

CHAMPIONS ON THE CANVAS

COLLECTOR INGO WEGERICH HAS PUT TOGETHER AN ASTONISHING EXHIBITION OF BOXING-RELATED ART

By Tom Gray

Above: Wegerich poses alongside two original Canelo-Golovkin artworks.

PAINTING BY RICHARD T. SLONE



IF YOU'RE A HARDCORE FIGHT FAN, THEN THE SIGHT ALMOST TAKES YOUR BREATH AWAY.

The original artwork of heavyweight legend Joe Louis for his first solo Ring cover (August 1937 issue) is less than the length of a jab away. Nearby, Sugar Ray Robinson is magnificent in his welterweight heyday (August 1947 issue), complete with Ring championship belt. Cross another seven decades and Canelo Alvarez is throwing down against arch nemesis Gennadiy Golovkin in the first of three superfights.

German art collector Ingo Wegerich purchased the Canelo-GGG original – his first boxing acquisition – from acclaimed British artist Richard T. Slone in 2017, and he's been on a roll ever since. As well as purchasing directly from Slone, who is a personal friend, the Frankfurt-based lawyer also buys from private collectors and auctions.

Wegerich now has over 80 items, including 41 original Ring covers, in what amounts to a treasure trove of fistic fine art. In "Bible of Boxing" terms, there are original paintings of Max Schmeling, Rocky Marciano, Lou Ambers and the iconic Jack Dempsey-Joe Louis "Dream Fight" artwork.

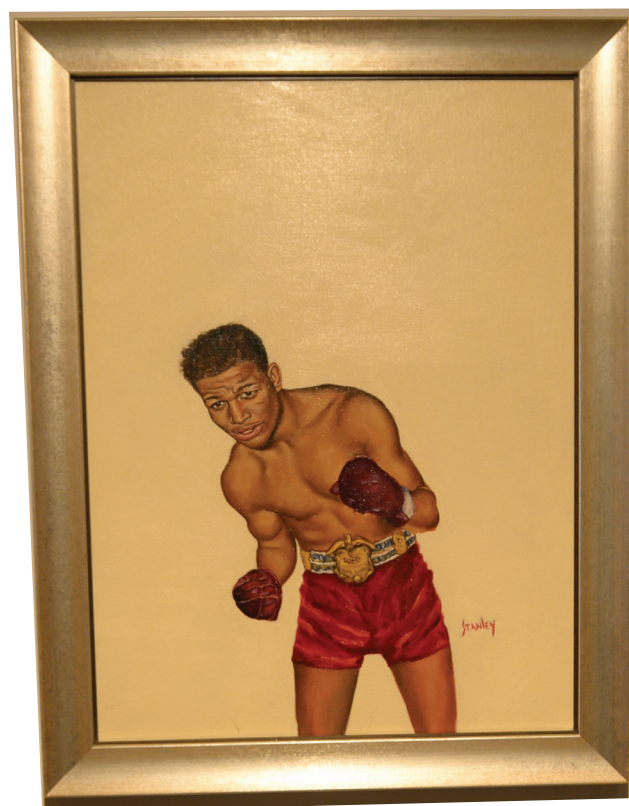
All of these items, and much more, appeared at the Boxing in Art Exhibition, which was staged at the swanky Airport Frankfurt Club on September 22.

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“I waited for the right moment to showcase the collection,” Wegerich told *The Ring* shortly after the exhibition concluded. “I love art, and *The Ring* magazine covers are special. I saw this place and I needed somewhere elegant to display the art. This is a private club, there are a lot of celebrities and big companies, so I wanted to show the artwork to interesting people who can spread the news of the exhibition far and wide.

“The more people know it, the better it is. What I loved most was that you have not just boxing people, but art people and casual people. Through boxing art, they can become interested in boxing, and that’s wonderful. The artwork



A gallery of stunning paintings from a golden era in boxing.



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is timeless. You have old fighters like Joe Louis and Max Schmeling preserved in history.”

During the exhibition, Wegerich presented former three-weight world champion Regina Halmich with an original piece of art by Slone. In the painting, Halmich, one of the most successful female fighters of all time and a pioneer for the women’s game, is featured alongside her fellow International Boxing Hall of Fame 2022 inductees: Miguel Cotto, Roy Jones Jr., James Toney, Holly Holm, Bill Caplan, Bob Yalen and Ron Borges.

The 45-year-old Halmich, who attended the event with her father, was visibly moved upon receiving the gift.

“Regina deserves it,” said Wegerich of his guest of honor. “She didn’t ask for money to attend the exhibition; she just wanted me to donate to a charity for animals. She wanted to do something good, and I wanted to do something good for her. That was my inspiration.”

During the event, I took the liberty of sending reigning WBC heavyweight champion Tyson Fury a photograph of Slone’s original Fury-Mike Tyson mythical matchup artwork that was designed for the July 2020 issue of The Ring. “The Gypsy King” dutifully responded with love.

“That’s amazing,” said Wegerich upon hearing the news. “Tyson Fury can do so much with just a simple message. The painter deserves credit. It’s a great way to promote and it doesn’t cost anything. That type of thing transcends to casual fans and it makes boxing bigger. Tyson Fury is an amazing person.”

Above: Mayweather-McGregor. Right: Iconic Joe Louis art from 1937.



ZÜBEYDE KÖRP, STUDIOZETA



Frazier-Ali and mythical Fury-Tyson matchup art, both by Richard Slone. Left: Lightweight legend Lou Ambers.



So will Wegerich take the exhibition to boxing hotbeds across the world?

“I don’t want to make money, but, at the same time, I don’t want to lose money,” said Wegerich in earnest. “This is my passion, but I don’t want to give away my pension for it. (laughs)

“To take such an event overseas, we’d need sponsors. There are costs for taking art overseas and those costs have to be covered. If you go to the U.S., you have to take the artwork over, pay insurance and rent space for the exhibition.”

If Wegerich does manage to take his show on the road, then fight fans the world over would be in for a treat. In the meantime, the exhibition, which was covered by two of Germany’s biggest newspapers, will remain at the Airport Club Frankfurt for the next several months. »

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Multi-weight world champ Regina Halmich is presented with original Slone artwork. Below: Halmich, Wegerich and Ring Managing Editor Tom Gray



REGINA HALMICH

Pro Career: 1994-2007 •
Record: 54-1-1 (16 KOs)
• Titles Won: IBF junior flyweight/IBF flyweight/IBF junior bantamweight • IBHOF Induction: 2022

“This artwork was such a special present. You cannot buy this. It’s the nicest present that I’ve ever had, because it brings back so many memories. I will have it in my house in a very special place.

“It was so exciting [to be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame]. I spent three days in Canastota

and it was unbelievable. There were so many superstars: Floyd Mayweather, Laila Ali, James Toney, Roy Jones. It was such an honor that I couldn’t believe it. It was like a dream. When they called to tell me I was being inducted, I was speechless, but now I know it’s reality. It will be in my heart for the rest of my life.

“It was a tough road to get people’s respect [when it comes to women’s boxing]. But the best argument for my success was the amount of people who watched my fights. More people watched my fights [in Germany] than some men’s fights, and it was around that time that we saw change in

Halmich poses alongside painting of German great Max Schmeling, which was used for the October 1936 cover of *The Ring*.

women’s boxing. It’s a new time now, a new era, and we see pioneers like Claressa Shields, Savannah Marshall, Katie Taylor and Amanda Serrano. I did it in the beginning and they do it now. It’s still a hard time, but they do it in a very good way.” **RING**

Tom Gray is managing editor for Ring Magazine. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing.

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