

Check this new Edinburgh-based game out

Visiting some of Edinburgh's most famous attractions without leaving the comfort of your own home just became easier – while playing a game of chess.

Friends Michael O'Donnell and Alex Duff have designed an exclusive chess set, with all of the pieces representing different capital buildings and locations.

The chess set will go on sale at the Scottish Design Exchange's new outlet at The Tron Kirk on the Royal Mile when it opens next week.

Following the high demand for their high-end Glasgow product, the design graduates are now set to replicate their success with an Edinburgh version.

Each piece was designed by the pair using a CAD software programme and produced using a 3D printer. They are fashioned from a sustainable eco resin made mainly from soya beans to ensure that they can be disposed of in an environmentally friendly way.

The chums, who set up a company called 3D Scotland, launched their first version of the game dedicated to their home city, which became a massive hit when it went on sale at SDX stores in Glasgow. The social enterprise provides a high street presence for hundreds of independent artists and craftspeople.



Michael, 24, said: “Alex and I became best friends at university and, because we were both studying design, we thought we could make a bit of extra money by designing a product for sale.

“We both love Scotland and we felt it would be nice if we did something that represents our home country. Global cities like Paris and London always seem to get attention in the world of design and culture while Edinburgh and Glasgow tend to get overlooked.

“We felt we’d like to pay tribute to those cities and to show

the world what fantastic places they are to live in.

“We were astonished by the success of the product. As well as selling it throughout Scotland we have taken orders from across the world, mainly from expats who want to have something stylish and decorative to remind them of home.”

The friends soon realised there was a market for different versions, representing cities and their next stop was Edinburgh.

Alex, 25, said: “Of course we knew about the city’s most famous buildings, but we took advice from friends and colleagues from Edinburgh on what landmarks should be represented by what pieces.

“So, the kings are represented by the Balmoral Hotel, the queens by the Scott Monument, the bishops by the Dugald Stewart Monument, the rooks by Edinburgh Castle and the knights by the statue of Greyfriar’s Bobby on George IV Bridge.

“We didn’t include the Scottish Parliament because picking a building to be a chess piece is a tricky process.

“We felt for any landmark to be included, it had to meet three different criteria – it had to be iconic, to be distinct enough in shape that you would recognise it at a glance, and we had to be able to manufacture it, using our technology.

“Sadly, the parliament building faltered because we felt it might not have been instantly recognisable.”



Michael said: “We talked to loads of people from Edinburgh and we considered many buildings. We considered the Usher Hall for the pawns, but in prototyping it as a piece, it didn’t come out as we’d hoped.

“We also considered Dynamic Earth, but we decided it wasn’t an ‘iconic’ enough structure. Given Edinburgh’s vast history and its many famous buildings, we were spoiled for choice.”

He added: “The pawns are represented by Murrayfield stadium. We considered the football stadiums, but decided we’d remain neutral rather than risking offending either of the two clubs.

“We also thought it fitting that the sets should go on sale first at the Tron Kirk, another great Edinburgh landmark.”

The sets, delivered in a specially designed presentation box and accompanied by a brochure explaining the background to their manufacture, retail at £225. Individual pieces are also sold in bespoke gift boxes. They also have their ‘mini’ sets coming out soon which is a shrunken down version of the set

retailing at £79.99.

The sets are produced in black and white and bespoke colour versions can be produced to order.

The friends are now working hard to fulfil orders. Each set takes around 36 hours to complete and so they are looking to speed up the process by investing in new premises and equipment.

Michael said: "A lot of detail goes into producing each of the pieces to make sure that they are authentic reproductions rather than crude copies.

"We photograph each of the landmarks and study their detail before starting the process of creating a graphic image of them, ready for 3D printing which is done to within five microns.

"Our goal was to make a prestige product that is enduring and stand the test of time. We finish and polish each piece individually to ensure that they look clean and elegant. Each set comes with detailed instructions so that the owners know how to care for them properly. If they follow the instructions, there is no reason why the sets should not last a lifetime."



