

**ILLUSTRATING THE OLYMPIC GAMES
THE ATHENS CASE (1896, 2004)
FROM NIKOLAOS GYZIS TO DIMITRIS PAPAÏOANNOY**

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Abstract

Greece is the smallest country to have organised Olympic Games twice, in 1896 and in 2004. The first time was a historically important event, which originated from people who adored Ancient Greece and its achievements in both the fields of sport and culture. Their revival signalled the beginning of a new understanding of Man, introducing the principles of mutual respect and universalism, excellence and sportsmanship. For Greece, its second Olympic Games represented an opportunity to enhance its national identity and to promote its image abroad. The setting was entirely different in 2004. Athens had the appearance of a modern city, the Games were considered to be particularly successful, and this became a source of national pride for its inhabitants. From the outset, the modern Olympic Games have been associated with culture, in line with the vision of the man who inspired them, Pierre de Coubertin. The Cultural Olympiad is the great legacy to the culture of the Olympic Games. At the same time, all visual material relating to the organisation and the carrying out of the Games has adopted aesthetic rules and has had an undeniable artistic character. There are several such items ranging from posters and medals to pictograms and commemorative stamps. This paper lists, evaluates and examines materials which constitute, from all points of view, evidence of the Olympic cultural legacy.

Keywords: Arts competition, Cultural Olympiad, Olympic posters, Olympic memorabilia, Olympic ceremonies.

Introduction

Blending sport with culture

In 1906, it was decided at the “Consultative Conference on Art, Letters and Sport”, held in Paris by the founder of the reinstatement of the Olympic Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937), to directly blend sport with culture. It was then that the organisation of the artistic aspects of the Olympic Games that were to be held in Stockholm in 1912 was planned. The purpose of the invitation addressed by Pierre de Coubertin to the participants in the conference was “to study to what extent and in what way art and literature could be included in the celebration of the modern Olympiads and be associated with the practice of sport in general so as not only to benefit from it but at the same time ennoble it” (Pierre de Coubertin, 1997: 186). The ideas discussed at the 1906 conference related to the modalities for implementing this new project, as well as the style that the artists would be required to adopt. The participants in the conference feared that the classical line would prevail overall in many fields of art and that this would prevent the selection of avant-garde works of art. The fields in which the artists were finally to compete included painting and sculpture, literature, architecture and music. At the “Consultative Conference”, de Coubertin expressed his concern about the absence of artists of renown, which he, however, attributed to the failure to invite them on time (Pierre de Coubertin, *ibid.*).

Thus, culture was also included in the realm of competition of the Olympic Games, creating new circumstances in a domain which would through time acquire very large dimensions. Since then (1912) and to this day, the organisers of both the summer and the winter Olympics, as well as the Paralympic Games, have included a rich cultural programme in the Games, creating considerable opportunities for showcasing the quality of cultural achievements.

We know that in 1906 Pierre de Coubertin sent a letter to universities, Olympic committees and sports clubs by which he encourage them to support this effort and to obtain the successful participation of intellectuals in the sport Olympic Games (Pierre de Coubertin and the Arts, 2008/2009). He himself considered that Olympism was an “aesthetic idea”, because he was inspired by the prevailing views of his time that the “beauty” of arts was inherent to sport (Douglas, 1996).

Pierre de Coubertin's initial position, i.e. blending sport with culture and education, has been included in the International Olympic Committee's "Olympic Charter" (Rules 2 and 3) (IOC, 1994: 10, Loland, 1993: 49). In this founding charter, "Olympism" is defined as a "philosophy of life" and reference is made to the harmonious development of humankind and to the need to blend "sport with culture and education".

As will be shown below, the initial plans have changed through time, because the ideology underpinning Olympism is not a static phenomenon; on the contrary, it is constantly changing and evolving following all sorts of societal developments (political, ideological, cultural), as noted by Chatziefstathiou (2011 : 41, 42). A similar flexibility has also been noted regarding the manner for promoting culture, although there have always been reactions with regard to the possibility of rewarding the arts in sport terms (Good, 2011: 163).

As mentioned above, the first Art Competitions were launched in 1912, at the Stockholm Olympic Games, under the title "**Muses Pentathlon**", and they lasted in this form until 1948 (London Olympic Games). The institution lasted for a relatively long period of time (36 years in total and seven Olympic Games, not including the three Olympic Games cancelled in 1916, 1940 and 1944 due to World War I and World War II).

However, this initiative did not have the expected results. There have been many reasons for that failure, as noted by Debra Good (2011: 164). One of the reasons, probably the most important one, was that well-known modern artists did not express any interest in participating in the competition. Another reason was that the invitation only concerned artists who were amateurs, like the athletes (a capacity which is not so easily discernible in the art world). Concerns were also expressed about the five art categories (painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, music), as well as regarding the regulatory framework for taking part in the competition.

Furthermore, it has been noted that the competitions had been inadequately promoted and publicised and that there was a lack of an international Arts Organisation. In addition, the requirement to select the submitted art work from the world of sport created difficulties to some artists. Quite often no Olympic medals were awarded due to the mediocrity of the works of arts submitted to the competition.

It is worth noting certain events linked to the Art Competitions. For example, in 1912 (Stockholm Olympic Games), the President of the International Olympic Committee himself, Pierre de Coubertin, participated in the competition in the field of literature, under the double pseudonym Georges Hohrod and Martin Eschbach, and won the gold medal. His poem was entitled "Ode to Sport". Another President of the International Olympic Committee, Avery Brundage, also took part in the Art Competitions, obtaining in 1932 (Los Angeles Olympic Games) an honorary distinction in literature. Brundage had also participated as an athlete in the 1912 Olympic Games (Stockholm).

In 1928 (Amsterdam Olympic Games), the gold medal in architecture was awarded to the designer of the city's Olympic Stadium, Jan Wils.

In painting, Jean Jacoby from Luxembourg won two gold medals (Paris 1924 and Amsterdam 1928). Swiss painter Alex Diggelmann won one gold (Berlin 1936), one silver and one bronze (London 1948) medal.

Furthermore, there have been athletes who also distinguished themselves in the arts, such as the American Olympian in shooting (gold medal in London in 1908 and silver medal in Stockholm in 1912) Walter Winans, who also won a gold medal in sculpture at the Stockholm Olympic Games. The Hungarian Olympian Alfréd Hajós was equally successful in winning two gold medals in swimming, in Athens in 1896 and in Paris in 1924, as well as the silver medal in architecture (together with Pezso Lander).

Another interesting example is that of the British John Copley, who won the silver medal in painting in London in 1948, at the age of 73.

During the period of seven Olympiads, when the Art Competitions (the Muses Pentathlon) took place, the only Greek participation that won a medal in the field of letters and arts was that of sculptor Kostas Dimitriadis (1881-1943). The Greek artist won the gold medal at the Paris Olympic Games in 1924. He won this prize for his work "The Discus Thrower" which has been in front of the Panathenaic Stadium in Athens since 1927. Its original mould can be found in the Olympic Museum in Lausanne (source: Olympic Games Museum, 1912-1948, Lausanne). It is worth noting that 193 artists from 24 countries participated in the Art Competitions at the Olympic Games in Paris in 1924 (Kramer, 2004, Karl Lennartz, <http://decoubertin.info/table-of-contents/the-art-competition>).

The Art Competitions were not organised during the Olympic Games in Helsinki in 1952. Helsinki, the capital of Finland, was awarded the organisation of these Olympic Games, because its bid had been cancelled in 1940, due to the war.

The next year, 1953, a special Conference of the International Olympic Committee was held in Athens which decided to change the existing institution, known as the “Muses Pentathlon”, and from 1956, at the Melbourne Olympic Games, a new phase for the promotion of culture began. Already in Helsinki, in 1952, the competitions in arts, literature and culture were not held, and for the first time no Olympic medals were awarded. Instead, various art exhibitions were organised, thus initiating the new period which was called “**Olympic Arts Festival**” (Garcia, 2012: 9). The common belief was that a new manner for obtaining the participation of Art in the great event of the Olympic Games had to be found, “to provoke general interest”, as noted by the then President of the International Olympic Committee, Avery Brundage (Good, 2011: 165).

After the Art Competitions during the Olympic Games were abandoned, a new plan for achieving the blending of sport with culture began to be implemented. As we know, the duration of the Olympic Games sport events had been set to 16 days, whereas there is no indication about the duration of the Olympic cultural “competitions” (Gold & Revill, 2011: 80).

Thus, the new form of the “**Olympic Arts Festival**”, as it was renamed, started to take shape at the Melbourne Olympic Games in 1956 and it lasted until the Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988.

Before the third change of the Olympic Arts Festival (1956-1988), nine Olympiads took place and they all, more or less, adopted a programme of a relatively small duration, lasting from two months to one year, including events of a diverse character. The International Olympic Committee supervised the cultural events, which also played an important role in the final selection of the city where the Olympic Games would be held.

It is worth noting that the Olympic Charter stipulates that every country is required to organise a programme of cultural events, “symbolising the universal character of Olympism and the diversity of human culture” (Garcia, 2008).

The Olympic Arts Festival was a serious and interesting development of the institution. It provided the opportunity to cities and countries to invest in culture and to make improvements in the everyday life of their inhabitants. On the other hand, it created opportunities to attract tourists and it contributed to the improvement of economic indicators. Everyone agreed that the time for preparing and promoting the cultural product was insufficient. Therefore, the International Olympic Committee adopted a new decision according to which the duration of the cultural events and support projects for the city hosting the Olympic Games would be extended to four years. The new institution was called “**Cultural Olympiad**” and it was launched at the Barcelona Olympic Games in 1992. This new form of the institution is still implemented today.

Indeed, the new institution has proven to be quite successful, since it has forced the cities putting forward bids to host the Olympic Games to take the matter of culture very seriously under consideration and to also extend their actions to issues relating to improving the life of citizens as well as the image of the city. For example, Barcelona put particular emphasis on urban regeneration through the considerable intervention that took place in the area of its port. It is widely accepted that Barcelona’s Cultural Olympiad remains a model to this day (Garcia, 2008).

In Athens, in 2004, organisers focused their interest on urban regeneration actions, the most important project being the Unification of the Archaeological Sites, which although left incomplete, has changed to a large extent the surrounding environment of the antiquities in Athens (Gold & Revill, 2011).

However, the relationship between sport and culture is not solely limited to the independent presence of sport and arts in the field of competition, but also extends to exploiting artistic expression in any manner possible. From the outset, artists were recruited to a multitude of actions: from the design of posters and promotional messages to the organisation of large-scale events, such as the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games.

Art is an integral part of the Olympic Games and its successful exploitation is the objective sought and the priority set by organisers, and it is evaluated accordingly by the International Olympic Committee.

Athens 1896

Nikolaos Gyzis and Nikiphoros Lytras

Although the programme of the first modern Olympic Games in Athens (1896) did not require making any direct association between sport and culture, something that would occur a few years later, many of the official Olympic events bore the mark of the artistic intervention of people in the area of culture. First of all, the Olympic Hymn itself was the result of the collaboration of a writer and a musician: Kostis Palamas and Spyros Samaras, respectively. As we know, the Hymn was played at the first modern Olympic Games in Athens and formally became the Olympic Hymn later, from the Olympic Games held in Rome in 1960 onwards (Gold & Revill, 2011). The fact that the newly founded International Olympic Committee (whose President was Dimitrios Vikelas, a writer) decided to commission and to accept this composition as the Olympic Hymn indicates that the organisers' objective was to blend sport with culture, in the spirit of the prevailing view of the time of "*anima sana in corpore sano*" (Coubertin et al., 1897).

There can be no doubt that the **Olympic Hymn** has been the most valuable cultural product of the Olympic Games defining through time their strong intellectual character.

Another important cultural legacy of the 1896 Olympic Games to both Greece and the entire mankind has been the complete renovation and operation of the **Panathenaic Stadium**, undertaken at the expenses of the great Greek benefactor originating from Alexandria, Egypt, Georgios Averof. The Panathenaic Stadium is a monument of the Ancient Greek cultural legacy dating from the 4th century BC.

To cover the rest of the cultural needs of the Olympic Committee in 1896 two of the greatest Greek artists of the time, Nikolaos Gyzis and Nikiphoros Lytras, were recruited. The cultural character of the first modern Olympic Games has also been pointed out by eye witnesses of the facts at that time, such as the American Rufus Richardson (1896: 267), who described the theatrical representations and the music events that were produced during the Games in Athens and the Piraeus, and Maynard Butler (1896: 995), who mentioned the award of certificates, medals and cups to athletes by Crown Prince Constantine. Memorabilia were also crafted which, for the most part, had been designed by artists and special designers.

Greek artists of renown, such as the aforementioned painters, worked on a multitude of Olympic memorabilia, having both an intellectual and a symbolic content, together with foreign artists and various design and printing workshops.

The Olympic Games Certificate

With regard to the contribution of **Nikolaos Gyzis**, professor at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts, this can be identified in the design of the well-known "**Olympic Games Certificate**", a work he was particularly familiar with. Aside from that, Nikolaos Gyzis had also worked together with the President of the IOC, Dimitrios Vikelas, having illustrated the latter's novel "Loukis Laras" (Misirli, 1996).

The original drawings of the "Certificate" are exhibited in the National Gallery in Athens, and it appears that there were many versions. In any event, in a description made by the artist in one of his published letters, Gyzis clearly states his thoughts and explains the symbolism of the patterns.

It is apparent from Gyzis' notes that artists wanted to express their personal artistic feelings and to convey many messages through the symbolic language of their art. Thus, the Olympic symbols are part of the cultural legacy and they can be considered as works of aesthetic value. Indeed, given that they become part of the advertising and promotion campaign of the Olympic values, their contribution also has an ideological content, as noted by John Hughson (2010: 749).

The practice of awarding certificates to athletes was carried on also in subsequent Olympic Games, the only difference being that they were not only awarded to the first three winners but to the first eight winners. The certificate's theme was initially linked to Ancient Greece, but it then became relatively free.

The Olympic Medals

Apart from the certificate awarded to the winners as a prize and as a memento of their participation and their victory in the Olympic Games, athletes were also given **Medals**.

The process of awarding certificates to winners did not last for long. On the contrary, the initial idea of awarding medals was carried on and medals represent to this day the most valuable possession for winners/athletes.

No gold medal was awarded in the 1896 Olympic Games. The first winner was awarded a silver medal and the second winner a bronze medal. At the time, silver was more expensive than gold. This practice changed in 1904 (Saint Louis, USA), two Olympic Games later, where medals were awarded to the first three athletes, a process carried on to this day.

The 1896 silver medal was designed by French sculptor Jules-Clément Chaplain, whose signature may be seen on the obverse, dominated by Zeus' imposing form. His model had obviously been Phidias' Zeus from the temple in Ancient Olympia dedicated to Zeus. Zeus is holding a globe in his hands, a reference to the planet Earth, and Nike is flying over it, carrying an olive branch, the inscription on the obverse being "OLYMPIA". The reverse bore a depiction of the Acropolis and its monuments and the Olympic Games logo (Wels, 1996: 142).

Nikiphoros Lytras, professor at the School of Fine Arts in Athens, also participated in the art works of the 1896 Olympic Games. Lytras designed the first commemorative medal of the Olympic Games. The obverse depicted the Phoenix reborn and above it the allegoric figure of Greece, holding a branch of wild olive. In the background, the Acropolis and the Panathenaic Stadium could be distinguished. Next to the figure of Greece was the inscription "776 BC - 1896 AD". The reverse of the medal bore the Olympic Games logo. This medal was awarded as a prize to all athletes for their participation in the Games.

Awarding medals (gold, silver and bronze) to athletes was considered a necessary process and it proved to be quite popular. This is demonstrated by the fact that medals are still awarded to this day and that artists and designers of renown participate in their design. As a rule, medals follow a specific typology and morphology. The dominant figures are those of Zeus, Nike and classical antiquities, but each Olympic city has made its own mark in this area.

During many Olympic Games, namely from the Amsterdam Games (1928) to the Mexico City Games (1968), medals had more or less the same typology. Nike was depicted on the obverse, holding a wreath, standing in front of the Coliseum, while an Olympic Games winner triumphantly carried in the stadium was depicted on the reverse. The design had been awarded in 1928, following a tender, to Italian artist Giuseppe Cassioli. The design of the reverse was modified at the Munich Olympic Games (1972), where the Olympic Games winner was replaced by the Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux). The design was created by artist Gerhard Marcks. Since then, the design of the medals has become a relatively free choice. The same applies to the design of the winter Olympic Games medals.

As will be seen below, things radically changed from the Athens Olympic Games in 2004 onwards. Almost all Olympic cities have chosen artists and special craftsmen to design and create the medals. Among the many artists encountered in this study, there is another Greek artist: Vasos Falireas, who was chosen to design the Olympic medal for the winter Olympic Games in Stockholm in 1952.

The Syros Louis Cup

Upon termination of the 1896 Olympic Games, on April 3, 1896, the winner of the Marathon, Spyros Louis, was offered, together with the silver medal, a silver cup. A little while ago, Louis had become the object of frenzied acclamations by the Greek spectators in the Panathenaic Stadium. This was a moment of great national pride and excitement, and Spyros Louis was likened to the ancient Marathon runner Pheidippides, as described by an eye witness of the scene (Waldstein, 1896).

The cup had been designed by French scholar Michel Bréal, who was the person who had suggested to Baron Pierre de Coubertin to organize the Marathon as a reminder of the victory of the Greeks against the Persians in 490 BC. Apart from the inscription making reference to the Athens Olympic Games, the cup also bore the name of his creator. Regarding its illustration, there is no clear symbolism. Some have suggested that the floral and animal themes are a reference to the plain of Marathon or that the idea of the cup was influenced by Pindar's Olympian Odes (<http://mikros-romios.gr/1744/spyros-loyis/>).

The cup belonged to the athlete's heirs and it was auctioned by Christie's, on April 18, 2012, and acquired (at a price of 544,000 Euros) by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, on behalf of the Greek people, as was said, something that satisfied the Greek public opinion, because it was considered an object of cultural and sport legacy. It is temporarily exhibited at the Acropolis Museum.

Olympic posters

Posters, like any other printed material addressed to the general public, are meant to encode messages and information that are useful and easily understood by the spectators or readers. The poster is the easiest to use and the most successful means to that end, and the organisers of small and big events choose it, because it enables them to convey their content in a visual manner according to the rules of semantics and art. The Olympic Games have had a large series of posters designed by artists and special designers.

The first poster of the Olympic Games is considered to be the one of the Athens 1896 Games, although it did not have an official character then. However, it clearly reflected the atmosphere of the time. There is a clear reference to classical Greece, to cultural monuments and to the revival of the most important sport event of Antiquity.

It is a fact that the history of Olympic posters bears witness to the political and cultural climate of their time, depicting an interesting period of European history. Besides, famous artists, such as Armando Testa, Andy Warhol, Victor Vasarely and others, have designed Olympic posters (Timers, 2008).

The 1896 poster, in particular, carries us back to the romantic atmosphere of that time and to the admiration of Ancient Greece that was one of its features. The poster's main theme was the goddess Athena, depicted as a *kore* wearing ancient clothing, holding the *kotinos* (olive wreath) and ready to put it on the head of the winner. The background of the scene was covered by the newly rebuilt Panathenaic Stadium, the Parthenon and other ancient ruins. The inscription on the upper part, "776-1896", left no doubt as to the meaning of the first Olympic poster. The logo (OLYMPIC GAMES, ATHENS) was inscribed in both Greek and French.

This was a poster that served to remind the classical origin of the Olympic Games. The poster was designed and printed by the printing house Charles Beck in Athens (The Official Game Report, 1896).

Another Olympic poster of that time refers to the Olympic Hymn. The Hymn was first played in the Panathenaic Stadium at the opening of the Olympic Games by the Athens Philharmonic Orchestra and the army's band. The poster was similar to the previous one, the only difference being that in this case, apart from the necessary logo making reference to the two authors, some Olympic sports mentioned in the Hymn were also depicted (wrestling and throwing).

Olympic posters are undoubtedly part of the Olympic Games cultural legacy both for their visual artistic importance and for their historical value.

Athens 2004

Dimitris Papaïoannou and the Olympic ceremonies

It is widely accepted that the greatest moment of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games has been the opening and closing ceremonies, organised by artistic director Dimitris Papaïoannou. His selection by the Games Organising Committee had been audacious, since he had not presented anything striking until then. This was a young artist who had studied at the Athens School of Fine Arts and had worked on painting and comics as well as dance and scenic design.

His recruitment by the Athens 2004 Organising Committee as artistic director of the Olympic ceremonies, to be watched by millions of people all over the world, was a risky one, but it proved to be absolutely right. Papaïoannou unfolded his talent on a great canvas, the Olympic stadium, and proved to be a brilliant artist.

In a programme lasting a few hours he presented the crucial moments of the Olympic Games, he showcased the intertemporal Greek culture with particular dexterity, like a real conductor of an incredibly large orchestra. The symbolisms he used were strong and accurate, directly targeting the heart and the feelings of spectators, presenting the Olympic spirit like the conquest of all people and like a spiritual value having an existentialist nature. Papaïoannou demonstrated that there can also be quality in mass spectacle, without deviating not even for a moment from the sense of grandiose, which is the spirit that prevails and leads people in life's dire straits.

The initial concept, the staging and the performance were all unique and this is why Papaïoannou was honoured, lauded and internationally acclaimed. He proved to be an avant-garde artist and at the same time an experimenter endowed with vision, imagination and inexhaustible creativity.

It is worth recalling at this point the closing ceremony of the London Olympic Games, where the famous British artist Damien Hirst had the fascinating idea of turning the field of the Olympic stadium into a huge work of art with the colour explosions of red, white and blue springing from the shape of the Union Jack. This was a gigantic painting of unique inspiration, a hymn to British Pop Art of the past century. This initiative by the British Organising Committee demonstrates the particular importance that culture has had through time in the Olympic Games.

The Athens Olympic Games emblem, poster and mascot

The Athens Cultural Olympiad, which lasted approximately four years, created the appropriate environment for many events and actions of the Olympic Games, even simple graphs and prints, to have an artistic character. Designers and graphic designers, artists and producers were employed to a large extent and undertook to realise projects that could be characterised as creative. These were mass production projects carried out according to aesthetic rules and aiming at conveying information in a speedy manner. In this case, too, such items and all kinds of products generated include many symbolisms, which are particularly strong due to their historical origin. This is why their realisation has been awarded through of tenders.

The Athens 201 emblem was simple, representing the *kotinos*, the wreath made from a wild-olive branch that was the prize awarded to athletes in Ancient Greece. In this sense, it captured the initial meaning of the Games. The white and blue colours used were a reference to Greek nature.

The Athens 2004 official Olympic poster represented in essence three elements: (a) the emblem, (b) the panorama (aspects of the cultural legacy), and (c) the Acropolis. Indeed, it displayed a combination of the country's history, its culture and natural environment. These were the symbolisms that dominated the Olympic discourse at the time. The Athens 2004 mascots were Phevos (Apollo) and Athena, two siblings (a god and a goddess), two dolls, representing light, beauty and wisdom, that is the everlasting Olympic values. These were two ancient dolls symbols of play, i.e. what the Games themselves are actually about (From Olympia to Athens, 2004).

Olympic medals, stamps and other memorabilia

As indicated above, the image pattern on the Athens 2004 Olympic medals has changed, now depicting the goddess Nike (from the statue by artist Paeonius exhibited in the museum of Ancient Olympia and dating from 421 BC). The goddess is depicted in front of the Panathenaic Stadium with the eternal flame together with verses from Pindar's eighth Olympian Ode, written in 480 BC.

At the same time, on the occasion of the Olympic Games, Olympic stamps were also printed, as had been the case for the first modern Olympic Games in 1896. This series featuring sport themes is rare and is currently kept at the Olympic Games Museum in Ancient Olympia. The Athens 2004 Olympic stamps featured a large variety of themes. The main thematic series were the following: "Ancient Greece. Olympia and Elis", "Olympic Games Winners 1896-1912", "Ancient Greece Coins", "Contemporary Art", etc. The stamps were designed by famous and reputable Greek artists.

The Olympic torch, designed as a stylised wild-olive leaf, also bore historical symbolism (it was created by Andreas Varotsos).

Another group of visual forms from the Athens 2004 Olympic Games having a communication purpose were the pictograms used to facilitate spectators and provide information about the Olympic Games events. These are simple graphic forms that have been used since the London Olympic Games in 1948 for communication purposes. They have been in constant use since then and they are designed by experienced graphic designers.

The Athens 2004 pictograms, 35 in total and representing 26 sports, were inspired by three elements of the Ancient Greek culture: the Cycladic idols (in terms of their form), the black-figure vases (in terms of their inspiration) and the shape of the vases themselves (in terms of their outline) (ATHOC, Official Report, 2004: 323).

Conclusion

It must be acknowledged that any work that appeals to the sense of vision is a creative act and presents artistic interest, irrespective of whether it is used for communication purposes or not. Such are the works used for the greatest sport event in the world, the Olympic Games, in order to disseminate information and to communicate with the general public. Although it lasts for quite a long period of time, the Cultural Olympiad does not carry with it the prestige of sport events and does not attract the media to the same extent as the Olympic Games. It is a fact that Pierre de Coubertin's vision about blending sport and culture has not been realised on equal terms. However, the benefit from this objective is multifold, because the cultural dimension of the Olympic Games may be seen on many occasions, such as during the ceremonies and at particular artistic aspects, as mentioned above. In particular, during the Games opening and closing ceremonies, where Art prevails, the interest of the international public is huge and these events attract the attention of billions of spectators. Furthermore, the participation of artists and designers of renown also in other forms of art, not only in those particular Olympic Games but also in others, demonstrates that culture remains the main partner of the Olympic Games. In particular, regarding the two Olympic Games held in Athens, one can validly argue that they have been distinguished by their excellent quality and originality and that they now form part of the Olympic legacy.

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