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## Chess and humor

\_ Poster for the exhibition

Siegfried Schönle reports on the meeting of the members of [Chess Collectors International \(CCI\)](#) and CH&LS on the occasion of the "Schachwunderland - Kunst und Humor im Schach" (Chess Wonderland - art and humor in chess) exhibition in Plauen. The article is written in German, but will soon be published in English:

[Schach und Humor](#)

[Update 2022-11-25] The English version of the text is now available: [Chess and humor](#) [/Update]

## Chess and humor

### or CCI and CH&LS met in Plauen (28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022)

by Siegfried Schoenle

Once again - and as so many times before in other places – about 65 members of the Chess Collectors International and Chess History & Literature Society met in Plauen at the invitation of Dr. Thomas Thomsen. Among other things, chess pieces made with great craftsmanship by the Polish artist couple Magda and Andrzej Nowakowscy could be admired. The exhibition *Schachwunderland* (Chess Wonderland ) in the Malzhaus showed the diversity and internationality of humor about chess in a wide variety of colors and forms:

- in the artistic design of the chess pieces and the chess boards
- in cartoons, satirical depictions
- in films, skits
- in parodies, humoresques, poems
- in chess graphics tasks (the position of the pieces results in a picture)
- in chess jokes, puns
- in drawings o.e. plauen's (Erich Ohser 1903-1944), an artist who achieved lasting fame and notoriety in particular through his series on "Father and Son".

\_ o.e.plauen

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And since we were staying in a town whose name is associated with “Plauen Lace”, a delicate, filigree fabric, a large chessboard made of lace, forced deep admiration from every observer. This was designed by Ing. S. Melnyk and is originally 43 x 43 cm in size.

[We took these and other photos of the exhibition from the catalogue: Schach Kunst und Humor | Chess Art and Humor, ed. v. Thomas Thomsen and Frank Bicker, Chess Collectors International, Königstein 2022, 40 p.]

\_ Puzzle ball, carved ivory. Egidius Lobenigk and Georg Wecker, Dresden, 16th century, Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, inv. II 293

A special "puzzle ball", meant here in a figurative sense [cf. plus the highly recommended catalogue Crossing Games. Journeys between East and West, Edition: MNAA 2022, pp. 52-53] was the conference venue Malzhaus for us.

If the building is a real gem in terms of architecture and its entablature, it contained two other "spheres". The conference and lecture room and especially on the floor above the richly designed ornate exhibition.



\_ Catalogue: Fairy Tale Game. Carver family Pretzl, Kleinwalsertal.

## About the weekend in detail:

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Participants from Holland, France, Belgium, the USA, Germany and other countries gathered in the

conference hotel on Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, from 6 p.m. for the first encounters and the first talks, of course mainly on chess topics. The conversations were so diverse and polyphonic that even with a strong voice one could or had to communicate. Refreshing drinks, also to relax the voices, were served.

Afterwards we met for dinner together, during which the chats continued in a somewhat quieter atmosphere.

As always after long and tiring journeys, we enjoyed a free evening.



Malzhaus, Plauen, conference room.

On Saturday morning at 9:00 a.m. the chess friends gathered for the lectures in the Malzhaus. A pretty and atmospheric place. Heavy beams criss-cross the space, forcing the taller participants to bend to reach the chairs.

Prof. Angerstein and Dr. Thomsen briefly and friendly welcomed the participants and other guests.

Everyone stood for a minute's silence and remembrance to honor the deceased members.



Hans Tempel, Schachverführung. Cutout.

They then led to the lecture by Frank Bicker from the Vogtländer Schachclub e.V./ Plauen 1952 e.V., who introduced the Malzhaus and humorously explained why the topic "Schach und Humor" was chosen. The large seating area for the collectors was surrounded by drawings by the artist Hans Tempel.

Afterwards we heard a well-researched lecture on the "History of Plauen Lace", its rise and fall, its beginnings as a craft and the forms of production by machines from Mrs. Katrin Färber, research assistant at the Vogtland Museum Plauen.

Wolfgang Pätz (Jena) reported on his research on the "Geschichte der Schachfiguren der Schacholympiade Leipzig 1960" (History of the Chess Pieces of the Leipzig Chess Olympiad 1960) less for humor and more for chess history. Helpful and impressively illustrated!

Also not particularly humorous because of his topic, the President of the CCI, Michael Wiltshire, had to report on his first experiences with the ivory trade ban in England. Although abbreviated, but still very aptly, it was formulated that the procedures for buying ivory figures had become very complicated and that elephants were not protected by trade bans, but rather by trained rangers who could make it impossible for poachers to hunt.

Georg Schweiger, from the chess and culture foundation G.H.S. based in Ebersberg, spoke about his exhibition "Schach und Musik" (Chess and Music), which opened on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022 in the old warehouse in Ebersberg. He explained highlights and highlights in advance and the few catalogs he brought with him to the exhibition were sold in a few minutes, but can still be ordered.

[Chess and Music. Exhibition in the "Unterm First" hall in the Bürgerhaus in the Ebersberg monastery courtyard, November 6<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022. edited by the chess. and Cultural Foundation G.H.S. N. Niemyer-Wasserer, G. Schweiger, Baldham - Munich 2022, 127 p., numerous illustrations of the exhibits]

A leisurely coffee break served to relax.

Harry Schaack, editor-in-chief of the well-known magazine KARL, continued the series of lectures by recalling the chess career of GM Yuri Averbakh, his successes on the chessboard, his activities as a chess official, and his chess writings. GM Yuri Averbakh passed away on May 7, 2022 at the age of 100.

Tom Gallegos and his wife talked about the International CCI Congress 2020 in St. Louis, USA, especially why it took place despite the pandemic. But her second presentation fulfilled the conference theme of chess and humor in a special way. Three films about Chess Humor from Saturday Night Live / Chess Humor from the US series Saturday Night Live flickered across the big screen, making viewers smile and laugh.

A brief report on problems with the CCI website and its activation by Gero Jung followed.

Thomas Thomsen offered an illustrated foretaste of the exhibition by showing and explaining - as always knowledgeable - the background to the chess boards and chess pieces by the artist couple Magda and Andrzej Nowakowscy (Warsaw).

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Petra Lootz, Kassel.

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Petra Lootz, Kassel.

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Petra Lootz, Kassel.

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Petra Lootz, Kassel.

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Petra Lootz, Kassel.

It should not be concealed here that Dr. Thomas Thomsen was the generous lender of the valuables as well as co-designer of the exhibition rooms. The participants expressed their appreciation with their applause.

Dumplings and sauerbraten were waiting for us in the "Alten Handelshaus" (old trading house), built in 1789 at Straßberger Straße 17 in Plauen, just a few steps from the conference venue.

After lunch the exhibition "Schach und Humor" (Chess and Humor) was opened. The beauty of the objects shown in numerous showcases impressed all participants. With a smile, we walked through the exhibition to enjoy the chess caricatures, comics, drawings, etc.

\_ Snow white. Watercolor. Jens Bleul.

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The catalog for the "Schachwunderland" exhibition is really urgently recommended to all interested parties, especially chess friends who could not be present, but to their hands. Definitely the best color photography [David Hall et al.] and readable texts by the authors [F. Bicker, Dr. Iris Haist, Dr. Th. Thomsen] make this a pleasure.

The afternoon chess market, which offered all collectors the opportunity to exchange, but also to sell and buy, is already a good tradition.

In the evening, we relaxed during a small walk to the Hotel Alexandra, where we took a tasty meal in a nice room, enjoying red or white wine from Spain.

A skit organized by Peter Seitz, with volunteer group members at his side, went very well with the humor, with "The Chess Turk" being premiered.

The warm October sun, which made jackets and coats unnecessary on Sunday morning, showed Plauen's city center from its best side. Market square, town hall, the citizens' monument to the Peaceful Revolution of 1989 attracted interested viewers and Frank Bicker's brief insight into the history of the town of Plauen was gratefully acknowledged.

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— Participants of the conference who took part in the city tour on Sunday, October 30th, 2022.

Our visit to the gallery e.o. plauen concluded this beautiful and interesting weekend.

From a roll-up that can be seen and read in the museum, we extract the following text on the artist's biography:

"Artist and Man. Erich Ohser alias e.o.plauen (Untergettengrün 1903-1944 Berlin) is one of the forefathers of comics in German-speaking countries. His mostly pantomimic picture stories father and son were already extremely popular when they were written (1934-1937) and have gradually conquered children's rooms to this day - including international children's rooms. Few people know that he also produced a wide range of styles and genres. In 1931, one year after their marriage, he and his wife Marigard, née Bantzer, had a son named Christian. Marigard was an illustrator for children's books and games and earned the family support when Ohser was banned from working. Ohser was a passionate, humorous and honest person all his life, loud and open. This is one of the reasons why he was imprisoned after making critical statements against the war and the Nazi regime for "undermining the military force".

On the night of April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1944, the night before the trial, he committed suicide in his cell."

The 6 drawings for the well-known story Chess the Father are taken from the first edition:

Plauen, E.O. [i.e. Erich Ohser 1902-1944]. Father and son. 50 funny pranks & adventures drawn by E.O. Plauen; Foreword by Hans Ohl. Berlin, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1935: Ullstein.

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I am firmly convinced that I can say on behalf of all participants that we would like to thank everyone who contributed to this wonderful weekend.

Siegfried Schönle (Kassel), November 2022.



— Catalogue: Fairy Tale Game. Carver family Pretzl, Kleinwalsertal.

See also:

- [Vogtländischer Schach-Club Plauen 1952 e.V.](#)
- [Deutscher Schachbund](#)