

What is Common?





In the early 1960s, the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA) launched a marketing program to advance the selling of ALCOA **aluminum*** products. In 1962 they hires an advertising agency and commissioned designer-craftsman Austin E. Cox of Austin Enterprises (AE) who designed one of the most stunning Chess sets of modern times - minimalist, sleek, abstract, creative yet "simple" and easy to recognize chess pieces carrying the name and symbol of the Alcoa company. Moreover, the pieces which were cut from **extruded*** aluminum bars and packaged in an innovative wood case mountable on a wall and viewable through a sizzling blue Plexiglas window.

- Extrusion Process: Shaping process that involves pushing heated material (aluminum) through an opening in a steel die with specific cross-sectional shape, also known as Profile. This creates a long bar that can then be cut to size to make individual (chess) figures.
- Aluminum is the North American term used for the element known in British English as Aluminium, Either is acceptable to use for the element with atomic number 13, symbol AL, which is a low density, soft, non-magnetic (metal) the 12th most common element in the universe.

(283) 1962 Alcoa Austin Enterprises Aluminum Chess Set



Mid-Century modernist (EAMES) styled extruded aluminum chess set was designed by Austin E. Cox for Austin Enterprises and manufactured by the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA). The pieces were cut from extruded aluminum bars and range in height from 3.75" tall for the Pawns to almost 5" Kings. The light pieces are in natural aluminum while the dark pieces are black, anodized on all non-cut facets, including the bottom. All pieces are marked on the underside of the bases with "1962 AUSTIN ENTERPRISES". Iconic, legendary, sleek design from the 1960s that set a modern standard for Aluminum Chess Sets and a model for further designs. The pieces are presented in an original large, compartmentalized display box over 30.5" long, with black lining and blue-tinted sliding Plexiglas windows ready to hang up for impressive display. This retro set is a must for any chess collector or the mid-century enthusiast. The set was also available, in limited quantities, in custom, two-trays stacked coffer box, marked with the Alcoa symbol.

[Garden State Chess: Austin Enterprises 1962 Aluminum Chess Set \(eosef.com\)](http://eosef.com)

Additional references: John Mazzucco, CCI publication 2002

(867) 1965 Alcomex Austin Enterprises Aluminum Chess Set



Alcomex 1965 Aluminum Chess Set. Mid-Century modernist (EAMES) styled extruded aluminum chess set was designed by Austin E. Cox for Austin Enterprises and manufactured by Alcomex S.A. Aluminum Company. Alcomex was partially owned by Alcoa, who in 1962 introduced the legendary aluminum set in a long wooden box, which was inspired as a model for this set. The pieces were cut from extruded aluminum bars and range in height from 3.25" tall for the Pawns to over 5" Kings. The light side pieces are in natural aluminum while the dark pieces are gold plated/coated on all facets, including the underside of the bases which are unmarked. The pieces are presented in a specially designed cardboard box approx. 13" x 8.5" x 2 3/4", containing two level trays. The box is inscribed in Spanish on the inside:

ALCOMEX, S.A.

Inaguración de la Prensa de extrusión
de 2,500 Tons., el 24 de Agosto de 1965,
en el Fraccionamiento Industrial "la
Presa", Edo. de Mexico

The set was also available in black coating/colors for the dark pieces and in other custom packages such as wood and faux leather.

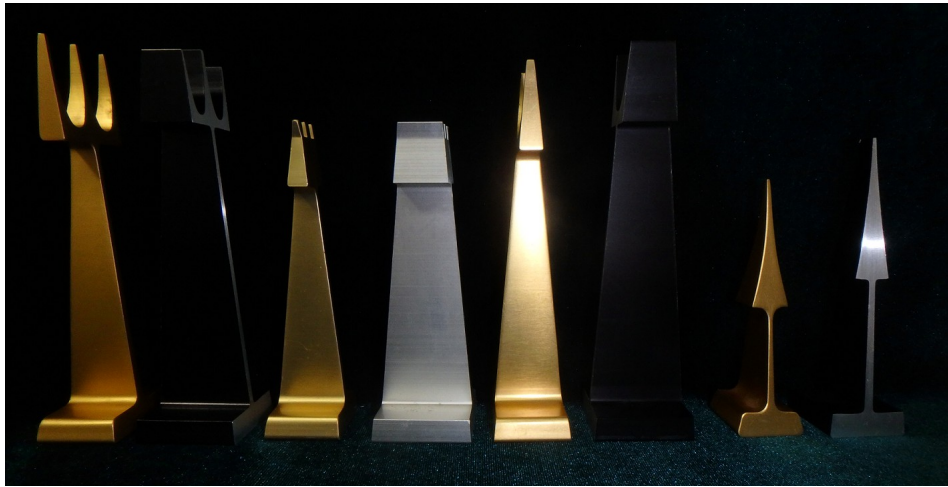
[Garden State Chess: 1965 Extruded Aluminum Chess Set in Presentation boxes \(eosef.com\)](http://eosef.com)

Comparison between the ALCOA and the ALCOAMEX Chess sets

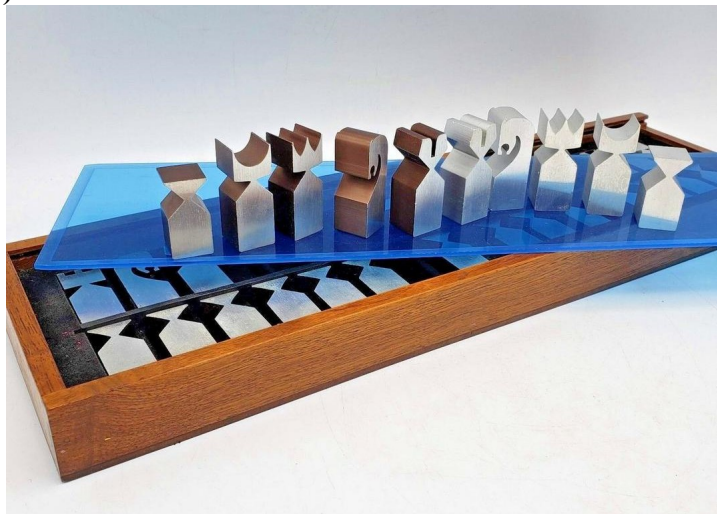
ALCOA						ALCOMEX						
Height (inch)	top		base		Weight (oz)		Height (inch)	top		base		Weight (oz)
	W	D	W	D				W	D			
5-	1	½	1 ¼	1 ¼	1.5	K	5+	1 ¼	1/8	1 ½	1	1.3
4 7/8	7/8	9/16	1 ¼	1 ¼	1.5	Q	4 5/8	1	1/8	1 ½	1	1.1
4 ¾	1 3/8	7/16	1 ¼	1 ¼	1.3	B	4 ½	1 ¾	1/8	1 ¼	1-	1
4 ½	7/8	3/8	1 ¼	1 ¼	1.5	N	4 ¼	1	1/8	1 ¼	1-	1.2
4	¾	5/8	1 ¼	1 ¼	1.5	R	4	¾	1/8	1 ¼	1-	1
3 ¾	¼	1/8	1	1	0.9	P	3 ¼	1/8	+	1	7/8	0.7

Notes (images on next page):

1. Sizes and Weight (Pawns, Kings...)
2. Anodized vs. Coated
3. Colored sides vs. All around
4. Marking bottom vs unmarked
5. Bases Square vs. Rectangular
6. Top shape diagonally spaced vs. pointy
7. Package Fancy display vs. boxed
8. Finish razor sharp vs. soft curved



(772) 1966 Extruded Aluminum Chess Set in Presentation box



Austin Enterprises 1966 Aluminum Chess Set. This Mid-Century modernist (EAMES) styled extruded aluminum chess set was designed by Austin E. Cox for Austin Enterprises and manufactured by the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA). The pieces were cut from extruded aluminum bars and range in height from 1.5" tall for the Pawns to 2" Kings. The light pieces are in natural aluminum while the dark pieces are bronze anodized on all non-cut facets, including the bottom. All pieces are marked on the underside of the bases with "1966 AE" (AUSTIN ENTERPRISES). Sleek design with resemblance to the original 1962 chess set. The pieces are presented in an original large, compartmentalized display box approx. 18" long, with black lining and blue-tinted sliding Plexiglas windows ready to hang up for impressive display. This retro set is a must for any chess collector or the mid-century enthusiast. The set was also available, in limited quantities, in a double-box version.

[Garden State Chess: 1966 Extruded Aluminum Chess Set in Presentation box \(eosef.com\)](http://eosef.com)

(427) 1970 Alcoa Aluminum Alice in Wonderland Chess Set



The chess pieces represent characters from "Alice in Wonderland" in design authentic to the original "Through the Looking Glass" book by Lewis Carroll. Manufactured by the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA). The pieces are nested in a custom made, Walnut, presentation box approx. 20" x 20" lined with red and positioned around a reprint of a chess book by Reuben Fine titled "Before You Make the Next Move ask Alcoa" and marked with the Alcoa logo. Also included an original 19" x 19" aluminum board with 2" squares, mounted on a wooden base and an original two-sided poster board, designed by George S Gaadt, with Alice and background of the set story. The other describes the Alcoa company, its superior aluminum products and invites customers-prospects to attend free symposiums-presentations on products and services. The large chess pieces range in height from 2" tall for the Pawns to 4.25" Kings. The light pieces are in natural while the dark pieces are darkened aluminum.

[Garden State Chess: Rare, Vintage Alcoa Aluminum Alice in Wonderland Chess Set \(eosef.com\)](http://eosef.com)

(876) Alcoa 1972 Aluminum Chess Set



Rare design variation of the classic Alcoa Austin E. Cox theme of the 60s. Excellent aluminum presentation case with the familiar blue windowed door and compartments for the pieces. The pieces were cut from extruded aluminum bars and range in height from 3" tall for the Pawns to over 4.25" Kings. The light pieces are in natural aluminum while the dark pieces are black, anodized on all non-cut facets, including the bottom. All pieces are marked on the underside of the bases with "1972 ICE". The pieces are presented in an original large, compartmentalized aluminum display box, with black lining and blue-tinted sliding Plexiglas windows ready to hang up for impressive display. A blue cloth board, stretched over the aluminum frame is on the reverse side of the case.

[Garden State Chess: Rare mid-century ICE extruded aluminum Chess set \(eosef.com\)](http://eosef.com)

(853) Unknown maker Aluminum Mid Century Modern EAMES Chess set



Vintage Aluminum Chess Set 1960s-1970s. Mid-Century modernist (EAMES) styled extruded aluminum chess set, Art Deco inspired Design. Similar to period sets made by Alcoa. This set is rare and in extreme beautiful and elegance. The pieces were cut from extruded aluminum bars and range in height from 1.75" tall for the Pawns to 3" Kings. The light pieces are metallic blue while the dark pieces are pink-red and are unmarked. This set is complete and comes in a presentation box, with key-lock approx. 12" x 12". An example of perfection in design and precision production.

[Garden State Chess: Unknown maker Aluminium Mid Century Modern Eames Chess set \(eosef.com\)](http://eosef.com)

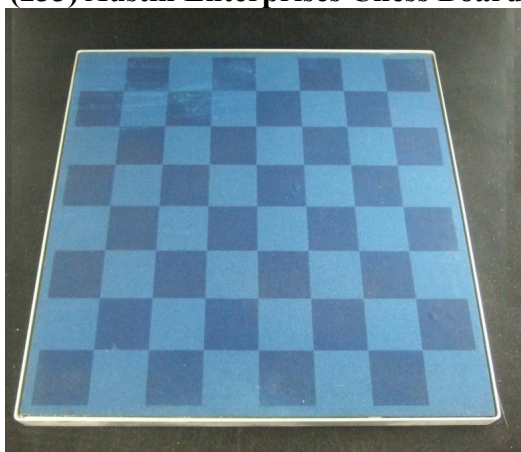
(532) 1986 Unique Alcoa Bauhaus Aluminum-Lucite Chess Set



1986 Alcoa Aluminum Company of America / Alcoa Laboratories. Modernistic Aluminum-Lucite Chess Set. Fantastic chess set compendium created especially for select guests of the Alcoa Laboratories Symposia 1986-1988. The chess pieces are a Josef Hartwig minimalist Bauhaus design from 1924. The pieces are made of an experimental ceramic/aluminum material developed by Alcoa and are stored in two wooden trays. Included also a 1 1/8" tick, ~16.5" x 16.5" with 2" inlay squares made of aluminum-lithium sheet clad board. The board is labeled Centennial Technical Symposium 1986-1988. All is packaged in large approx. 24.5" x 17.5" x 2" wooden case with sliding top, which was mailed to participants (only several hundreds) after the events. Very rare is the inclusion of a two-page brochure providing further details and signed by Dr. Peter R. Bridenbaugh, VP of R&D at Alcoa Laboratories. The chess pieces, with the Alcoa logo, range in height from 1" tall for the Pawns to 2" Kings. The light pieces are off-white the dark pieces are charcoal-black. The all-original set includes all chess pieces, board, housing for chess pieces and carrying wooden case weighs nearly 40 pounds.

[Garden State Chess: Unique Alcoa Modernistic Aluminum-Lucite Chess Set \(eosef.com\)](http://eosef.com)

(233) Austin Enterprises Chess Board



Custom made chess board for Alcoa chess sets was also available from Alcoa. Made of cloth mounted on wood and enclosed in aluminum frame. Was built to be played or hung on the wall. Most common color is two shades of blue but also available in Green, Red and Gold/Yellow.

Summary

Title	Quantity	Distribution	Occasion
1962 Austin Enterprises Extruded Aluminum Chess Set		<i>Clients-Prospects</i>	<i>Marketing</i>
1965 Alcomex Extruded Aluminum Chess Set			
1966 Extruded Aluminum Chess Set			
1970 Alcoa Aluminum Alice in Wonderland Chess Set	200		
1972 Alcoa ICE Extruded Chess Set			
1986 Alcoa Josef Hartwik Aluminum-Ceramics Chess Set		<i>Symposium</i>	
??? is this Alcoa ???			
1962 Alcoa Chess Board			

* EAMES (Wiki): **Charles Eames** and **Ray Eames** were an American married couple of industrial designers who made significant historical contributions to the development of [modern architecture](#) and [furniture](#).

In conclusion, an innovative company that spearheaded a new generation of modern aluminum chess sets. Please write to me at chess@ogdir.com and visit my collection at www.eosef.com/gsc (no log-in required) where you can also find more photos of these and many other sets.

Israel Raphaelli