Fred Horn's Great Finds!

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Great Finds!

Article by Fred Horn

Two Amazing European Games from the Early 20th Century

Sometimes luck is on your side, which happened for me when receiving two wonderful antique “Fishing games.” But their stories of how they became part of my collection are so different and interesting that both are worth to be recorded for history. Let’s start with “DAS MAGNETISCHE ANGEL-SPIEL” from 1905.

Just before the turn of the last century I found, unexpectedly, one of these old fishing rod (angle) games from the first centennial of the 20th Century in MINT condition. For a long time I knew a lady who sold antique paperware. She had a small shop in an alley just around the corner of the Dennenweg in The Hague (the town where I live). Now and then I would walk by to have a look; just to see if she had anything new, for me it would be a lithographic print of an old game. But at one special occasion she smiled and said, “No print today, but here is something you certainly will like. I saved it especially for you!”

And from under the counter she picked up this box with that amazing looking game: “Het visch- of hengel spel” (The fish- or fishing rod game) from J. W. Spiers & Sohn, Nuernberg-Doro. Not only was the game a nice surprise, but its price was “for a friend and thus for a friendly sum,” she said. Afterwards I surmised she had charged me only the amount she had paid for the item herself.
The Fish- or Fishing Rod (Angle) Game

There are a number of 'so-called' fishing games, most of them however, are dull; this game is undoubtedly the best representation of real fishing with a rod. It is played as follows:

The basin (the hexagonal aquarium — F.H.) is placed on the table and the fish are placed into it in such a way that they are not covering each other. There are two ways of play:

1) Each player takes a fishing rod and all fish together for a certain amount of time. The number on each fish represents its weight in pounds and for each player this figure is recorded when he catches one of the fish. After a certain time, agreed upon before, the player who has captured the most pounds wins the game.

2) After letting chance decide who is going to fish first, players follow one after another in turn. When a player thinks he has a fish, he pulls up his fishing rod out of the basin and then the next player goes, etc. The game continues until there are no more fish in the basin, and whoever caught the most number in pounds, wins.

When very young children play, no pounds are recorded, only the number of fish. Lobsters, old shoes, hats, etc. do not count. Also it is forbidden for a player, on his turn, to look into the basin.

It is recommended to use small iron rods on the magnets. As long as the game is not used, the magnetic force remains longer.

The Basin, and the rules (in Dutch)
MAGNETISCH VISCHVERMAAK
(Magnetic Fish Fun: An Entertaining Party Game for Young and Old)

We continue with the second "fishing" game: "MAGNETISCH VISCHVERMAAK" also from 1905.

I received this game as a present from my good friend Rudolph Pitz, who, while handing over a plastic bag with all sorts of pieces of paper and cardboard, said the words, "Just something for you old boy! Nice game but this needs a lot of restoration I think!"

And it really needed a complete overhaul, he did not lie about that: "What a mess!"

I first had to rebuild the box to get some idea of what to do with all the cardboard pieces representing tree images. Unfortunately, the set of rules was lost, so I had to figure out what had to be the "fishing-area" (the pond). This proved a bit difficult because all of the tree and leave parts were not present! But when I finally solved this puzzle-like problem, Figure 1 was the result.

BINGO! These (tree and leave parts) would make up the banks of the pond! The bottom section of the restored box offered the solution. These images represented the sides (see previous game DAS MAGNETISCHE ANGEL-SPIEL, page 14) of what normally would be the suggested glass sides of an aquarium (see Figure 2).
Separating out the various playing pieces, I discovered most of the fish had lost their tails. There were two ‘lucky ones’ however that were still complete. Also, one of the golden colored fish proved missing, as well as one of the magnets connected to one of the rods.

The meaning of the numbered cards 1 through 6? These may have represented the order of play (fishing) because of the small amount of rods (2). In any case, after a lot of hard work, the ‘mess’ turned into this beautiful SALA (Luxus Papier Berlin).

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