [The Sinquefield Effect: The Resurgence of American Chess](#)

Media interviews with the curator, Simon Purkis, and select artists can be scheduled by contacting: Kiley Herndon at (314) 309-0799 or kherndon@saintlouischessclub.org.

About the World Chess Hall of Fame

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, Washington, D.C.; and Florida. The World Chess Hall of Fame is located at 4652 Maryland Avenue, 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 exhibitions highlighting the great players, historic games and rich cultural history of chess. The World Chess Hall of Fame partners with the Saint Louis Chess Club to provide innovative programming and outreach to local, national and international audiences. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6]

For more information, please visit the World Chess Hall of Fame online at www.worldchesshof.org or call (314) 367-9243 (WCHF).

Visit our social channels: Facebook (@WorldChessHOF), Twitter (@WorldChessHOF), Instagram (@worldchesshof), and YouTube (www.youtube.com/worldchesshof); Exhibition hashtags: #PaintedPieces, #StauntonStandard, #SinquefieldEffect

About Purling London

Purling London was established in 2012 by Simon Purkis and exists to celebrate art and playfulness. Their critically acclaimed, contemporary chess, backgammon and checkers contrast traditional, by-hand-manufacturing against vivid colour, abstract art and theatrical illumination. Purling London's unique board games, silver-gilded playing cards and tungsten darts are classic with a British twist. Purling offers an artistic and playful range of chess sets. All based on the same Staunton design, the selection extends from one-off sets painted by British street-artists to traditional ebony and boxwood pieces.

Every Purling chess piece is hand-carved by artisans, heavily weighted and hand-finished with Purling branded leather felts. For more information and to view Purling's complete product line, visit purlinglondon.com.