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Living Like Kings: The Unexpected Collision of Chess and Hip Hop Culture

October 9, 2014 – April 26, 2015

September 17, 2014 (Saint Louis, MO) – This fall, the World Chess Hall of Fame (WCHOF) invites visitors into a world of battle, strategy, creativity, and passion; a world where lessons are hard-won and success does not come without sacrifice.

Living Like Kings: The Unexpected Collision of Chess and Hip Hop Culture is an exhibition that explores the surprising ways in which the ancient game of chess intersects with the powerful, creative expression in hip hop culture, which includes music, fashion, art, dance, and spirituality.

“The concept for *Living Like Kings* began when WCHOF’s team was introduced to [Adisa Banjoko](#), an author and educator who founded the nonprofit [Hip Hop Chess Federation](#) in San Francisco, CA. Adisa fuses chess and hip hop to promote peace, knowledge, and self-reliance among young people. This has been the inspiration for our ground-breaking art exhibition,” said Shannon Bailey, chief curator at the World Chess Hall of Fame.

The centerpiece of *Living Like Kings* is an immersive, multimedia experience created by artist [Benjamin Kaplan](#). Commissioned by WCHOF, the installation includes archival and original video, music and photography, custom-designed type and illustration, and a series of interviews. Kaplan weaves these pieces together to create a linear narrative that will literally surround visitors in sound and sight using inventive projection techniques.



Still image from Benjamin Kaplan's "Living Like Kings"

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Kaplan's piece is approximately 20 minutes in length and will be shown in WCHOF's first floor gallery. It touches on themes that chess and hip hop share: history, strategy, spirituality, process, creativity, education, and symbolism. Interviewees for the piece include Banjoko, International Grandmaster [Maurice Ashley](#), Wu-Tang Clan member [RZA](#), [Eugene Brown](#) (founder of Big Chair Chess Club, Inc.), Dr. [Daaim Shabazz](#) (founder of thechessdrum.net), and woman Grandmaster [Jennifer Shahade](#).

“Benjamin's piece creates a potent storyline that takes viewers on twists and turns and leaves them with the realization that there are connections in the world they never knew existed. These new ways of looking at things are beneficial to everyone — no matter if they play chess, love hip hop, or are just curious about this exceptional show,” said Bailey.

Learning Lab

WCHOF's second floor gallery will serve as a companion Learning Lab for the *Living Like Kings* exhibition. The lab will allow visitors to participate in the show through interactive music and video stations, hands-on art opportunities, and educational presentations.

The Learning Lab will open with graffiti-inspired exhibitions by two local artists. Photographer [Adrian O. Walker's](#) powerful images of graffiti from the St. Louis area showcase an art form that many consider vandalism, but is often beautiful and extremely vibrant.

Artist Daniel Burnett is curating the development of a series of murals that will be created by a team of artists throughout the run of *Living Like Kings*. Each month, a new artist will create a work based upon a different chess piece, beginning with Burnett's images of the pawn. Subsequent months will feature work by Christopher Burch, Ruben Aguirre, Ben Pierce, Stan Chisholm, and Nice & Lucx.

***Living Like Kings* opens on October 9, 2014, and runs through April 26, 2015. Admission to the first floor gallery is free with a \$5 per person recommended donation. Visit worldchesshof.org for details on educational programming.**

About the World Chess Hall of Fame

4652 Maryland Avenue, Saint Louis MO, 63108 (314) 367-WCHF www.worldchesshof.org

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 and Miami.

The WCHOF is 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 WCHOF partners with the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis to provide innovative programming and outreach to local, national, and international audiences.

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