

LOS ANGELES 1932

by Richard Stanton

After the close of the Olympic Games in Amsterdam, 1928, the Organizing Committee for the 1932 Games in Los Angeles got to work and one of the first items in their budget was for the Art Competitions. The Americans took the preceding games as their example chose to conduct an Art Exhibit concurrent with the Art Competitions. The task would be formidable. The stock market crash of 1929 shook the financial timbers of the world economy when the banks began to close in 1931 the nations of the world plunged into the seemingly insatiable maw of the great depression. The city of Los Angeles was no exception; it too was struggling under the burden of the depression. However, when it came to the art competitions they suffered from an additional burden. Despite Hollywood's early glitter and glamour, the Los Angeles of 1932 was still culturally far from becoming what one could describe as a "world-class city." Culturally, its fundamental arts infrastructure was barely beginning.

In the eyes of many, the original decision by the International Olympic Committee to award the games to Los Angeles was risky. With the transportation limitations of the era, Southern California was very remote for the European communities. They faced at least week aboard ship to cross the Atlantic, and then a journey of another several days to cross the North American continent. The additional costs to the European participants travelling to such a remote location were a major concern in these times of financial crisis. However, the Americans had a plan to mitigate the problem of additional costs regarding the art competitions.

The job of organizing the art competitions fell to General Charles H. SHERRILL. However, as a result of his already busy schedule (in early 1932 he received an appointment as U.S. Ambassador to Turkey) he had no option but to transfer most of the duties of managing the Olympic art events onto the shoulders of Miss Leila MECHLIN. She handled the actual on site organization for the events He also appointed Mr. Guillaume LEROLLE to tour Europe and solicit participation in the art events by the various nations.

Apparently, the instructions to Mr. LEROLLE were overly vague. In his first communiques to some of the National Olympic Committees LEROLLE almost set off a European boycott of the art competitions. He believed his assignment was to contact the National Olympic Committees of the various countries and have them organize local art competitions, etc., from which he would select the artworks for the Los Angeles competitions. In his communique

to the Dutch committee, he also stated that if they cooperated with his efforts the Los Angeles Fine Arts Committee would bear their expenses for the exhibition. Otherwise they would have to bear the expenses themselves. As is easily imagined, the reactions were swift in coming.

The Dutch committee complained directly to Count BAILLET-LATOUR, President of the International Olympic Committee. An example of the complaints is a letter from the French National Olympic Committee sent to William GARLAND.

"... General Sherrill made it known to us that a representative of the American Committee Olympic, Mr. Guillaume Lerolle, staying in Paris, was assigned to centralize all works of the European artists eligible to take part in the Olympic Art Competitions of 1932. For your further information, having achieved a good rapport with Mr. Guillaume Lerolle, he made it me known that he had received as a mission to undertake a tour of Europe and to search for himself the works eligible to represent their countries in Los Angeles, to select them himself and to interpose with the foreign Governments to provide greater amplitude for his prospecting, etc.

I made it known to Mr. Lerolle that, according to the Olympic Regulations he could not thus be empowered because the selection of the works of art eligible to be shown in Los Angeles belonged solely to the National Olympic Committees. ..."

Numerous similar reactions were forthcoming. It did not take long for General SHERRILL to arrange a meeting with Mr. LEROLLE and make the necessary clarifications to avoid a near rebellion. As a result of that meeting Mr. LEROLLE sent a letter to the various Presidents of the National Olympic Committees unequivocally stating,

"... It is of course well understood that the choice of works thus transported to Los Angeles, which will participate in the Competitions or should only be exhibited, belongs solely to your National Olympic Committee. ..."

The matter of Mr. LEROLLE'S function now being resolved, the nations of the Olympic family regained their willingness to participate. They then set about their own respective processes for the selection of artists and artworks worthy of participating in the Los Angeles games.

The art disciplines selected for participation in the 1932 Games (Architecture, Literature, Music, Painting and Sculpture) remained unchanged since the original mandate in 1906 for arts as competitions to be included in the celebration of each Olympiad.

With only a few changes, rules for entries into the competitions were essentially the same as those used in the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam. Summarizing, the rules applicable to all of the arts were:

1. The works had to be by living artists from the nations which were invited to participate in the Games of the Xth Olympiad to be held in Los Angeles.
2. The artworks had to be related in some fashion to sport.
3. The artworks had to be executed during the course of the IXth Olympiad that is, since January 1, 1928, and must not have been exhibited at the Games of the IXth Olympiad at Amsterdam.

Examples of some of the regulations specific to each of the art disciplines include:

Architecture:

Competitors may submit the following works for competition and exhibition:

- a. drawings on a scale of at least 1:200 for building, and at least 1:500 for grounds, drawings in detail on a larger scale may be added,
- b. water colour paintings,
- c. perspective drawings,
- d. casts,
- e. photographs of works which have been executed.

Literature:

Competitors may submit the following:

- a. lyrics and contemplative works (as songs, vocal music, odes, hymns, cantatas, ballads, etc., lyric prose, essays, etc.)
- b. dramatic works (tragedies, plays, comedies, farces, librettos, open air plays, dialogues, scenario, etc.)
- c. epic works (as romances, novels, heroic narrative poems, short stories, etc.)

Only works of which the contents relate to sport, and which do not comprise more than 20,000 words will be allowed.

Music:

- a. Compositions of songs for one or more persons, with or without accompaniment of piano or orchestra.
- b. Compositions for one instrument, with or without accompaniment, and for chamber music (instrumental).
- c. Compositions for orchestra (string or mixed orchestra, wind band and brass band).

The performance of which does not occupy more than an hour will be allowed.

Paintings:

- a. paintings (in oils, on canvas or on pasteboard).

- b. drawings and water-colours (on paper, or similar material, in one or more colours).
- c. graphic art (engravings, lithographs, signs, etc.).

Sculpture:

- a. sculptures;
- b. reliefs and medals.

In addition, the works required approval by the National Olympic Committee under which the artist claimed citizenship. Works that did not satisfy these requirements were not allowed to enter. However, pieces not conforming to the regulations could be entered *hors concours* as for exhibition only. In the United States section there were a considerable number of such entries, works borrowed from some of the leading art museums, which greatly enhanced both the interest and the standard; but mostly the works from abroad were entered in the competitions.

The art events opened on July 30th in the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art. The museum stands in Exposition Park directly opposite the stadium in which the main sporting events took place. The competitions and exhibits occupied fifteen galleries, the foyer, the rotunda and the main hall. In all, thirty-one nations participated in the art activities. They were Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, France, Haiti, Germany, Guatemala, Holland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Luxemburg, Mexico, Monaco, Norway, Peru, Poland, Rumania, San Salvador, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the U.S.A., Uruguay, and Venezuela. There were over eleven hundred items on display. However, Argentina, Bulgaria, Mexico, Peru, Romania, San Salvador, Spain, Turkey Uruguay and Venezuela participated *hors concours*, only as exhibitors. Originally, they were counted among the countries also entering the art competitions. Five-Hundred-Forty artists representing 24 nations chose to enter as competitors rather than simple exhibitors.

Twenty-four judges comprised the juries of the various art disciplines. They were:

Painting: Benjamin C. Brown, Pasadena; John C. Johansen, New York City; Reginald Poland, San Diego; Eugene Savage, New York City; and David Alfaro Siquieros, Mexico.

Sculpture: Henry Hering, New York City, representing the National Sculpture Society; Carl Miller, Sweden; Haig Patigian and Lloyd La Page Rollins of San Francisco; and S.C. Scarpitta, Hollywood, representing Italy.

Architecture: Arthur Brown Jr., San Francisco, representing the Societe des Beaux Arts Architects; Myron Hunt, Los Angeles; Professor Warren P. Laird, Philadelphia; Frederick H. Meyer, San

Francisco; and Eliel Saarinen of Finland, representing the American Institute of Architects.

Literature: William Lyon Phelps, New Haven; Thornton Wilder, Peterborough; Hugh Walpole, London; Andre Maurois, Paris.

Music: Ernest Schelling, New York City; Ruben Goldmark, New York City; Sigismund Stojowski, New York City; Carl Engel, New York City; A. Jurgelionis, Lithuania.

Of those Twenty-four judges, eighteen were Americans. Although seemingly weighted to the American advantage, no record appears regarding any contentious decisions or awards made by the juries.

The competition results in the art categories were as follows.

Paintings:

Gold Medal: David WALLIN (SWE),
At the Seaside of Arild
Silver Medal: Ruth MILLER (USA),
Struggle
Bronze Medal not awarded
Honorable Mention: Antonia MATOS (GUA),
Charles PEARS (GBR), George HILL (USA),
Michal BYLINA (POL), Waclaw BOROVSKI
(POL).

Water Colors & Drawings:

Gold Medal: Lee BLAIR (USA), *Rodeo*
Silver Medal: Percy CROSBY (USA),
Jackknife
Bronze Medal: Gerhardus WESTERMAN (NED),
Horseman
Honorable Mention: BLUE EAGLE (USA), Jean
JACOBY (LUX), Gosta va HENNIG (SWE),
Prevost (BEL)

Prints:

Gold Medal: Joseph Webster COLINKIN (USA),
Leg Scissors
Silver Medal: Janina KONARSKA (POL),
Stadium
Bronze Medal: Joachim KARSCH (GER),
Stabwechsel
Honorable Mention: Gerald Spencer PRYSE
(GBR), Armin HANSIN (USA), Lewis C.
DANIEL (USA), Eijiryo NAGA (JPN)

Sculpture:

Gold Medal: Mahonri YOUNG (USA),
The Knockdown
Silver Medal: Milthiades MANNO (HUN),
Wrestling
Bronze Medal: Jakub OBROVSKY (CZE),
Odysseus
Honorable Mention: Ercole DREI (ITA),
Antoni KENAR (POL), Carl FAGERBERG
(SWE), Gerhard HENNING (DEN), Hunt
DIEDERICH (USA), Dudley V. TALCOTT
(USA)

Medals & Reliefs:

Gold Medal: Josef KLUKOWSKI (POL),
Sport Sculpture II
Silver Medal: Frederic MACMONNIES (USA),
Lindbergh Medal
Bronze Medal: R. TAIT MCKENZIE (CAN),
Shielf of Athletes

Architecture:

Gold Medal: John HUGHES (GBR),
Sport Center Liverpool
Silver Medal: HOVMOLLER-KLEMMENSEN (DEN),
Public Park Stadium"
Bronze Medal: Andre VERBEKE (BEL),
Marathon Park

Architectural Designs:

Gold Medal: Gus SAACKE, Pierre BAILEY, P.
MONTENOT (FRA) *Cirque pour Toros*
Silver Medal: John Russell POPE, (USA),
Payne Whitney Gymnasium
Bronze Medal: Richard KONWIARZ (GER),
Schlesierkampfbahn
Honorable Mention: H.R. AIKER (GER),
BAKER-ORMSBEE-BRANNER (USA), Alvis
DRYAK (CZE), Louis STYNEN (BEL)
K.Martin WESTERBERG (SWE)

Literature:

Gold Medal: Paul BAUER (GER),
Struggle with the Himalayas
Silver Medal: Josef PETERSEN (DEN),
The Argonauts
Bronze Medal none awarded
Honorable Mention: Avery BRUNDAGE (USA)

Music:

Gold Medal none awarded
 Silver Medal Josef SUK (CZE),
Into a New Life
 Bronze Medal none awarded
 Honorable Mention none awarded

The medals awarded to the artists were identical to those awarded to the athletes. The Gold Medal was actually Silver-Gilt, the Silver Medal was silver, and the Bronze Medal was bronze. The press received the announcement of the awards shortly after the opening of the exhibition to the public. Distribution of the medals took place while the exhibition was in progress, but the Diplomas were issued later and sent to the respective Olympic Committee of each country for subsequent delivery to the artist. Those artists receiving an Honorable Mention received the diploma alone. All of the awards in the arts were ceremonially announced in the Olympic Stadium in precisely the same manner as were the athletic awards.

On Sunday, July the 31st the California Arts Club invited many distinguished guests to meet the visiting Olympic artists and members of the International Olympic Jury of Art Awards at an early soiree in which the guests were entertained with Spanish and Mexican music, such as Jose ARIAS and his Troubadours.

The exhibition of the artworks remained open for another month, ending on the last day of August 1932. From the opening day, the exhibition was extremely well attended. The interest of athletes and officials in the show was demonstrated by the numbers who came to see it. In all, the daily average of visitors was fifteen thousand and swelled to twenty-four thousand on Sundays. The final count at the art events exceeded 384,000 visitors. With some minor changes to the schedule, that number would have been even larger. From the records found regarding the art competitions segment of the Games from 1912 through 1948, it appears Los Angeles had the largest number of visitors to the art exhibits.

In every instance, the Olympic Committees of the various European nations chose to assume the responsibility of assembling their own exhibits,

but each of the nations received a certain allowance for the cost of transportation, insurance, and other expenses. Thus, the American effort to assist with the costs appears indeed to have helped to assure European participation and a successful art segment.

The Gold medalist in the Water Colour competitions, Lee BLAIR of the USA, while watching the closing ceremonies of the Munich 1972 Olympic Games, commented to a friend that he knew the feeling of national pride in representing your country. It was the proudest moment of his life. During a newspaper interview in the later years of his life, BLAIR also said the only difference (between the artists and the athletes) was they were in the stands while the athletes were on the field during the awards announcements. BLAIR further commented there was a local art critic in attendance who was loudly complaining he could not hear due to the noise of the crowd. Blair told the interviewer he used to chuckle at the astonishment he met when people discovered he was a Gold medalist Olympian. They wanted to know if he won the One Hundred meter dash or something, and when he told them it was in the art competitions, they were flatly astounded.

The wife of the German Gold Medalist in Literature, Paul BAUER, said before her husband passed away that he was enormously proud of participation in the Games and being the first German to win the Gold Medal in the Literature competitions.

The closing ceremonies of the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles were held on August 14. After the speeches were finished, the pageantry complete, the trumpets high up on the peristyle sounded again. The plaintive strains of "Aloha 'oe" began to play. The audience, deeply touched, joined in a chorus of a hundred thousand voices singing the Hawaiian farewell of the western seas. 'Aloha 'oe, Aloha 'oe, one fond embrace, a ho'i a'e au, A hui hou aku." (Farewell to thee, farewell to thee, one fond embrace ere I depart, until meet again).