Drawn Games: Chess Posters from Around the World showcases a small selection of the World Chess Hall of Fame’s (WCHOF) extensive poster collection, which numbers over 300, as well as a few posters from the collection of Dr. Jeanne Cairns Sinquefield and Rex Sinquefield. Dating from 1930 to the present, the posters span numerous artistic styles and are the products of many different creators. The subjects portrayed in the WCHOF’s poster collection—scenes from films, gorgeous designs made to publicize historic tournaments and world championship matches, and works designed for tournaments held on the Saint Louis chess campus—perfectly demonstrate the museum’s mission to celebrate the history of chess as well as its impact on art and popular culture.

Many of the posters in the WCHOF’s collection are donations from individuals including Raquel Browne (wife of the late Grandmaster Walter Browne), International Master John Donaldson, Ken Marshall, and New in Chess chief editor Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam. Others are part of important purchases that the WCHOF has made to build and diversify its collection.

Poster History

Posters are one of the earliest forms of advertising. Public announcements date back to ancient times, but the poster began to come into its own after the 1796 invention of lithography by Bavarian actor and playwright Alois Senfelder. The new print technique allowed posters to be created more cheaply and efficiently. The artist draws an image on stone or a plate with a greasy medium that will adhere to ink then applies water to the stone. The artist then uses a roller to add oil-based ink to the stone, which will only adhere to the grease crayon. As the 19th century progressed, posters began to be seen as more than simply means of communication; they were also works of art that were accessible to collectors of varied social stations.
Artist unknown

17th Chess Olympiad, Havana, Cuba
October 23—November 20, 1966
20 ⅝ x 16 ¼ in.
Lithograph
Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame

Artist unknown

Torneo Internacional, Ciudad de Luanda, Angola
January 23—February 11, 1981
19 ⅝ x 13 ¾ in.
Lithograph
Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame
Created by unknown as well as world famous artists, WCHOF’s collection demonstrate a remarkable range of artistic styles from 27 countries: surrealism, Bauhaus, Puerto Rican graphic design of the mid-to-late-20th century, and Op Art, among many others. Some are one-time projects to promote a specific tournament; others are the products of campaigns to promote chess and art.

In 1976, Goldman’s Gallery held an exhibition of posters by artists in connection with the Chess Olympiad held in Haifa, Israel, from October 26 through November 10, 1976. Artists and musicians Otmar Alt and Allan Davies created colorful abstractions that capture the joy of playing the game. Also included in the exhibition was Samuel Bak, a Holocaust survivor whose artwork includes chess imagery as a means of exploring the devastation caused by war and other conflicts. Samuel Bak’s design for the 1976 Chess Olympiad held in Haifa, Israel, showcases his trademark surreal chess imagery with a number of wooden knights posed before a rook with waving flags. Also included is the Romanian-born artist Jean David, who also designed posters to promote tourism to Israel. The “Father of the Op-Art Movement,” Victor Vasarely, also created a poster inspired by some of his earlier experiments with incorporating chess into his artwork. Vasarely became entranced by patterns, including that of a chessboard in the late 1930s, which became the quintessential framework for his art.

Numerous other posters in the WCHOF’s exhibition are part of a tradition of chess-related artwork created by Puerto Rican artists following the beginning of Narciso Rabell Mendez’s tenure as the president of the Puerto Rican Chess Federation. Many of Puerto Rico’s most prominent artists participated in creating these engaging works, including Antonio Maldanado and Rafael Tufiño. Members of the Puerto Rican Chess Federation took posters like these to international tournaments in which they competed as a way of sharing highlights of their arts and culture.
Antonio Maldonado
27th Chess Olympiad, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
November 14–December 2, 1986
31 3/16 x 23 in.
Serigraph
Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame

Alan Davie
22nd Chess Olympiad, Haifa, Israel
October 26–November 10, 1976
33 x 21 ⅝ in.
Lithograph
Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame
One of the world’s oldest and best-loved games, chess often appears in film and television. To promote the Queen of Katwe (2014), which tells the story of Ugandan chess phenom Phiona Mutesi, Disney produced a poster with a chess piece at its center. The WCHOF has numerous examples of chess themed movie posters. Some, like The Queen of Katwe, tell the stories of famous chess players. The poster for Liz Garbus’s documentary Bobby Fischer Against the World (2011) includes a portion of a photo of Fischer by famed photojournalist Harry Benson CBE, the only journalist whom Fischer trusted. Another poster features actor and chess enthusiast Humphrey Bogart playing chess as the character Rick Blaine from Casablanca (1942). The poster for The Seventh Seal (1957) features perhaps one of the most famous chess scenes in film, in which actor Max von Sydow plays a knight returning from the Crusades who challenges death to a game of chess.
YUGOSLAVIA

Artist unknown

20th Chess Olympiad, Skopje, Yugoslavia
September 18—October 13, 1972
48 ½ x 23 ¾ in.
Lithograph
Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame

UNITED STATES

Design Army
Signature Theater
2011
20 x 15 15/16 in.
Digital Print
Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame
© Design Army | Signature Theatre c.2010
From World Chess Championships to local tournaments, the WCHOF’s poster collection offers a window into chess around the world. The designers of some tournaments take cues from the cultures of the locales that host the tournament. Puerto Rican poet, journalist, and politician Luis Muñoz Rivera appears on a poster for a tournament held in his name. On a poster for the 1985 Balkaniad, a hand lifts a chess piece resembling a bull’s head. It may be a reference to the minotaur, a half-man, half-bull creature, which according to Greek mythology resided in a labyrinth near Heraklion, where this chess tournament took place. Another, created for the 1983 Student Chess Olympiad held in Budva, Montenegro (then Yugoslavia), includes a globe atop a chess piece as well as a rook with elements of Budva’s cityscape with the Church of St. John featured prominently. Other posters feature more fantastic imagery: one created for a 1987 tournament in Romania features a pawn floating in space.
Rolandgrafic
World Chess Championship, Merano, Italy
October 1—November 19, 1981
27 ⅞ x 19 ½ in.
Lithograph
Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame

Artist unknown
Interpolis Super Tournament, Tilburg, Netherlands
October 16—November 5, 1991
23 ⅞ x 16 ⅜ in.
Digital print
Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame
Founded in 2009, the Saint Louis Chess Club (STLCC) is the center of championship chess in the United States. The organization hosted its first U.S. Chess Championship in 2009, and since then, it has also become the home of the U.S. Women’s, Junior, Junior Girls’, and Senior Chess Championships. Additionally, the Club hosts competitions like the Sinquefield and Cairns Cups, which feature the strongest players from around the world. In 2011, the WCHOF relocated from Miami, Florida, to Saint Louis. The institution began hosting exhibitions on a wide variety of subjects and creating posters to promote each show.

As a result, our graphic design team is constantly required to create new chess designs, from logos for the elite national and international chess tournaments held at the Club throughout the year to promotional imagery for exhibitions about topics as varied as chess and hip hop, great female chess players, and contemporary artists like Marcel Dzama.

The posters for chess competitions at the STLCC function not only as advertisements but also as souvenirs. Chess fans wait in line for hours to get their favorite players to sign them on autograph days preceding the tournaments. They also become part of the collection of the WCHOF, memorializing history as it happens in the nation’s chess capital. We hope that you will enjoy learning more about chess history through these and the other posters on view as part of the exhibition.
Arcturis
Sinquefield Cup, Saint Louis, Missouri
September 9–15, 2013
17 x 11 in.
Digital print
Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, gift of the Saint Louis Chess Club

Arcturis
U.S. Women's Chess Championship, Saint Louis, Missouri
October 3–13, 2009
15 ¾ x 11 ¾ in.
Digital print
Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, gift of the Saint Louis Chess Club
**DRAWN GAMES: CHESS POSTERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

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**Special Thanks to:**

Curated by Shannon Bailey, Chief Curator, and Emily Allred, Curator, World Chess Hall of Fame

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**WORLD CHESS HALL OF FAME**
4652 Maryland Avenue, Saint Louis, MO 63108
(314) 367-WCHF (9243) | worldchesshof.org
@WorldChessHOF #DrawnGamesChess

The mission of the World Chess Hall of Fame is to educate visitors, fans, players and scholars by collecting, preserving, exhibiting and interpreting the game of chess and its continuing cultural and artistic significance.

The Museum does not discriminate or permit harassment or discrimination on the basis of gender, race, color, national and ethnic origin in the treatment of individuals with respect to employment, or admission or access to Museum facilities, programs or activities.

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