

The Uist Chessmen

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From: Uist Arts Association

Uist artist turns church graffiti into a chess set

Made by Uist artist Ani George, this chess pieces are carved from locally cast wild red-deer antlers. The chess board is locally made and framed with wood from the pews of the former Carinish Church in North Uist.

The wood originally formed the hymn-book rests from the church's pews. Removing the outer layers of paint revealed an extraordinary find of dates as early as 1918 and many names and initials of local church-goers have been etched into the wood. The church dates back to 1889,

Ani says:

“It's full of names, dates and initials. The wood has sea-worm holes so it originally came from a boat or as driftwood. One inscription says AMC Kamar, which appears more than once. One idea was maybe this was a military boat and maybe inscriptions were written on the boat and not at the Church”

During WW1 British passenger liners and fishing boats were requisitioned by the Royal Navy for conversion to armed merchant cruisers (AMC). They were used for convoy and patrol duties. In the index of British merchant vessels lost 1914-1918 there is reference to Karma which was shelled and sunk by U39 on 20th July 1916, 68 miles NNW of Algiers. It was carrying coal so was most likely part of a convoy.

The set is called “Hebridean Land vs Sea”. The Land pieces are all carved into the brown outer layer of antlers, the Sea pieces have had the outer brown layer of antler sanded off to expose the white under layer then carved and “Scrimshawed” using a natural earth paint made with pottery, from an archaeological site at Baleshare beach, which had been eroded onto the beach during a battle between the land and the sea.

With the game of chess being a battle, each carved piece denotes a player depicting the ever-changing battle between the land (brown) and the sea (white) using archaeological, Scottish Folklore, people and ancient artifacts from Uist.

The board representing the battlefield is made of pine and meranti squares with a unique frame made using wood from the church.

The chess set is one of the artworks on display until August 6th at the Uist Arts Association's Summer Show at Taigh Chearsabhagh Museum and Arts Centre in Lochmaddy, North Uist. It's part of the Uist Art on the Map trail around Uist and Barra.

Further information

For print-quality images of the chess set:

- <https://uistarts.org/art-on-the-map-media-images/#chessmen>

For more information, please contact:

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- Uist Arts Association and Summer Show website: <https://uistarts.org/>
- Media pages: <https://uistarts.org/art-on-the-map-media-page/>

Social Media links:

- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/UistArts>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/UAAgroup>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/uistarts/>

Visit the Media information pages of our Summer Show and Art on the Map website at

- <https://uistarts.org/art-on-the-map-media-page/>

The media pages includes links to:

- Print quality images of the chess set
- Print quality images of artworks and venues on the Art on the Map Trail
- Previous interviews with some of the Art on the Map Participants
- Contact details for all the participating artists and venues
- Links to our social media feeds for daily updates on Art on the Map activities and other island arts and culture news

Media are welcome to contacts directly using the information in the website profiles. Alternatively, the Uist Arts Association can help in making contacts.