PARIS 1924
Sport, Art and the Body

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Exhibition introduction

Paris 1924
Sport, Art and the Body

This year, the Olympics return to Paris for the first time in a century. The 1924 Olympics were the earliest truly international Games and took place at a crucial moment in the histories of sport and art. Paris was establishing itself as the modern city, crucible for art, jazz and fashion.

The founder of the modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937), was born in Paris. He was inspired by ancient Greece, where the Games began, and by sporting practices emerging in Britain and the United States. His admiration of ancient Greek ideals competed with radically new ways of representing the body, with the realities of World War I casualties and with innovations in science and technology. Newspapers and magazines, photography, radio and
Exhibition introduction

cinema broadcast the Paris Games to unprecedented audiences, blurring the boundaries between documentary and artistic styles, and making sport more commercial.

This commercialisation had a profound effect on how sport was - and still is - seen. The bodies it celebrated challenged ideas of beauty, gender and race, and impacted on painting and sculpture. This exhibition highlights how sport is culture.
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Acknowledgements

Curators
Professor Caroline Vout, University of Cambridge
Professor Christopher Young, University of Cambridge

Exhibitions Research Assistant
Dr Rebecca Virág

Exhibitions Project Manager
Sophia Patel

Interpretation
Nadine Langford

Collections
Natasha Lawson, lead Collections Management team

Conservation
Susanna Pancaldo, lead Conservation team
Acknowledgements

Registrar
Elena Saggers

Internal Projects Manager
Andrew Bowker

Press
Emma Shaw
Sam Talbot PR

Marketing
Joanna Johnson
Tracy Hall

Digital
Natalie Duff

Exhibition and Graphic Design
Nissen Richards Studio

Exhibition Fabrication
MER Services Ltd
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Graphics Production
Omni Colour

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DHA Designs

Audiovisual Installation
ADi Audiovisual Ltd

Marketing Creative
Kellenberger-White
Scenes from *The Olympic Games in Paris 1924*, official film

1924
Directed by Jean de Rovéra (1898-1939)

De Rovéra’s documentary of the Paris Olympics falls between newsreel and feature film. Jumping from one clip to another, it struggles for coherence. But it remains a very human study in flesh-and-blood bodies, their victory and collapse. From the pomp of the opening ceremony to the excitement of individual events, it conveys as much action as is possible from a fixed camera.

© 2010, Comité International Olympique (CIO)
Running time: 2 mins 25 secs

Opening Ceremony and parade of athletes: France and Great Britain enter the stadium; Freestyle wrestling; 100m final (Harold Abrahams, fourth from right at the start line); Uruguay vs Switzerland football final (Uruguay in white shirts); Cross Country; 5000m final (Paavo Nurmi, near right at the start line)
About 1880

Domenico Brucciani and Co., London (1841-1900s); after unrecorded Roman maker (British Museum, London, 117-138 CE, marble); after Polykleitos (bronze, now lost, about 440 BCE)

This muscular athlete ties a winner’s ribbon around his forehead. His is a body originally attributed to Polykleitos, one of ancient Greece’s most influential artists. Polykleitos was renowned for rendering the human body as beautiful, balanced, symmetrical, ideal. For Coubertin too, there could be no beauty ‘without poise and proportion’. As the statue avoids our gaze, it asks for admiration.

Plaster, metal, paint
Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, 185
Object label

Plaster cast of *The Wrestlers*

About 1800

Cast by unrecorded maker; after unrecorded Roman maker (The Uffizi, Florence, 100-1 BCE or later, marble); after unrecorded Greek maker (bronze, now lost, 300-200 BCE)

This is a cast of a group rediscovered in Rome in 1583. Based on a Greek sculpture, it depicts ‘pankratian’ – a mix of wrestling and boxing central to the ancient Olympics.

Ancient Greek athletes competed naked. They were paragons of virtue and objects of desire – art and life enhanced each other. Coubertin described athletes as ‘living sculpture’.

Plaster, metal, paint, possibly wood
Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, 390
Staging the Olympics

The eighth modern Olympics officially opened in Paris on Saturday 5 July 1924. The main stadium was an expensive train ride from the centre in a smoky industrial suburb. Surviving black and white footage is deceptive. The parade of over 3000 uniformed athletes, with their national flags, was as colourful as it was choreographed, making an artwork of the ceremony.

Unlike in the ancient Olympics, women paraded with the men. This was their only appearance in the stadium: they competed at other venues in a limited number of sports - tennis, fencing, swimming and diving.

As the Prince of Wales underlined two days later, each athlete was ‘a sportsman in the truest sense of the word’. Official stamps
and posters juggled modernism and tradition to reinforce this manly message. But being man enough had its limits: the Americans requested hot showers in every room of what was the first Olympic village in history.
Winning, ancient and modern

Both of these vessels were awarded to victorious athletes – competing thousands of years apart.

The larger held olive oil given as a prize at the athletic competitions of the ancient Athenian festival of the Panathenaia. The smaller one went to Alphonse Gemuseus, winner of a gold in equestrian at the 1924 Olympics. It is one of four types of souvenir vase given by the city of Paris to that year’s gold medallists and is in debt to ancient Greek models. Nude athletes compete in roundels that echo ancient cameos.
Panathenaic prize amphora (left)

336 BCE or earlier

Unrecorded maker

Black-figure pottery
British Museum, London, purchased from Alessandro Castellani, 1873, 1873,0820.371
Paris 1924 Olympic Games
gold-medal winner’s vase (right)

1924

Designed by Émile Louis Bracquemond (1889-1970) and made by Octave Denis Victor Guillonnet (1872-1967) for Sèvres Porcelain Factory

_Pâte-sur-pâte_ porcelain, paint, gold leaf
Markus Osterwalder, Switzerland, Olympic historian and collector
Herakles wrestling with Antaios

1–200 CE

Unrecorded Roman maker

This ancient bronze dramatises an episode from Greek mythology. The bearded hero, Herakles, wrestles Antaios, who is invincible as long as his feet remain in contact with his mother, the goddess Earth. Herakles' fabled feats of strength made him the ultimate athlete. He was credited with founding the Olympic Games and worshipped in Greek gymnasia.

Copper alloy

The influence of Greek pottery

The postcard belongs to a folder of eight issued for the 1924 Olympics. With one exception, the cards depict male athletes, all of them only partially clothed in homage to the Greeks.

The red and black colours reference ancient pottery. This Athenian red-figure drinking cup shows that there was no single athletic ideal, even among Greek men. The sprinter’s body (far left) is different from the boxer’s body, which is different again from that of the javelin or discus thrower.
Kylix (cup)

About 510 BCE

Painted by Pheidippos (active 525 BCE–510 BCE)

Red-figure pottery
British Museum, London, purchased from Campanari, 1846, 1846,0512.2
Postcard, *Jump, Olympic Games Paris 1924*

1924

E. Blanche (active 1914-20s), printed by Henri François, Paris (active 1920s)

Printing in red and black ink on tan-coloured paper
Collections of the Musée national du Sport, Nice, MNS 2006.6.24
De Rovéra’s short film was made to accompany his documentary of the 1924 Games. It combines set pieces and slow-motion footage to present its audiences with a romantic image of ancient athletic prowess.

Taking its inspiration from ancient Greek sculpture, it lingers over male bodies, suspended in sporting action and at rest. Unlike the sculptures, they wear underpants to preserve their modesty.
Object label

Gentleman travellers

Members of the 1924 British Olympic team, officials and competitors, men and women, were given a booklet on how to be a ‘sportsman’. It educated them in winning, losing, dressing and travel - vouchers were issued for economy fares via Dieppe, returning within 30 days of arrival.

Stamps in coach Sam Mussabini’s passport reveal that he reached Paris on 5 July and left on 13 July, the day on which his protégé, Harold Abrahams, won his second Olympic medal, in the relay.
'A Sportsman' from *The Eighth Olympiad Paris 1924*, booklet

1924

The British Olympic Association

Printing on paper
Churchill Archives Centre, Papers of Sir Arthur Marshall, MSHL Acc 2082
UK Passport of Scipio Africanus ('Sam') Mussabini (1867–1927)

1922-31

Printed paper, covered boards, pen and ink, ink stamps, paper stamps, black and white photograph
Lent by the Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, MS935/2
Cutting from the *Daily Sketch*, with a photograph of British athletes departing for the Paris Olympics

Thursday 3 July 1924

Reproduction
Churchill Archives Centre, Papers of Sir Arthur Marshall
Ticket to ride

Tickets for the main stadium of the Paris 1924 Olympics have more to them than those from the winter Games earlier that year: practical information about the stand, gate, block and row is balanced by the Olympic rings and by representations of the stadium with the gate highlighted in colour.

That summer’s postcards replaced site-specific detail with ancient sculpture and Parisian landmarks. The Eiffel Tower, Les Invalides and Opéra give the false impression that all Olympic events took place in the city centre.
Used admission ticket to the Olympic stadium at Colombes, Paris

1924

Unrecorded maker
Colour printing on orange-coloured paper
Admission ticket to the winter Olympics in Chamonix

1924

Unrecorded maker
Printing in black ink on green-coloured paper
Both, Markus Osterwalder, Switzerland, Olympic historian and collector
Paris 1924 Olympic Games, souvenir postcard representing the ancient *Discus Thrower* statue (Bleuet, Paris postcard series, no. 412)

4 May 1924
Paris 1924 Olympic Games, souvenir postcard representing the ancient Discus Thrower statue by the Seine (Nox postcard series, no. 592)

4 May 1924

Unrecorded photographers

Reproduced photographs © 1924, Comité International Olympique (CIO), PHO10004175; PHO10004176
Paris 1924 Olympic Games, souvenir postcard representing five views of the Games (E.R. Paris postcard series, no. 784)
Paris 1924 Olympic Games, souvenir postcard representing five views of the Games

4 May 1924

Unrecorded photographers

Reproduced photographs
© 1924, Comité International Olympique (CIO), PHO10025033; PHO100004174
Village life

Many athletes at the 1924 Games were housed, three per room, in military-camp-like huts close to the main stadium in northwest Paris. This Olympic Village had a post office, laundry, and hairdresser, and served its residents three meals a day, with bread and jam or ham and eggs for breakfast.

The British team stayed in central hotels; the US housed only its male swimmers in the Village, preferring a château as its main base and complaining about the food in both venues.
Paris 1924 Olympic Games, Olympic Village, the entrance (A.N. Paris postcard series, no. 1)

1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph © 1924, Comité International Olympique (CIO), PHO11106719
Paris 1924 Olympic Games, Olympic Village, a shopping street (A.N. Paris postcard series, no. 2)

4 May 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph © 1924, Comité International Olympique (CIO), PHO10017824
The main stadium

An architectural competition was launched to design a world-class stadium for the 1924 Olympics that could accommodate 100,000 spectators, with the winning entries exhibited publicly.

There was not the funding to build it, and the track and field events and Opening Ceremony wound up instead in a smaller, ultra-modern venue in the ‘ugly’ manufacturing district of Colombes.

With the exception of the football tournament, ticket sales were low. Tickets were promoted and priced to encourage middle-class car-owners and foreign visitors rather than working-class spectators.
Olympic Stadium of Colombes, Official Stand and Finish Line

4 May 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph © 1924, Comité International Olympique (CIO), PHO10004298
Paris 1924 Olympic Games, Opening Ceremony, parade of athletes, Great-Britain (GBR) (centre)

5 July 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph © 1924, Comité International Olympique (CIO), PHO11072465
Paris 1924 Olympic Games, Opening Ceremony, parade of athletes, the delegation in the middle of the Olympic stadium (right)

5 July 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph © 1924, Comité International Olympique (CIO), PHO11072460
The Olympic pool

While the 1924 Olympic tennis was played on courts adjacent to the main stadium, the swimming, diving and water polo took place in a new brick-built venue 12 miles away, in the east of the city.

Getting there through the centre of Paris was challenging but the rewards were considerable: it boasted the first 50-metre Olympic pool, open to the elements in an art-deco interior. The sun shone, tickets sold and records fell, making the swimming events among the most successful.
Olympic Games of 1924, High Diving (A.N. Paris postcard series, no. 442)

4 May 1924

Unrecorded photographer
Reproduced black and white photograph
© 1924, Comité International Olympique (CIO), PHO100005740
Paris 1924 Olympic Games, men’s water polo, general view at the Tourelles Olympic swimming pool

4 May 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph © 1924, Comité International Olympique (CIO) / United Archives, PHO10483875
The official posters

The programme shows one of two official poster designs for the 1924 Paris Olympics. Orsi’s javelin thrower is a modern man. The globe signifies the universalism of a Games set against Paris’s skyline.

The poster by Droit is more nostalgic. With bare chests and carefully placed palm-branches, its athletes have ancient ancestry. The combination of French flag and Olympic salute echoes the pose made famous by Eugène Delacroix’s 1830 painting, Liberty Leading the People.

10,000 copies of each poster were printed; over half were shipped overseas.
Programme for the Paris 1924 Olympic Games (left)

1924

Cover illustration by Italo Orsi (1889-1947), published by Comité Olympique Français

Colour printing on paper
On loan from Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, WTM:2006/62
Poster for the Paris 1924 Olympic Games (right)

1924

Jean Droit (1884-1961), printed by Hachard & Co., Paris

Colour lithography on paper
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, purchased with the support of the American Friends of the V&A in honour of Diana Quasha, E.329-2006
France hosted the 1924 Winter Olympics as well as the Summer Games. This advertising poster for the Paris-Lyon-Méditerranée rail company uses the Olympic bobsleigh event to sell its train service to the Alps.

The eagle and viaduct arches do more than suggest speed. They work with the caption to conjure not democratic Greece but imperial Rome, power over nature, and winning over taking part.

Colour lithography on paper
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, given by Auguste Matisse, E.23-1926
Poster, *Eighth Olympiad, International Exhibition of Sport, Magic-City, May–June 1924* (right)

About 1924

Marcel Norsac (active 1920s–40s), printed by Duval and Bedos, Paris

This poster advertises the international exhibition of sport held at Paris’s Magic-City from 1 May to 31 July 1924 - everything from gliders and bicycles to films and dances.

The venue, on the Left Bank of the Seine, was known for its masked balls, popular with Paris’s gay community. The poster’s flamboyant figure, drapery flying, nods to ancient and contemporary culture.
Object label

Colour lithography on paper
Collections of the Musée national du Sport, Nice, MNS 1989.134.1
H.L. Roowy’s postcard images of 1924 turn their backs on the pale and timeless nudity of Greek and Roman art to show athletes in the latest sports gear. In the water or the stadium or at the net, they burst with colour and testosterone.
Paris 1924 Olympic Games commemorative postage stamps

1924

Designed by Edmond Henri Becker (1871-1971) and engraved by Georges Daussy (1862-1951) and Gaston Parison (1889-1959)

153 million stamps were issued in celebration of the 1924 Paris Games with designs chosen by the Olympic Committee. Like the 5-centimes ‘Sower’ stamp on the envelope with them, the figures and their laurel wreaths were inspired by Greek and Roman art.

Engraving and letterpress, glued to a paper envelope with Paris postmarks dated 10 August 1924

Markus Osterwalder, Switzerland, Olympic historian and collector
Whose Sport?

The Paris Olympics attracted the brightest stars and made new ones. Formal portraits, popular images, action shots, medals and memorabilia relived experiences and created heroes.

Only amateurs could participate in the Olympics. At one end of the spectrum were college athletes: those from the University of Cambridge won more medals than most countries. At the other end of the spectrum, sports such as swimming encouraged wider participation. Lucy Morton, from a Blackpool working-class family, won gold in the 200m breaststroke.

William DeHart Hubbard became the first African American to win an individual gold, and newcomers, Uruguay, triumphed in football with a Black player, José Andrade, in the spotlight.
Paris was an unequal city as intrigued by its visitors as they were by its multiculturalism. Its caricaturists had a field day. But they devoted their greatest energies to competitors, like Hubbard and Andrade, whose bodies challenged the whiteness of Coubertin’s Greek statues.

This section of the exhibition includes objects that contain outdated language and racialised caricatures.
The flying Scotsman

Sprinter and rugby player Eric Liddell was born in China and educated at London’s School for the Sons of Missionaries and at Edinburgh University, where he studied science. Although selected to run against Abrahams in the Olympic 100m, he refused to compete because the heats were on a Sunday.

Liddell would go on to win bronze in the 200m and an unexpected, extraordinary gold in the 400m. On his return to Edinburgh, he was given a hero’s welcome and crowned in laurel.
Studio portrait of Eric Liddell (1902-1945) wearing the 1924 Olympic team kit of Great Britain

July 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Black and white photograph
Lent by the Liddell Family
Scottish athlete Eric Liddell is paraded by fellow students around Edinburgh University after returning victorious from competition at the 1924 Summer Olympics

18 July 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph
Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis via Getty Images
Cambridge’s 100m champion

Sprinter and long jumper Harold Abrahams was from a Jewish family and had his first taste of international competition when a law student at Gonville and Caius College here in Cambridge. The May Ball photograph shows him in the organiser’s sash, fourth row, sixth from right.

The year after graduation he perfected his training schedule and on 7 July 1924 won the 100m, equalling the Olympic record in the second round, the semi-final and the final. He secured a second medal in the relay.
Harold Abrahams (1899–1978)

Taken in the 1930s, modern print 2002

Photograph by Elliott & Fry

Black and white photograph. Half-plate glass copy negative made 1948; original negative 1930s Lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London, x21178MP
Caius College Ball, May Term 1921

1921

Photograph by Stearn & Sons, Cambridge

Black and white photograph mounted on board, pen and ink, metallic paint and coloured ink on applied paper
By permission of the Master and Fellows of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, PH.B.15.3
Caius College, Athletes 1922, Winners of Inter Collegiate Cup

June 1922

Photograph by Stearn & Sons, Cambridge

Black and white photograph mounted on board, pen and ink, metallic paint and coloured ink on applied paper

By permission of the Master and Fellows of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, PH.S.7.1922
Harold Abrahams wins the 100-yard dash at the AAA Championships at Stamford Bridge

June 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Black and white photograph
By permission of the Master and Fellows of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, PH: 1/50
Harold Abrahams interviewed by Rex Alston (1901-1994)

Broadcast 20 September 1963

Extract from a programme in the series People Today

-PRE: Band 1
BBC Archives
Running time: 5 mins 38 secs
Lowe’s highs

Douglas Lowe was not the favourite to take gold in the 1924 800m. His Cambridge teammate, Hyla (Henry) Stallard might have taken it from him, had he not been injured.

Lowe was admitted to Pembroke College in 1921 to study French and German. He excelled in football and cricket as well as running and later had a law career. In 1928 he would successfully defend his Olympic title. Less than 3 months later satirical magazine *Punch* imagines him discharged from athletics, his victor’s laurel-wreath resting on his barrister’s wig.
Douglas Lowe’s application for admission to Pembroke College

14 April 1921

Printing and pen and ink on paper
By permission of the Master and Fellows of Pembroke College, Cambridge (Application for Admissions, vol. 6)
Pembroke College Athletics Team
(Douglas Lowe (1902–1981), on a chair in the front row, third from left)

1923

Photograph by Stearn & Sons, Cambridge

Black and white photograph mounted on board, graphite
By permission of the Master and Fellows of Pembroke College, Cambridge, GBR/1058/COL/9/1/2/1/1923
Paris 1924 Olympic Games, Athletics, 800m Men. Douglas Lowe (GBR) 1st and Paul Martin (SUI) 2nd, shake hands following the 800m final.

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph © 1924, Comité International Olympique (CIO), PHO10004390
Pembroke College Football Team
(Douglas Lowe, front row, centre)

1923–24

Photograph by Stearn & Sons, Cambridge

Black and white photograph mounted on board, graphite
By permission of the Master and Fellows of Pembroke College, Cambridge, GBR/1058/COL/9/1/8/3/1923
Mr Douglas Lowe, Mr Punch’s Personalities – LXXIX, from Punch, or the London Charivari

10 October 1928

Illustrated by Bernard Partridge (1861-1945), published and printed by Bradbury & Evans
Printed verse and reproduction of an original drawing, loose sheet
Private collection
The ‘Flying Finn’

In this sculpture by German artist Renée Sintenis, Finnish runner Paavo Nurmi streaks past the viewer. The ‘Flying Finn’ was the stand-out athlete of the 1924 Games, making history by winning five golds - in the 1500m, 5000m, the 3000m team event and the individual and team cross country.

Also called the ‘Phantom Finn’, Nurmi was, according to one French newspaper, ‘serious, closed, concentrated, pessimistic, fanatical’ - ‘cold’. His relentless training regime made him appear to ‘live outside humanity’. Sintenis captures the determination.
The Athlete (Nurmi)

1926

Renée Sintenis (1888-1965)

Bronze
On loan from Leicester Museums and Galleries,
Y.F1.2014.0.0
Paavo Nurmi (1897-1973) pictured during his training regime

1925

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph
Sports Museum of Finland
The gold medal in the 1924 coxless fours was won for Great Britain by a boat from Trinity College, Cambridge. The crew of Third Trinity - Charles Eley, James Macnabb, Robert Morrison and Terence Sanders - had rowed together since their schooling at Eton.

They arrived in Paris to find the water ‘stickier than the Cam’ but triumphed by 1½ lengths in 7 minutes. The oar records this, the crews they beat and the official Olympic emblem (the ship from the City of Paris’s coat of arms).
Metcalfes’s Boat-Race Card

June 1924

Printed/published by Metcalfe and Co. Limited, Cambridge

Printing on blue-coloured paper
By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge, Rec. 34.9

About 1924

Unrecorded maker

Wood, paint, gold leaf
The Macnab Memorial Trust
James Macnabb, Charles Eley, Robert Morrison and Terence Sanders seated with trophies won as a coxless four crew for Third Trinity, Cambridge and Eton Vikings at Royal Henley Regatta, 1922, from Robert Erskine Morrison’s *Album of Rowing Photographs, both College and Boat Race Crews, 1921-1979*

About 1922

Unrecorded photographer
Object label

Black and white photograph
Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library, GBR/0265/UA/OCBR.P3
Handwritten account of Third Trinity coxless four crew at the Paris 1924 Olympic Games, *Third Trinity Boat Club Minutes*

July 1924

Unrecorded author (probably Robert Erskine Morrison)

Pen and ink on paper
By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge, Rec. 31.2
Transatlantic rivalries

Oxford and Cambridge athletes regularly competed against their Yale and Harvard University counterparts. The 1927 menu (right) has Burghley handing the baton to his teammate; one 1929 menu shows Lowe winning the 880-yards at Harvard a year after his success in Paris.

A Yale crew won the eights in the Paris Olympic rowing. On finals day, their captain, from one of America’s richest families, graced the cover of *Time* magazine. The quote (‘Why do you stand there amazed?’) is from the ancient Greek epic poem the *Iliad*. 
*Time* magazine, vol. 4, no. 1, 7 July 1924, with cover photograph of ‘Captain Rockefeller’, James Stillman Rockefeller (1902–2004)

Time Inc.

Printing on paper

Courtesy of Thomas E Weil
Paris 1924 Olympic Games, Rowing, eight with coxswain (8+) Men – The team of the United States of America (USA) 1st (A.N. Paris postcard series, no. 446)

1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph © 1924, Comité International Olympique (CIO), PHO11106794
Four menus for Oxford and Cambridge and Harvard and Yale Universities athletics team dinners

9 July 1927; 9 July 1929; 13 July 1929

Reproductions
Achilles Club
Tennis divas

These three images offer different takes on the femininity of the woman tennis player. Kitty McKane (later Godfree) was one of the best, winning five Olympic medals, two of them (a bronze and silver) in 1924. She was All England Badminton Champion in the same year.

The 1924 Olympic gold went to US player Helen Wills, whom McKane had just beaten in the Wimbledon final. Absent from Paris, due to injury, was French phenomenon and world number one Suzanne Lenglen.
Portrait of Kitty Godfree (1896–1992)

1924

Sydney W. White (1870-1945)

Oil paint on canvas
On loan from Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, A2073
Helen Wills Moody (1905–1998)

1933

Photograph by Dorothy Wilding

Bromide print
Lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London.
Given by the photographer’s sister, Susan Morton, 1976, x21384
French tennis champion Suzanne Lenglen (1899–1938) high-kicking during a doubles match at the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championships

1 June 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph Kirby/Topical Press/Getty Images
If at first you don’t succeed

Burghley’s 1924 Olympic dream was short-lived – he fell in the heats of the 110m hurdles. He was already an engineering undergraduate at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and would win gold in the 400m hurdles in 1928. He combined sport with a career in politics, eventually chairing the 1948 Olympic Organising Committee.

The aristocratic Burghley in his Cambridge Blue’s blazer contrasts with the 1936 cigarette card’s toothy grin. Its reverse reads, ‘one of the most popular athletes ever to wear England’s colours’.

1926

Sir Oswald Joseph Hornby Birley (1880–1952)

Oil paint on canvas
The Burghley House Collection, PIC 179
Object label

David George Brownlow
Cecil, 6th Marquess of Exeter
(Lord Burghley)

Taken on 24 September 1924, modern print 2002

Photograph by Bassano Ltd

Black and white photograph. Whole-plate glass negative 24 September 1924
Lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London, x122918MP
David, Lord Burghley at the University of Pennsylvania’s Penn Relays Carnival

About 1926

Unrecorded photographer

Black and white photograph
The Burghley House Collection
Lord Burghley, cigarette card from the ‘Champions’ set

1936

Gallaher Ltd, tobacco company

Colour relief halftone print on paper
Lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London, D48955
It’s not the winning but the taking part...

Cambridge University athletes won medals in 11 events in Paris in 1924. But winning was not everything. Every participating athlete and official received a medal with Paris on one side and a Victory figure crowning athletes on the other. Jesus College’s Arthur Marshall proudly had his name inscribed on his. He was reserve for the 4 x 400m relay and went on to build Cambridge airport.

The badge is from the blazer he received as member of the British team.
Participation medal, Paris 1924 Olympic Games, awarded to Sir Arthur Marshall (1903–2007)

1924

Marshall of Cambridge
Participation medal, Paris 1924 Olympic Games

1924


Designed by Raoul Bénard (1881-1961) for Monnaie de Paris

Bronze
British team blazer pocket for the Paris 1924 Olympic Games, worn by Sir Arthur Marshall

1924

Unrecorded maker

Embroidered textile, coloured silk

Marshall of Cambridge
Blackpool’s heroine

Lucy Morton’s father had been a groom in domestic service and then attendant to the Mayor of Blackpool. It was at the local club there that Lucy learned to swim. She nearly did not make the breaststroke final: her taxi crashed in Paris, causing her to lose some of her teeth.

The dedication on the British Team’s photograph sums up her achievement: ‘To our only Victor’. Morton was Britain’s only swimming gold medallist, leaving organisers scrambling to find a British flag.
Three FINA (Fédération Internationale de Natation, now known as World Aquatics) world record badges (lower left)

1916 and 1920

Unrecorded maker

Embroidered textile
Showtown, Blackpool, BC.2023.1.19; BC.2023.1.20; BC.2023.1.21
The British swimming team posing in front of the Musée du Louvre during the 1924 Olympic Games (Morton second row, far left)

Photograph of the Opening Ceremony of the 1924 Olympic Games showing French athlete Géo André (1889–1943) reciting the Olympic Oath

Unrecorded photographers

Black and white photographs in album Showtown, Blackpool, BC.2023.1.24
Lucy Morton (1898–1980) competing in the women’s 200m breaststroke at the 1924 Olympic Games (upper left)

1924

Black and white photograph
Postcard with studio portrait of a young Lucy Morton (centre left)

About 1912

Black and white photograph on paper

Unrecorded photographers

Showtown, Blackpool, BC.2023.1.22; BC.2023.1.48
Lucy Morton wearing a FINA world record badge

About 1916

Photograph by Laverne Studios Ltd, Blackpool
Lucy Morton wearing her 1924 Olympic Games swimming costume, cap and robe

1924

Photograph by John Capstack, Blackpool

Both black and white photographs Showtown, Blackpool, BC.2023.1.41; BC.2023.1.2
To the victor, the spoils

Although there were no medal ceremonies in 1924, winners still received a medal and certificate. André Rivaud was one of six young French artists shortlisted to design these medals. On one side, a nude athlete reaches for the hand of his defeated opponent. On the other, summer and winter sporting equipment combines with a harp, symbol of culture. Lucy Morton’s name is tooled around its edge.

Naudin’s certificate design is equally Greek in inspiration with a winged Victory between garlanded columns and allegorical figures.
Winner’s certificate, Paris 1924 Olympic Games, awarded to Lucy Morton (upper right)

1924

Designed by Bernard Naudin (1876-1946); unrecorded printer

Colour lithography on paper from an original drawing
Showtown, Blackpool, BC.2023.1.3
Gold winner’s medal, Paris 
1924 Olympic Games, won 
by Lucy Morton in the 200m 
women’s breaststroke 

1924

Designed by André Adolphe Rivaud (1892-1951) for 
Monnaie de Paris

Gilt silver
Showtown, Blackpool, BC.2023.1.1
Hubbard’s long jump

The postcard commemorates William DeHart Hubbard who represented the USA in Paris in the long and triple jump. Scouted by Michigan University, his pride at being selected is palpable in the letter to his mother. His victory in the long jump grants him his wish to be the first Black Olympic champion in an individual event. Silver was won by his teammate ‘Ned’ Gourdin, another African American. Hubbard later worked with Black communities, becoming race relations adviser for Cleveland’s Federal Housing Authority.
Letter written by William DeHart Hubbard (1903–1976) to his mother on board the SS America before sailing to Paris with the US Olympic team

16 June 1924

Pen and ink on paper with printed letterhead
On loan from Cincinnati Museum Center, MSS 1067
Postcard, *Hubbard, Olympic Champion of the long jump* (A.N. Paris series, no. 387)

1924

Unrecorded photographer

Gelatin silver print on paper

Collections of the Musée national du Sport, Nice, MNS IMG.1998.0040.0718
1924 University of Michigan Track Team

Rentschler’s Studio, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Reproduced black and white halftone print
University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library
America’s golden boy

USA’s Johnny Weissmuller poses for a painting that cements his status as a god. In 1924, he won gold medals in the 100m and 400m freestyle swimming, and the 4 x 200m freestyle relay, and bronze in the water polo. In 1928, he added two more Olympic golds. His family had moved to North America in 1905 from a village that, by 1924, was part of Romania.

The caricatures are by a Jewish Hungarian artist who emigrated to the US in 1938.

About 1931

Photograph by Pach Brothers

Reproduced gelatin silver print
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, S/NPG.93.388.39
Weissmuller, caricature of Johnny Weissmuller

About 1924

Emery Kelèn (1896-1964)

Graphite on paper

Collections of the Musée national du Sport, Nice, MNS 2005.136.8
Johnny Weissmuller with Arne Borg (Sweden) (1901–1987) and Andrew Murray ‘Boy’ Charlton (Australia) (1907–1975) (upper right)

Caricature made about 1924; photographed about 1950

By Emery Kelèn (1896-1964); unrecorded photographer

Gelatin silver print of an original drawing
Collections of the Musée national du Sport, Nice, MNS 2005.136.7.1
John Weissmuller (U.S.A)

Caricature made about 1924; photographed about 1950

By Emery Kelèn (1896-1964); unrecorded photographer

Gelatin silver print of an original drawing
Collections of the Musée national du Sport, Nice, MNS 2005.136.7.5
The making of modern football

Uruguay was the first South American team to play in Europe, touring Spain directly before the 1924 Olympics. Many spectators had no idea where Uruguay was, but the team’s dribbling skills were ahead of their time and their artistry on the pitch part of the country’s claim to be a modern nation.

The world took notice. When not winning en route to the gold medal, they were meeting the press and managing their mythology. They returned home to an extraordinary welcome.

About 1924

By Stefan Strobl (active 1920s)

Lithography with hand-colouring, in bound volume Olympic Museum Collections, Lausanne, C-J01-1924/001
Action in the quarter-final match between France and Uruguay, with Uruguay on the attack, at the 1924 summer Olympics in the Stade Olympique in Colombes near Paris (upper left)

1 June 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph
Bob Thomas/Popperfoto/Getty Images
Footballers from the Uruguay football team pose as they prepare a barbeque at the team's Argenteuil base during competition in the football tournament at the 1924 summer Olympics in Paris

Probably May 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph
Bob Thomas/Popperfoto/Getty Images
Olympic Games of 1924 – Football, the Team from Uruguay

1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph © 1924, Comité International Olympique (CIO), PHO10005185
Reception of the victorious Uruguayan football team at the Plaza de Cagancha in Montevideo following their return from the Paris Olympics (centre left)

18 July 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced gelatin silver print
Centro de Fotografía de Montevideo
The ‘Black Marvel’

Uruguayan midfielder José Andrade dominated play in both halves of the pitch. The press called him the ‘Black Marvel’. He had the ‘grace of a tap-dancer and the fairness of a true sportsman’.

Graphic artist, Bonniot de Fleurac, who was himself a runner and bronze medallist in the 1908 Olympics, captures Andrade in action. A second artist depicts the footballer with five legs, emphasising his coordination and skill but also making him appear insect-like, exacerbating this image’s already racist stereotyping.
Andrade, Uruguayan Player, Olympiad 1924

Probably May 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph
Paul Popper/Popperfoto/Getty Images
Andrade (lower right)

1924

Louis Bonniot de Fleurac (1876–1965)

Graphite and black crayon on paper
Collections of the Musée national du Sport, Nice, MNS D.I.108
The Black Marvel, caricature of José Leandro Andrade (1901-1957)

1924

Unidentified artist, signed with initials, Ad.v.B

Reproduced photograph of an original drawing
Bob Thomas/Popperfoto/Getty Images
Pair of football boots worn by José Leandro Andrade (1901–1957) in the match between Uruguay and Argentina in the final of the first FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) World Cup competition in 1930

About 1930

Unrecorded maker
Similar to the pair he wore in Paris, these boots helped Andrade secure immortality six years later. 1930 saw him and his teammates defeat Argentina in the first men’s World Cup Final, adding to the Olympic victories of 1924 and 1928. Not even Pelé and Brazil won three global titles in a row.

Leather, textile, iron

Collections of the Musée national du Sport, Nice, MNS 2007.7.53
The ‘Roaring Twenties’ were a fast-paced period of technological revolution. The Paris 1924 Olympics were the first to broadcast radio commentaries on events. Advances in training, clothing and equipment helped athletes break records. Beyond the Games, economic growth brought changes in lifestyle and fashion that encouraged everyone to be active.

Lifestyle changes could only do so much. The ideology and practice of eugenics was developing apace and underpinned by measuring the most successful sporting bodies. Eugenics opened up the more terrifying possibility of transforming and transcending human biology in a war-torn world still reeling from the lack of fitness of its pool of conscripts.
Artists too reimagined the relationship of man and machine. Already in 1909, poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti had chosen Parisian newspaper *Le Figaro* to publicise his ‘Futurist Manifesto’, which urged artists to ditch tradition and the legacy of ancient Greece for the dynamism of modern life.
Antique figures in profile

Antibes, summer 1923

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)

Picasso was keen on sport, especially boxing and bullfighting. Here he doodles on the front page of the newspaper Excelsior and its photograph of Henri Pélissier, winner of the 1923 Tour de France.

Picasso’s decision to turn Pélissier and his wife into ancient Greek figures highlights the ongoing dialogue between classical ideals and real sporting bodies.

Ink on paper, Excelsior, Monday, 23 July 1923
Musée national Picasso-Paris, given by Pablo Picasso, 1979, MP984
Poster, *General Association for the War Disabled*

1917

Designed by Justin Marie Georges Dorival (1879-1968) and Georges Capon (1890-1980), printed by Atelier Dorival, Paris

The General Association for the War Disabled provided ‘education’, ‘employment’ and ‘surgical care’ to those injured in World War I. The poster targets soldiers from urban and rural France. Both wear medals and one a prosthetic limb.

Today’s Paralympic movement started small, as a competition for veterans of World War II, but the 1924 Olympics already played out against a background of disability and rehabilitation.

Colour lithography on paper
IWM (Imperial War Museums), Art.IWM PST 11165
Physical perfection

Robert Tait McKenzie was Medical Director of Physical Training at McGill University in Canada. He sculpted figures with proportions derived from the finest athletes on campus and from measurements of students taken by Dudley Allen Sargent, his Harvard counterpart. Sargent advocated training with machines for ‘advancement of the race’.

In 1913 McKenzie’s sculptures were in Paris for a physical education exhibition, with de Coubertin and members of the French Eugenics Society on its Committee of Honour. McKenzie later worked with wounded veterans.
The Athlete (back left)

1903

Robert Tait McKenzie (1867-1938), cast at Roman Bronze Works, New York City

Bronze and marble
National Trust Collections, Anglesey Abbey (The Fairhaven Collection), Cambridgeshire, NT 515046
Plaster cast of *The Athlete*

1903

Robert Tait McKenzie (1867-1938)

Plaster

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, bought from the sculptor, 4 March 1905 and received from Paris, M.2-1905
Plaster cast of *Sprinter* (front left)

1902

Robert Tait McKenzie (1867-1938)

Plaster
The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, bought from the sculptor, 4 March 1905 and received from Paris, M.1-1905
Object label

Sprinter

1902

Robert Tait McKenzie (1867-1938), cast at Roman Bronze Works, New York City

Bronze
National Trust Collections, Anglesey Abbey (The Fairhaven Collection), Cambridgeshire, NT 515040
Poster, *Young people* ...  

1901–33

Unrecorded artist for Bardou, Savard & Co.

This poster, for a company supplying rope for physical education, advises young people not to confuse physical education with sport nor risk the latter without adequate training. Physical education, it claims, pertains to everyone, sickly and strong, girls and boys. It fortifies the body and ensures health.

Balding spectators in classical drapery watch youths exercising bare-chested in a stadium.

Colour lithography on paper  
Collections of the Musée national du Sport, Nice,  
MNS 15199 b
Dancer no. 5

1915/16

Gino Severini (1883-1966)

Severini’s painting translates the Futurist fervour for movement into Parisian language. In Paris, he hung out with Picasso in the nightclubs of Montmartre and found his inspiration in the physical exertion of its dancers, their can-can legs and swirling skirts. He later designed mosaics for Mussolini’s *Foro Italico* sports complex, built in a vain attempt to secure the 1940 Olympics for Italy.

Oil paint on canvas
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, Kearley Bequest, through The Art Fund, 1989, CHCPH 0594
The Gymnast

About 1922

George Grosz (1893–1959)

Man and his gym equipment merge in Grosz’s painting of a gymnast. Skittle-shaped, with pole-like limbs and a head as round as his dumbbell, this gymnast stares blankly at the viewer. At the root of ‘gymnastics’ is the ancient Greek word ‘gymnos’, ‘naked’. There is nothing naked about this athlete; instead he is enigmatic, and in being abstract is barely human.

Oil paint on canvas
Collection of the McNay Art Museum,
Gift of Robert L. B. Tobin, 1974.26
Unique Forms of Continuity in Space

Sculpted 1913, cast 1972

Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916)

Boccioni’s work lends flesh to Marinetti’s Futurist vision. Supposedly inspired by a footballer in action, this sculpture was first cast in bronze by Marinetti in 1931. It is a figure on the move, and leaves figurative form standing, fleeing convention to surge forward. Boccioni died young in 1916 on military exercise for the Italian army.

Bronze
Tate: Purchased 1972, T01589
The first Winter Olympics took place in the French Alps at Chamonix and featured bobsleigh. This 1920s sleigh is from Switzerland, which won the gold.

Compared to today’s aerodynamic sleighs, this is cumbersome and exposed. Men competed without crash helmets on a run that was deemed particularly dangerous: in training, a British four took a bend too fast and overturned, leaving decorated war veteran Frederick ‘Boy’ Browning badly injured. He survived to compete in the 1928 Olympics and to marry novelist Daphne du Maurier.
Four-man bobsleigh

1921-29

Unrecorded Swiss maker

Steel, wood
Markus Osterwalder, Switzerland, Olympic historian and collector
Footage of the bobsleigh event from *The Olympic Games held at Chamonix in 1924*, official film

1924

Directed by Jean de Rovéra (1898-1939)

© 2010, Comité International Olympique (CIO)
Running time: 1 min 6 secs
The juxtaposition of Greek temple and motorcar pits old against new in a book that dictates architectural theory. Its author, Le Corbusier, moved to Paris in 1917 and in 1925 presented plans for skyscrapers in Paris’s city centre. Too radical, these plans went unrealised. He later designed a gymnasium in support of Iraq’s failed bid to host the 1960 Olympics.
Edmond Dehorter (1877–1965) prepares to broadcast at the Colombes stadium from a tethered hot-air balloon

9 June 1924

Agence Rol photographic agency

1921 marked France’s first public radio programme. It mattered little that few owned radios. Paris’s streets, shops, and dancehalls echoed with music and commentary that transformed modern life.
The Olympics benefited from this sound revolution. Popularly known as ‘the unknown speaker’, Edmond DehSorter provided live commentary from a tethered balloon. Here he is about to commentate on the football final between Uruguay and Switzerland.

Reproduced glass-plate negative
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Rol 92780
Bolton-based Joseph William Foster and Sons blazed a trail with their spiked running shoes. Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell won their 1924 gold medals in them. The company later boasted that their shoes had been worn by ‘successful athletes at the Olympic games since 1908’ and named its building ‘Olympic Works’. Foster’s grandsons founded Reebok, named after the fast running, jumping antelope.

Leather, metal, textile
Reebok Brand Archive / © Reebok International Limited, RF-5233
Training for Athletes

1928

Harold M. Abrahams (1899-1978) and Dr Adolphe Abrahams (1883-1967)

After winning his gold medal, sprinter Harold Abrahams collaborated on this training manual with his brother, a sports scientist and consulting medical officer to the British Olympic Team. Dedicated to the Amateur Athletic Association and packed with advice for amateurs and champions on shoes, clothes, injuries, diet and drinking, it admits to the occasional ½ bottle of champagne for university rowers!

Published by George Bell and Sons Ltd: London
Printing on paper, covered boards (original book jacket)
The Syndics of Cambridge University Library, 9514.d.15
The Runners

About 1924

Robert Delaunay (1885-1941)

If Delaunay’s runners have any individuality, it is in their sportswear. None is yet a champion. The focus is on their jostling for position, legs working, arms pumping, with colour that enhances the energy and rhythm. Their five spherical heads echo the Olympic rings.

This is one of a series of runner canvases that Delaunay painted after watching the 1924 Olympics.

Oil paint on canvas
The National Museum of Serbia, 974
The need for speed

Faced with trams, trains and cars, Futurist artists explored the beauty of speed. Their French manifesto stated, ‘We want to sing of the man who holds the steering wheel... of bridges that straddle rivers like gymnasts’. Benedetto joined the Futurists in 1923; his *Cyclist* is a study in momentum.

Grosz’s race is a blur, whizzing past spectators. Cycling was popular at the 1924 Olympics. The camera is better at capturing anticipation than action, making competitors and their teams self-conscious.
Cyclist (left)

1926

Enzo Benedetto (1905–1993)

Oil paint on canvas

Courtesy Galleria Arte Centro, Milan
Object label

The Cycle Race (right)

1913

George Grosz (1893-1959)

Chalk on tracing paper
Footage of the tandem cycling event from *The Olympic Games in Paris 1924*, official film

1924

Directed by Jean de Rovéra (1898-1939)
© 2010, Comité International Olympique (CIO)
Running time: 1 min 3 secs
Freedom to move

This silk sleeveless one-piece is a typical tennis dress of the 1920s. Popularised by champions like Suzanne Lenglen, its shorter, lighter, drop-waisted style afforded better temperature regulation than the dresses in Gere’s painting, to the right, and far greater movement. For all that silk was liberating and expensive, players still got hot. The sweat stains on the dress spotlight physical exertion.

Ideally the dress would have been worn with springy rubber-soled shoes like these which became popular in the late nineteenth century.
Tennis dress

About 1925

Unrecorded maker

Silk

On loan from Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, WTM:1993/447
Pair of women’s tennis shoes with original box

1921-29

Probably J. Collinson & Co. (founded 1831)

Buckskin, rubber, textile, metal; box: paper
On loan from Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, WTM:2002/22
Racket science

Olympic gold medallist, Helen Wills, played with a Wright & Ditson racket a little like this one. The company made this model, with its trophy logo, from the early 1920s to the early 1930s.

Steel rackets were produced in the 1920s and allowed play to resume immediately after rain. Wooden rackets warped, but they remained the norm for many decades.
Object label

‘Challenge Cup’ tennis racket

About 1930

Wright & Ditson

Wood frame (possibly ash), paint, fabric cord, synthetic strings

On loan from Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, WTM:2014/190.1
Steel lawn tennis racket

About 1924

Allen West Company

Steel frame and strings, wood handle, leather butt, painted enamel
On loan from Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, WTM:1977/52
The expansion of health and fitness activities in the 1920s collided with the relaxation and exercise that came of affluence and leisure to make sporty style chic. No one made it more chic than Parisian designer Jean Patou, who employed French tennis player Susanne Lenglen as his muse. In competition with Coco Chanel, his designs took dressing for tennis onto the high street.
Lithography with hand-coloured *pochoir* on paper, in bound volume.
Victoria and Albert Museum (National Art Library), London, 95.SS.17
Object label

The Tennis Party

1900

Charles March Gere (1869-1957)

Gere’s painting of friends and family at a tennis party in Leamington Spa contrasts sharply with the Cubist painting next to it and the Victorian style of its women’s outfits with the 1920s one-piece in the case to the left. Brimmed hats and long sleeves and hems may look elegant but drastically impeded movement. There is little difference between the dresses of those playing and those observing.

Oil paint on canvas
The Wilson, Cheltenham Trust, purchased with the assistance of the Museums and Galleries Commission Regional Purchase Grant Fund and donations from the All England Tennis Ground Ltd, the National-Art Collections Fund, the Friends of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museums, the W.A.
Cadbury Charitable Trust, the Orlando Oldham Charitable Trust, Cotswold Life Magazine, the Mercantile and General Re-Insurance Company, and Pillar Aluminium Ltd, 1986.1136
Tennis Players

1917

André Lhote (1885-1962)

If asked what modernity meant to them, many artists in the 1910s and 1920s will have answered ‘sport’. Lhote claimed, ‘It is exciting to capture a moving spectacle where everything seems to stand still for a second before starting up again at an even faster rate, like a pendulum at the end of its trajectory’. The painting’s planes jostle like the players on the court.

Oil paint on canvas
On loan from Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, WTM:1994/176
Section introduction

Sport as Art

In ancient Greece, contests in music, dance, theatre and athletics were a defining feature of public festivals. From 1912 to 1948, the modern Olympics included competitions in literature, music, architecture, painting and sculpture as well as sport. Entries had to be inspired by sporting activity. Ireland, competing for the first time as an independent nation, won its only medals in these events. France was over-represented, though even it could not convince the judges of the music competition to award any medals.

Music and dance were as defining of Paris as its fine arts. A supporting cultural programme ranged from performances of Greek tragedy and a new ballet with a tennis-playing lead to a costumed ‘Olympic Ball’, honouring the god Apollo.
Art and sport fed each other. When not winning gold in the 1924 singles and doubles, tennis player Helen Wills was sketching her opponents. She entered the 1932 Olympics in painting.
Head of a Boxer

Sculpted 1920; cast 1921

Henri Laurens (1885-1954)

Paris-born Laurens designed the set of The Blue Train ballet, created for the Paris Olympics.

This piece is inspired by his regular attendance at fights. The breaking down of the boxer’s head into various planes is typical of French Cubism and works with the disjointed nose to conjure the fractures and cuts often inflicted in the ring.

Painted terracotta
Tate: Bequeathed by Elly Kahnweiler 1991 to form part of the gift of Gustav and Elly Kahnweiler, T06833
A sporting dance

*The Blue Train* ballet was performed by the Ballets Russes in the ‘Grand Season of Arts’ accompanying the Paris 1924 Olympics.

The ballet was inspired by the luxury night-train that ferried passengers to the Riviera, and by the sports they played when they got there. A tennis-playing heroine, based on Suzanne Lenglen, and a bathing beauty were joined by golfing and acrobatic men in Coco Chanel costumes. The dancing couples apparently found the swimsuits slippery! The curtain was designed by Picasso.
The Blue Train: I. Choir of hens and gigolos

Composed by Darius Milhaud (1892-1974)

Performed by German Radio Saarbrücken-Kaiserslautern Philharmonic Orchestra

Conducted by Robert Reimer
Licensed courtesy of SWR Classic
Running time: 1 min 19 secs
Leon Woizikovsky, Lydia Sokolova, Bronislava Nijinska and Anton Dolin from the ballet *The Blue Train* pose on stage at the London Coliseum

December 1924

Photograph by ‘Sasha’ (Alexander Stewart)

View of the stage with set by Henri Laurens (1885–1954) during a performance of the ballet *The Blue Train* at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris

20 June 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph
Library of Congress, Music Division. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2023
Opera cloak

About 1924

Attributed to Natalia Gontcharova (1881-1962) for Myrbor

An opera cloak was a statement piece in the art of dressing well in 1920s Paris. This example is attributed to Natalia Gontcharova, Russian-born costume designer, painter, and organiser of the 1924 costumed ‘Olympic Ball’. She, Picasso and Matisse all designed for the couture house, Myrbor.

As a painter, Gontcharova was drawn to sporting themes - cycling, rowing and wrestling.

Silk, metal thread (likely silver), fur (mink)

Courtesy of Board of Trustees of National Museums Northern Ireland, BELUM.T2767
Midnight, 11 July 1924, guests arrive at the Olympia Tavern for the Olympic Ball. Organised by Paris’s Russian artists, the entertainment ranged from dance to male and female wrestling and boxing.

Its printed programmes too were spectacular. Victor Barthe reproduces an ancient Apollo statue famed for its beauty. Picasso’s dancer is a design from the 1924 ballet *Mercury*, for which he produced costumes and décor. The flyer is headed by Natalia Gontcharova’s dress ideas for men and women ‘in a hurry’.
Programme, *Olympic Ball, Real Sports Costume Ball*

Cover showing an illustration of an original drawing by Victor Barthe of the Apollo Belvedere. With illustrations of original drawings by Pablo Picasso, Edouard Manet, Marie Vassilieff, Serge Fotinsky, Samuel Granovsky, Victor Barthe and Boris Chatzman

Published/printed by L’Union des Artistes Russes & François Bernouard: Paris 1924
Printing on heavy paper
Collection of the McNay Art Museum, Gift of Robert L. B. Tobin, TL1999.18.2
Mercury: Study of a dancer, in the programme, Olympic Ball, Real Sports Costume Ball

1924

Illustration of an original drawing by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)

Published/printed by L’Union des Artistes Russes & François Bernouard: Paris
Printing on heavy paper
Private collection
Costume Project for the Olympic Ball, on double-sided flyer

1924

Illustration of an original drawing by Natalia Gontcharova (1881-1962)

Printing on pink-coloured paper
Jacoby won gold for Luxembourg in the Olympic Arts Competitions of 1924 and 1928. These paintings are two of three works from his 1924 entry. Their style is quite unlike either the modernist painting of this exhibition’s previous section or Costas Dimitriadis’ gold medal winning sculpture and its take on the Greek ideal. Most entries to the competition were conservative and artistic conventions different for two dimensions than for three.

Jacoby’s paintings are unpretentious – less like Paris’s avant-garde art than the illustrations in English boys’ magazines.
Corner, from the Sport Studies triptych

1924

Jean Jacoby (1891-1936)

Oil paint on canvas
Olympic Museum Collections, Lausanne, 81598
Rugby, from the Sport Studies triptych

1924

Jean Jacoby (1891-1936)

Oil paint on canvas
Olympic Museum Collections, Lausanne, 81599
**Finnish Discus Thrower** by Costas Dimitriadis (1879 or 1881-1943) seen in his Paris studio

About 1924

Unrecorded photographer
Object label

Reproduced black and white photograph
Dimitriadis archive, Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive / National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation
Finnish Olympic discus thrower Armas Rudolf Taipale (1890–1976) poses in the Paris studio of Costas Dimitriadis for the sculpture, *Finnish Discus Thrower*
Object label

About 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph
Dimitriadis archive, Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive / National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation
Dorothy Margaret Stuart (1889–1963),
with illustrations by Gerald Spencer Pryse

Poor organisation meant that the British Team entered only the literature section of the 1924 Olympic Arts Competition. Of the four entries submitted, one, by Dorothy Stuart, secured silver. Her winning entry *Sword Songs* was dedicated to her fencing teacher. Part one transports readers to ancient Rome’s gladiatorial arena.

Published by Methuen and Co.: London
Printing on paper, covered boards
The Syndics of Cambridge University Library, 1925.7.4776
Ireland’s first Olympic medal

Over 100 international jurors judged Paris’s Arts Competition. Jack Yeats, whose brother, W.B. Yeats, had just been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, entered two paintings, and won silver with the one on the wall to the right, of Dublin’s annual swimming race on the River Liffey. Its brushstrokes suggest a speed of execution that conveys excitement: we look with its spectators. A journalist claimed if you owned a Yeats, ‘you would never wish you were dead’.

The Expressionist style contrasts with the ancient inspiration of the medals he received.
The Liffey Swim

1923

Jack Butler Yeats (1871-1957)

Oil paint on canvas
On loan from the National Gallery of Ireland,
NGI.941
Silver winner’s medal, Paris 1924 Olympic Games, won by Jack Butler Yeats

1924

Designed by André Adolphe Rivaud (1892-1951) for Monnaie de Paris

Silver

Yeats Archive, National Gallery of Ireland,
IE NGI/YA/Y1/JY/10/2/2
Participation medal, Paris 1924 Olympic Games, awarded to Jack Butler Yeats

1924

Designed by Raoul Bénard (1881-1961) for Monnaie de Paris

Bronze
Yeats Archive, National Gallery of Ireland, IE NGI/YA/Y1/JY/10/2/3
The Dancer Nattova

1930

Serge Youriévitche (1876-1969)

Paris-born Youriévitche studied with Rodin and entered the 1924 Olympic Arts Competition as Russian. Russia did not otherwise take part: its philosophy of sport was collaborative, not competitive.

This delicately poised sculpture is a reduction of the piece he entered. It captures fellow Russian Natacha Nattova, who was famous in Paris at the time for combining dance with acrobatics.

Bronze, marble
Northampton Museums and Art Gallery, 2002.78.35
The Javelin Cast

1923

Robert Tait McKenzie (1867-1938), cast by Roman Bronze Works, New York City

McKenzie was Olympics-obsessed and, although he had no formal artistic training, submitted sculpture to five Olympic Arts Competitions, winning bronze in 1932.

Unlike his earlier athletic sculptures, his javelin thrower is not based on measurements but on observation alone. It borders on the balletic. He explained that if technique and beauty is to be preserved, ‘the sportsman needs the artist’.

Bronze, marble
National Trust Collections, Anglesey Abbey (The Fairhaven Collection), Cambridgeshire, NT 515038
A Game of Tennis, dressmaking fabric from the Americana series

1926

Designed by Helen Wills (1905-1998) for Stehli Silks Corporation

Printed silk crepe
Wills’s powers of perception made her great at drawing and tennis. Her 1928 book combines her anecdotes and advice with self-portraits and sketches of opponents. Here, she captures Jean Borotra, winner of the 1924 Wimbledon singles title and a bronze medal in the Olympic doubles. He reaches for a smash in an art deco-type halo.

Wills’s female players had already decorated dress fabric for ‘modern American women’. Vogue 1928 showcased her designs in a feature on ‘famous artists’.
Tennis

1928

Written and illustrated by Helen Wills (1905-1998)

Published by Scribner's Sons: New York and London
Printing on paper, covered boards
The Syndics of Cambridge University Library, 9415.d.16
Section introduction

Sex and Sport

Participation in sport made men stronger. Competing in sport at the Olympics paraded the masculinity of man and country to the world. Sport also made women stronger, challenging female passivity with a more active image. This agency spoke to women’s fight for the vote and to 1920s Parisian fashion, which replaced the corset with freer flapper styles and boyish looks. Swimmers, tennis players and yachtswomen offered different ways of being a woman.

Olympic champions were also objects of the gaze. The mass dissemination of photographs and the advent of commercial cinema turned these men and women into sex-symbols. This made poster boys of even the strongest of strong men, appealing to an ancient Greek legacy that celebrated male beauty and male-male desire.
In 1924, same-sex desire and gender-nonconforming behaviour were still widely stigmatised, but Montmartre’s salons and nightclubs gave a welcome home to a gay and lesbian subculture.
The female gaze

Woman artist Jeanne Rij Rousseau worked in Paris, where she was repeatedly drawn to the dynamics of men’s wrestling. Here we see her experimenting with how to capture that dynamism. As well as these 1924 drawings, she produced a tapestry on the subject, a medium often associated with women.
The Wrestlers

1924

Jeanne Rij Rousseau (1870-1956)

Ink wash drawing and graphite on paper
Private collection
The Wrestlers

1924

Jeanne Rij Rousseau (1870-1956)

Ink and gouache on paper
Private collection
Manly pursuits

Some Olympic sports, like wrestling, were considered manlier than others. Intensely physical, wrestling was as old as the Olympics itself. Picasso returns to its ancient roots by stripping his wrestlers bare, but unlike in the ancient Greek relief, his spectating figures are female. That they are also nude and languorous and lovely renders the contact and curves of the men’s bodies erotic.
The Wrestlers, from the series *Four Lithographs*

8 March 1921

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)

Lithography on paper, edition 27/50
The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, given by Louis Colville Gray Clarke, 1940, P.15-1940
Plaster cast of a marble relief showing wrestling, one of six reliefs from the base of a Greek funerary monument

About 1924

Cast by unrecorded maker; after unrecorded Greek maker (National Archaeological Museum, Athens, about 500 BCE, marble)

Plaster
Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, 59a
Active and passive

At the same time as amateurs sparred in the Olympics, professional boxing was popular with wealthy and working-class audiences alike - it was both intimate and raw and sexier for it.

Segonzac's drawing puts the viewer ringside, looking up, close to the sweat and sawdust. Its spontaneity and anonymity contrast with *The Boxer Rolf* by Jan Sluijters (right), who entered the 1928 Olympic Arts Competition. As its protagonist slumps, exhausted, it is the painting's viewers who are active as their gaze ranges over his body.
The Boxers

About 1910-14

André Dunoyer de Segonzac (1884-1974)

Pen and ink on paper
The Boxer Rolf

About 1918

Jan Sluijters (1881-1957)

Oil paint on canvas
Collection Het Noordbrabants Museum, ‘s-Hertogenbosch (The Netherlands), 7762
The Strong Man

About 1923

Marsden Hartley (1877-1943)

Hartley’s strong man no longer pumps iron but sits contemplatively - a life model posing for the artist. His body is buff and smooth. Like an image of Aphrodite, goddess of sex, he both shields and signals his genitals. He may appear passive, but the shapes of the dumbbells, cannon and skittles next to him playfully suggest that he is still ballsy.

Oil paint on canvas
The Jan T. and Marica Vilcek Collection, Promised gift to The Vilcek Foundation, 2006.03.05
Women’s swimwear had previously been about modesty. But by the 1920s it was skimpy and form-fitting like the men’s.

Swimmers in the 1924 Olympics still had rules about what to wear, but the changes were liberating in the pool and out. Jacqueline Marval’s painting plays with the art-historical tradition of reclining nudes to present the epitome of the modern woman, sunbathing on the beach.
Beaded evening gown

About 1925-28

Unrecorded French maker

Women of the 1920s abandoned their corsets and embraced movement. This evening dress is typical of the fluid lines and shorter hems that were fashionable on and off the tennis court. Bias-cut, with a generous, uneven skirt and art-deco beading, it is perfect for dancing. It is as show-stopping as it is comfortable – designed to get its wearer noticed.

Georgette, beading, glass
On loan from the Olive Matthews Collection, Chertsey Museum, MT.1410
She sails solo

Ella Maillart competed for Switzerland in the 1924 Olympics, going up against the men in the solo sailing and finishing ninth out of 17. She was also a world-class skier and captained the national field hockey team, but it was as a travel writer and photographer that she made her name.

In 1939 she drove to Kabul with her boyish, bisexual friend Annemarie Schwarzenbach. Her account is as much about being a woman in a modern world as it is about Afghanistan.
Ella Maillart (1903–1997)

About 1935

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced photograph

akg-images / Keystone
Ella Maillart pictured at Meulan with sailing teams from Scandinavia, from her Paris 1924 Olympics scrapbook

1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced photograph
Succession Ella Maillart et Photo Elysée, Lausanne
Ella Maillart sailing at Meulan during day two of the competition, from her Paris 1924 Olympics scrapbook

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced photograph
Succession Ella Maillart et Photo Elysée, Lausanne
Ella Maillart’s identity card for the Paris 1924 Olympics, from her Paris 1924 Olympics scrapbook

1924

Comité olympique français

Reproductions of front and back
Succession Ella Maillart et Photo Elysée, Lausanne
Redefining womanhood

With women excluded from track and field in the Paris Olympics, Violette Morris won gold in the discus and shot in the substitute Women’s Olympiad in London in 1924. She sparred with men and was often seen in Montmartre’s lesbian nightclub in men’s clothes. Her behaviour had her barred from competing for France in the 1928 Olympics. In 1929, she had a double mastectomy for the sake of sport and racing driving.
Violette Morris (1893–1944) boxing with a sparring partner

1913

Agence Rol photographic agency

Reproduced glass-plate negative
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Rol 33393
Violette Morris pictured around the time of her début as a singer in music halls

1926

Agence Meurisse photographic agency

Reproduced glass-plate negative
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Meurisse 31197 A
Baumeister’s runner of 1925 powers round the bend, leaving the male spectator beached behind her. He cannot take his eyes off her, but less with lust than curiosity. She now dictates the pace. She may be naked, but she is neither nude nor vulnerable. He is the self-conscious one. With her long limbs and small head, she is superhuman.

Oil paint on canvas
Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, acquired in 1968, Hugo Borst Collection, 3042
A beautiful game

These luxury objects exploit tennis’s image as fashionable and feminine.

The cameo features a female player, who clasps her racket like a hand mirror. With delicate features, modish bob and diamond jewellery, she encourages anyone picking up the brooch to see themselves in her. They run their fingers over her bare and brawny arm and, literally, feel her power.

The powder bowl has a racket for a handle. A real mirror beneath makes it practical and glamorous.
Cameo brooch carved with a female tennis player holding a racket

About 1930

Unrecorded maker

Shell, diamonds, gold
On loan from Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, WTM:2018/191
Object label

Powder bowl and cover decorated with a tennis racket and ball

About 1924

Unrecorded maker, Birmingham

Silver, mirror glass
On loan from Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum,
WTM:2014/15
In the eye of the beholder

Vincent’s portrait of a ‘sports star’ captures the frisson of seeing female tennis players like Suzanne Lenglen dance around the court. A glimpse of underwear leaves her partner distracted and blushing.

Elegance was Lenglen’s watchword: she arrived on court in makeup, headband, silk and furs. She was also athletic and uninhibited, high kicking through matches and sipping alcohol at changeovers. Tennis was one of the few sports deemed graceful enough for women. British newspaper The Graphic questions that image.
'Life on the Courts ...
A Sports Star', *La Vie Parisienne*, vol. 59, no. 23

4 June 1921

René Vincent (1879-1936)

Colour lithography on paper, loose sheet
Private collection
‘Is Tennis a Graceful Game? The Answer of Wimbledon’, The Graphic

28 June 1924

Unrecorded artist

Printing on paper, in bound volume
The Syndics of Cambridge University Library, NPR: Vols. 1-135
Cigarette box

About 1930

James Dixon & Sons (founded 1806); painted by May Talbot

Helen Wills stares down opponent and viewer on this cigarette box. With her signature visor, red lips and racket poised to hit a winner, she is presented as sexy yet sassy. In 1928, Lucky Strike cigarettes began targeting women. One campaign featured a female swimmer: ‘When tempted to overindulge, reach for a Lucky instead.

Pewter, wood, glass, oil paint
On loan from Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, WTM:2000/29
Calder abbreviates tennis player Helen Wills to what he sees as her essentials - skirt, breasts, racket, visor. After her Olympic victory in 1924, white visors were the accessory of choice for women on the Côte d'Azur. The elegance of Calder's economy of line gives Wills a balance and freedom worthy of an ice skater or dancer.
Section introduction

Sport Sells

Winning or watching Olympic events was just the beginning. The 1924 Games inspired merchandise from figurines to paper fans and helped sell high-end Paris fashion. Medallists endorsed swimwear and tennis rackets and made an income from personal appearances, books and tours. The increasing power of Hollywood made film irresistible: one of the box office’s biggest draws was five-times gold medallist Johnny Weissmuller.

These athletes became the faces and bodies of their nations with an impact beyond sport or gender politics. In 1981, winning runners Eric Liddell and Harold Abrahams were immortalised in Chariots of Fire, a film that made their competition with each other a clash between Christianity and Judaism, and grossed $59 million at the box office.
When Weissmuller posed like a Greek statue of a discus thrower in photos advertising the 1932 Games, little did he know that Hitler, and Leni Riefenstahl’s film of the Berlin Olympics, would soon use this statue to sell the Fascist fantasy of an Aryan master race.
This still from the 1981 film Chariots of Fire and Vangelis’s accompanying soundtrack have become synonymous with Olympic effort.

The film is a retelling of the 1924 story of Harold Abrahams and his British teammates. Funded by Mohamed Al-Fayed, it won four Oscars, including Best Original Score. The music was used in the BBC’s 1984 and 1988 Games programme and the London 2012 Opening and medal ceremonies.

Allstar Picture Library Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo. Courtesy of 20th Century Studios, Inc. All rights reserved.
Music from the film *Chariots of Fire*

Words, music and performance by Evangelos Papathanassiou (Vangelis)

Published by Sony Music Publishing
Courtesy of Universal Music
Under licence from Universal Music Operations Limited
Aaltonen entered the Olympic arts competition in 1948 and 1952. But it is his sculpture, commissioned in 1924, of fellow Finn Paavo Nurmi that defines his success. Miniatures were sold to raise funds for Helsinki’s Olympic Village Project in 1952 and a version was erected outside the stadium. The sculpture appeared on the Olympic poster, and, on Nurmi’s death, on Finnish stamps.
Paavo Nurmi

1950-53

Wäinö Aaltonen (1884-1966)

Metal (probably zinc)

Finnish National Gallery, State Art Deposit Collection, SKOP-3740
Wäinö Aaltonen (1884–1966) working on his sculpture of Paavo Nurmi

1924

Unrecorded photographer
Reproduced black and white photograph
Wäinö Aaltonen Museum (Turku City Art Museum), Museum Centre of Turku. © DACS 2023
Czech long-distance runner, Emil Zátopek (1922–2000) receiving a Paavo Nurmi statue from Ilmari Harki in Otaniemi, Espoo, during the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki

About 1952

Unrecorded photographer / Hede Foto
Reproduced black and white photograph
Paris 1924 Olympic Games, Athletics, 1500m Men’s final, Paavo Nurmi (FIN) first across the finish line

10 July 1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph
© 1924, Comité International Olympique (CIO), PHO10004737
Paris 1924 Olympic Games, Athletics, Paavo Nurmi (FIN) 1st in 1500m Men, 5000m Men, Team 3000m, Individual and Team Cross Country

1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph © 1924 Comité International Olympique (CIO), PHO10004733
Mrs Helen Wills Moody

1930

Diego Rivera (1886-1957)

When Mexican artist Diego Rivera painted *Allegory of California* on the wall of the San Francisco Stock Exchange, tennis player and local girl Helen Wills inspired the central figure. She was the ‘nearest living perfection of the old Greek ideal’, ‘an ideal American beauty’. This pastel gives some sense of the mural’s style and scale. It makes the girl next door a goddess.

Pastel on paper
Tate: Presented by the Earl of Huntingdon 1958, T00200
Celebrities sell swimwear

Weissmuller poses with US teammate Kahanamoku in the 1924 Olympics, each of them in the latest form-fitting swimsuits. US company Jantzen was at the forefront of swimwear design. Kahanamoku, who won gold in the 1912 and 1920 Olympics, already endorsed the Jantzen brand.

Johnny Weissmuller and Duke Kahanamoku (1890–1968) at the Paris 1924 Olympic Games

1924

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph
Gamma-Keystone/Getty Images
Men’s swimsuit (in case to the left)

About 1925–35

Jantzen (founded 1916)

Rib-knitted wool
On loan from the Olive Matthews Collection, Chertsey Museum, M.2001.22
Betty, car hood ornament

1924

National Cycle & Novelty Company, Los Angeles (active 1920s)

The ‘Betty’ of this 1923 car bonnet mascot is sometimes thought to be Elizabeth Pinkston, who won diving medals for the USA in Paris. It is more probably Betty Williams, who was already starring on the diving platforms at Madison Square Garden, where she was photographed in a swimsuit and similar footwear. It is a cute alternative to Rolls-Royce’s ‘Spirit of Ecstasy’.

Steel, chrome-plating, paint
On loan from John Giannini
Swimming with a star

When Lucy Morton returned to Blackpool with her 1924 Olympic gold medal, she received a hero’s welcome. She retired from competition but did a season of swimming exhibitions at Blackpool Tower Circus together with bare-back riders and a female lion-tamer. Fittingly, the Tower is modelled after Paris’s Eiffel Tower; its arena’s hydraulic floor sinks and fills with water in under a minute.

Morton was paid a modest 12 pounds and 12 shillings per week for two daily performances.
Memorandum of Agreement between The Blackpool Tower Co. Ltd and Miss Lucy Morton

25 March 1927

Published/printed by The Blackpool Tower Co. Ltd

Typescript on paper
Showtown, Blackpool, BC.2023.1.154
Tower, Palace and Grand Souvenir Programme

Week of 9th April 1928

Published/printed by The Blackpool Tower Co. Ltd

Colour printing on paper
Showtown, Blackpool, BC.2023.1.144
Lucy Morton performing her swimming classes at the Blackpool Tower Circus

1928

Unrecorded photographer

Black and white photograph
Showtown, Blackpool, BC.2023.1.152
From gold to silver screen

In 1931 Olympic swimmer Johnny Weissmuller screen-tested for the role of Tarzan, a fictional British orphan, raised by apes in the African jungle. Photographed bare-chested, performing an Olympic salute, he is hailed as Hollywood’s perfect male; yet, as Tarzan, his is a primitive masculinity.

Weissmuller was in his forties when he made the last of his twelve Tarzan films, *Tarzan and the Mermaids*. The poster fits the film’s Italian title: Weissmuller resembles mythological hero Odysseus tied to his ship’s mast to withstand the song of the Sirens. Set against a stereotypical, imaginary depiction of African people, his body becomes a complex symbol of European colonialism.
'Is this the World’s Perfect Male?', *Movie Mirror*, vol. 2, no. 2

June 1932

Unrecorded author

Reproduction
Library of Congress, MBRS,
Moving Image Research Center, Washington
Poster for the Italian release of the film *Tarzan and the Mermaids (Tarzan e le Sirene)*

About 1948

Enzo Nistri (1923–2008); printed by A.G.A.F, Firenze

Colour lithography on paper
Collections of the Musée national du Sport, Nice, MNS 84.6.7
Making a splash

Two summers after winning three medals at the 1924 Olympics, Gertrude Ederle became, at the second attempt, the first woman to swim the Channel, beating the men’s record.

Ederle had turned professional, but the swim secured her fame. She performed in a tank on the vaudeville circuit until collapsing with exhaustion. And she played herself in the film Swim Girl, Swim. Its French title L’École des Sirènes conjures the figures who seduce the sailors in the Greek epic the Odyssey.
Grease-coated Olympic swimmer Gertrude Ederle (1905–2003) wades into the sea in France on her way to becoming the first woman to swim the English Channel

6 August 1926

Unrecorded photographer

Reproduced black and white photograph
New York Daily News Archive/Getty Images
Poster for the film *School of Mermaids (L’ École des Sirènes)*

About 1927

Unrecorded artist; printed by Affiches Gaillard, Paris, Amiens

Colour lithography on paper
Collections of the Musée national du Sport, Nice, MNS 1993.38.8
The Discus Thrower was made in bronze in ancient Greece where it stood in a sanctuary as evidence of man’s god-given beauty. That bronze was melted down, but not before the Romans copied it for gyms, gardens and bathhouses. The British Museum version, which this plaster-cast reproduces, was wrongly restored in the 1790s. The athlete should look towards the discus.
The art-deco poster advertises a 1924 silent film, starring ‘the leading players of England’. Joan Austin and Evelyn Colyer had given Lenglen and Elizabeth Ryan a run for their money in the 1923 doubles final at Wimbledon.

Lenglen turned professional in 1926 and accepted an anticipated $100,000 to tour north America. Wills declined to partner her, but she did accept an invitation by Fascist leader Benito Mussolini to go on a three-week art tour with exhibition matches in Florence, Rome, and Naples.
Poster for the film, *The Art of Tennis and How to Play It*

1924

The Parkstone Film Co. Ltd, Lytham (active 1920s)

Colour printing on paper
On loan from Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, WTM:2022/143
Promotional leaflet, Suzanne Lenglen, North American Tour, Direction C.C. Pyle

1926

Unrecorded maker

Colour printing on paper
On loan from Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, WTM:1995/53
Fashion forward

The Games were a place to see and be seen. The June 1924 issue of French magazine *Art-Taste-Beauty* imagines women watching the Olympic rugby and rowing in *haute couture* by Lanvin, Doeuillet, Martial et Armand and Patou.

The fan uses the Olympics to advertise perfume. Modern women are dressed for sports, the fencer in a trouser suit instead of the skirt that women normally wore in competition. The reverse is inspired by ancient Greece - this scent is avant-garde and classic.
Art-Taste-Beauty: Pages of Feminine Elegance, no. 46

15 June 1924

Unrecorded artist; published by Éditions d’art: Paris

Lithography with hand-coloured pochoir on paper, in bound volume
Victoria and Albert Museum (National Art Library), London, 95.SS.16
Advertising fan for Volt perfume by L.T. Piver, Paris

About 1924

Réné Préjelan (1877-1968)

Paper, wood, metal

The Fan Museum, Greenwich, LDFAN2007.9.HA
Art-Taste-Beauty: Pages of Feminine Elegance, no. 46

15 June 1924

Unrecorded artist; published by Éditions d’art: Paris

Lithography with hand-coloured pochoir on paper, paper covers, centre spread
Private collection
The swimmer and boxer are part of a series of French figurines produced for the 1924 Olympics. They have large heads and exaggerated expressions - even then, not all souvenirs were chic.

But they are positively stylish compared to the tiny lead figure by British manufacturer Johillco - again part of a series, this time of male and female tennis players. Johillco figures, many of them toy soldiers, were cheaply made, and often sold individually to appeal to a mass market.
Eighth Olympiad Paris 1924, Swimming, souvenir figurine

1924

Fernand Coffin (d. 1946)

Plaster, paint, brass
Collections of the Musée national du Sport, Nice, MNS 2003.9.15
Eighth Olympiad Paris 1924, Boxing, souvenir figurine

1924

Fernand Coffin (d. 1946)

Plaster, paint, brass
Collections of the Musée national du Sport, Nice, MNS 2003.9.12
Toy figure of a female tennis player

1921-29

John Hill & Co. (Johillco) (founded 1898)

Lead, paint
On loan from Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, WTM:2003/18
In 1924, when a student at Yale, Benjamin Spock had been in the gold-winning rowing eight. In 1946, he would publish one of the most influential parenting books ever written. Here he advises that organised athletics and games are a controlled outlet for aggression in children.
Souvenir handkerchief

1924

Unrecorded French maker

This handkerchief features images of French tennis players René Lacoste (in the driving cap) and Jean Borotra, who won bronze in the doubles. When Borotra later became France’s General Commissioner for Sports, he banned women from playing association football. Lacoste designed the practical, iconic Lacoste tennis shirt.

Printed cotton
On loan from Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, WTM:2009/68
In 1932, glistening with baby-oil to resemble the bronze original, Weissmuller posed as the Discus Thrower statue.

Later that decade, the statue was central to Leni Riefenstahl’s film of the 1936 Berlin Olympics and Hitler paid a hefty sum to bring the most famous version from Italy to Munich. There, the white athletic body stood for what the Nazis considered superior humanity.
Actor and Olympian Johnny Weissmuller poses as the Discus Thrower statue for the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games

George Hurrell (1904-1992)

Reproduced black and white photograph
John Springer Collection/Corbis via Getty Images
Production still from the prologue to Leni Riefenstahl’s (1902–2003) film *Olympia* (Germany, 1938)

Willy Zielke (1902–1989)

Reproduced black and white photograph
Album/Alamy Stock Photo
Official poster for the 1948 London Olympic Games

1948

Walter Herz (1909-1965); printed by McCorquodale & Co. Ltd

When London hosted the Olympics in 1948, three years after the end of World War II, it put the British Museum’s version of the Discus Thrower statue on its official poster. By placing the statue in front of the Houses of Parliament, the artist has its ancient Greek heritage speak of democracy and freedom.

Colour lithography on paper
Olympic Museum Collections, Lausanne, 81722
Olympic Games Paris 2024
10 Euro Silver Hexagonal Coin - Genius

2022

Designed by Joaquin Jimenez (b. 1956) for Monnaie de Paris

This Discus Thrower has wings; it is both ancient Greek athlete and modern take on the figure that graces the Parisian monument to revolutionary victory at the Bastille. On the reverse is the national motto, ‘Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood’. It would not have seemed out of place a century ago. How will the story of sport, art and the body look in another hundred years?

Silver
Private collection
Please return this guide after use