

A Premiere with Obstacles: The Olympic Art Competitions 1912 in Stockholm

By Ansgar Molzberger

Preface

The inclusion of Art Competitions in the program of the Olympic Games is known to have been a special affair of the heart for Pierre de Coubertin and something he had pursued since the beginning of his Olympic career. However, it was always his aim to provide the Olympic Games with a meaning that would make them different from "ordinary" international sport championships. The "marriage of muscle and mind," as Coubertin called it in his memoirs¹, should combine "his" world festival with science and art.

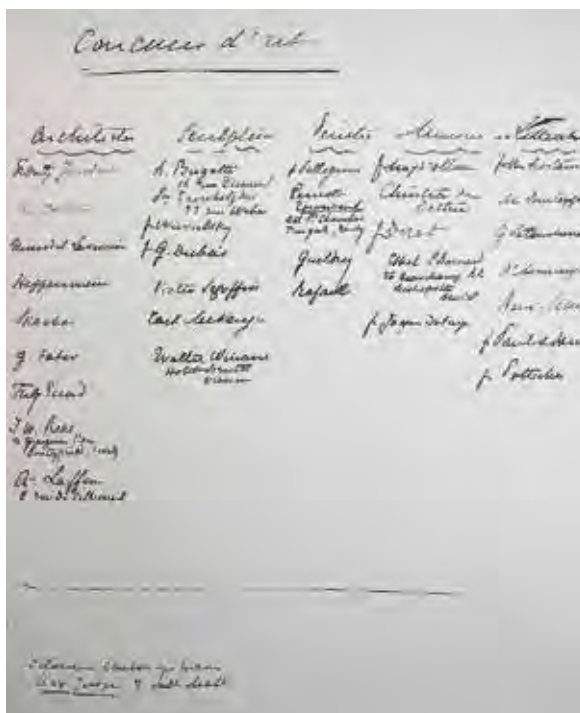
After a consultative meeting, hosted by Coubertin in 1906 in Paris, he had hoped to introduce the contests at the 1908 Games. This proved impossible even though the Royal Academy had already published the regulations.² The London Organising Committee had to cancel the Art Competitions because of the lack of preparation time – after the withdrawal of Rome as the original host for the Olympic Games of 1908, the preparation time for London was only about one and a half years.

Coubertin was forced to agree to the postponement of the contests which were eventually introduced in 1912.



Walter Winans: "An American Trotter", Gold medal (sculpture), Olympic Art Competitions 1912. Winans is the only person in Olympic history to have won both sporting (Shooting, 1908) and artistic gold medals. Sveriges Centralförening för Idrottens Främjande (Photo: German Sport & Olympic Museum)

Left: Handwritten notice "Concours d'art" of Pierre de Coubertin. IOC Archive.



The prospect of fulfilling Coubertin's wishes were given a boost even before Stockholm had been formally designated as host city by the IOC. Founder member Viktor Balck³ promised that there would be Art Competitions if Stockholm were awarded the Games:

*"Les concours d'art seront arrangés selon le vœux du comité international, qui aura le devoir de dresser le programme de ce concours."*⁴

And even in the Official Report of the Stockholm Games, published in 1913, the Swedes expressed their understanding of the "marriage of muscle and mind" as a special wish by Coubertin:

*"It was, of course, quite natural, that, when the Olympic Games were revived in our days, a wish should be strongly expressed to also include the thought entertained by the ancients, and unite intellectual feats to the physical displays at Olympic Competitions."*⁵

So much for theory, reality – not mentioned in the Official Report of the 1912 Olympic Games – looked different: The Stockholm Organising Committee (OC)

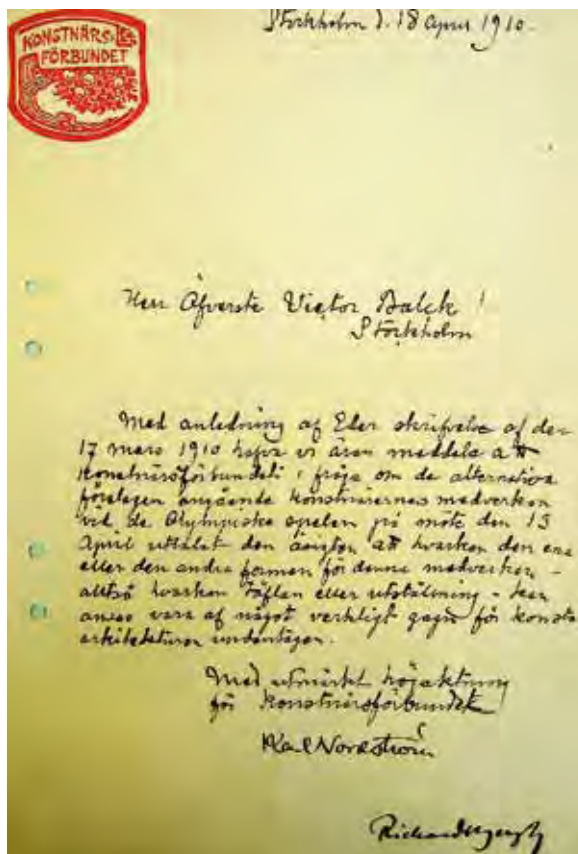
was less than enthusiastic about Coubertin's desire for the implementation of Olympic Art Competitions and resisted so stubbornly to the new "discipline" that the IOC President temporarily declared "war" to the Swedish organisers and was only able to save the premiere of the Concours d'art in 1912 by carrying it out on his own.

The controversy over the first Olympic Art Competitions

At the IOC Session in Berlin on 28th May 1909, the Swedish capital was chosen to host the 1912 Olympic Games. Subsequently, the Stockholm Organising Committee, led by Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf (1882–1973, King of Sweden as Gustaf VI Adolf from 1950–1973) as Honorary President, Viktor Balck as President and J. Sigfrid Edström⁶ as Vice-President, was founded and immediately started its work. The theme of the Olympic Art Competitions appeared in February 1910 for the first time on the OC agenda. However, after a short discussion it was agreed not to initiate any plans for the organisation of the competitions and adjourned the matter.⁷ But two weeks later, Balck reported to his colleagues that a letter by Coubertin was received in which he demanded the implementation of "his" Concours d'art at the Olympic Games of 1912. Thus, the Swedish organisers were forced to act.

But apart from Balck to Coubertin from 1908, in which Balck's letter expressed his backing for Olympic Art Competitions, the Swedes showed themselves now to be extremely cautious about the idea. In particular Honorary President Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf was critical regarding the matter because he thought it hardly possible to compare and classify artworks in a competition. To set the organisers free from a direct compulsion to act, he proposed to ask well-known Swedish art experts for their opinion on Coubertin's ideas. The committee members acted on his advice.⁸

Various institutions and organisations like the Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna (Royal Academy for Free Arts), the Konstnärslförbundet (Artist's Association), the Svenska Arkitekturföreningen (Swedish Association of Architecture), the department "House Building Art" of the Svenska Teknologföreningen (Swedish Association of Technologists) as well as several artists were chosen. They all received a letter in March 1910, in which the OC explained that Coubertin wanted a Concours d'art in Stockholm 1912. Furthermore, the letter described a preceding discussion in the OC on whether an exhibition rather than a competition would be preferable and it ended with a request of a statement on the subject. From this, it can be seen that the men around Balck were not really convinced about Coubertin's idea of Olympic Art Competitions – or rather: the Swedes doubted the Concours d'art from the beginning. The replies from the local artists and architects, which



Statement of the Konstnärslförbundet of 18th April 1910 on the question of the Concours d'art: "Apart from architecture, neither a competition nor an exhibition is really of use for art." Riksarkivet.

came promptly and unanimously, were all negative or at least cautious. At most, an architectural competition could be imagined by some of the requested experts, but the idea of Olympic Art Competitions was not received well at all. Some of the experts were a little more open minded regarding the idea of only arranging an exhibition. However, no association offered its support. Therefore, the OC decided to inform Coubertin about the anticipated difficulties in implementing the Concours d'art in the Olympic Games of 1912.⁹ This seemed to be a good tactic: by explaining the difficulties with the expert's rejections they rolled off the responsibility and detracted from their own unwillingness to arrange the competitions.

However, Coubertin was unimpressed by the Swedish complaints and demanded in his answer, that the Concours d'art absolutely had to be part of the Stockholm Games.¹⁰ At the IOC Session in Luxembourg in June 1910, he was even more explicit: Balck reported on the progress of Olympic preparations and mentioned the negative attitude of the Swedish art experts. Coubertin then sharply rebuked the Swedish delegation and threatened to ignore the Stockholm Games, if the artistic contests were missing from the programme:

"Il n'y a qu'une différence entre nos Olympiades et les Championnats sportifs ordinaires, et ce sont précisément les concours d'art tels qu'ils existaient aux Olympiades de la Grèce antique, où les manifestations sportives marchaient de pair avec

les manifestations artistiques. Il est tout naturel que des organisations littéraires et artistiques suédoises, étrangères à l'idée Olympique, n'aient pas compris ce qu'on leur demandait et s'en soient effrayées.

Il se verrait obligé de se désintéresser de la V^e Olympiade si le Comité suédois n'organisait pas les concours d'art qui ont été rendus obligatoires, à partir de la IV^e Olympiade, par les Congrès de Paris de 1906."¹¹

After all, Coubertin showed what he thought of the so-called expert-status of the Swedish art associations, and that the Stockholm Organising Committee actually had no choice, because the realisation of the competition was just about following the guidelines of the IOC. Furthermore, the strong reaction of the IOC President showed that the Swedish organisers were unwise to use the negativity of local art organisations as justification for their own reservations. Simply by going to the "experts" they had openly expressed their own doubts about Coubertin's idea. This affected him on a personal level.

The decision on the future implementation of the Olympic Art Competitions, which was made in Paris in 1906, had been pretty much a decision of Coubertin alone and was rather tolerated than supported by the majority of the more sport-interested IOC Members, with most of them not even being present at the Congress.

Balck back-pedalled immediately on the rebuke by Coubertin and gave his assurance that he was personally a supporter of the Concours d'art, but needed help from the IOC to conduct the competitions in the Stockholm Games, even against the resistance from the local art scene. Clarence von Rosen¹² as the second Swedish IOC Member and J. Sigfrid Edström, a guest in Luxembourg, shared Balck's opinion and promised their support in working for the Concours d'art, too.¹³

However the undertakings made in Luxembourg were soon shown to be half-hearted once they had returned to Stockholm. The issue was postponed at the OC Sessions the following months for several times, and the men around Balck swung even back into the old direction by proposing once again to ask the Swedish art associations for help: The plan was to have a conference to discuss once more if Art Competitions would make any sense.¹⁴

Balck in particular was in a quandary regarding the Concours d'art, as he on the one hand had to be true to his word given to Coubertin, but on the other hand was – like his OC colleagues – reluctant to arrange the competitions which the Swedes saw as an unwanted intervention in "their" games. They probably thought they could delay the decision until there was simply not enough time for them to be implemented. The Swedes had underestimated Coubertin at this point, though. Even if it remained quiet for several months regarding

the Concours d'art, in a letter of December 1910, the IOC President made clear to the Stockholm Organising Committee that he absolutely was not willing to compromise: The competitions were a matter of honour from which the IOC would not and could not withdraw, and Coubertin outlined that the doubts of the Swedish art scene were a national problem that had no relevance at the international Olympic Games.¹⁵ However, in order to support the Organising Committee in this matter he submitted the following offer:

- *"There will be a Concours d'art with the categories of architecture, sculpture, painting, music and literature as part of the Olympic Games of 1912. The winners will receive the same medals as the athletes and the award-winning works will be presented in an exhibition if possible.*
- *Because of the local problems related to the competitions, the Stockholm Organising Committee will entrust the IOC with the realisation of the Concours d'art. To support the work of the IOC, the Swedes will build a three-person sub-committee and will be involved with no more than 5,000 Francs regarding the costs."¹⁶*

Expressing the hope that the Swedes would accept his offer and the repeated emphasis that he was absolutely intransigent on the issue of Olympic Art Competitions, Coubertin closed his letter.

Despite the clear words of the IOC President, the Stockholm OC continued their aggressive stance and rejected the outstretched hand of Coubertin. The Swedes were harassed. They had neither the will to arrange the contests nor did they wish to suffer the intervention of the IOC in "their" project. They reverted to a consultative conference and invited some 30 representatives of the artistic community to their office to discuss the situation. The conference was held on 12th January 1911. It was attended by the OC delegates for the Concours d'art and high-ranking Stockholm cultural representatives such as Georg von Rosen¹⁷, Gustaf Cederström¹⁸, Ludvig Looström¹⁹ and Tor Hedberg²⁰, furthermore stadium architect Torben Grut²¹ as well as about fifteen people interested in art.²² As an introduction, Balck read the letter dated 15th December 1910 and written by Coubertin to them and subsequently declared the precarious situation for the Stockholm OC. Following this, he released the discussion on the Olympic Art Competitions.

According to the minutes of the meeting, Cederström was the first to speak: He absolutely rejected the Concours d'art as desired by Coubertin, because he thought the rules to be too vague. Therefore, it would be impossible to compare the submitted artworks with each other, said the Director of the Academy of Art.²³ Academy Professor Rosen had a different opinion on the matter: He thought no one in Sweden would be able to organise

such an international competition with high value and the refore proposed to accept Coubertin's offer to carry out the Concours d'art on his own. In contrast, stadium architect Grut commented that it would be best if the competitions did not happen, as it was likely to be a fiasco for which the Swedes would be blamed. The most obstinate attitude, however, was shown by Prince Eugene, brother of the King of Sweden and active as an artist:

*"No pressure should be exerted on us by the International Olympic Committee. The question is not, to what extent Olympic Art Competitions should be staged, but whether we consider them suitable or not."*²⁴

Thereupon, the conference took the unanimous decision that the Stockholm OC should not plan or arrange the Concours d'art at the 1912 Olympic Games. The attendees turned then to the question whether there should be an exhibition instead of competitions. Again, refusal was expressed with the art experts unanimously opposing to stage such an Olympic art exhibition.

Thus it was clear that the Swedes had not found a new way how to handle the requirements of Coubertin. After the conference, Balck remembered Coubertin's clear words of December 1910, however, he also notified that not the Art Competitions themselves were up for discussion, but merely the question of who should organise them. Therefore, the Stockholm OC decided to make a final decision at its next meeting to decide whether Coubertin should be asked to organise the Concours d'art by himself. On 26th January 1911 Balck informed the IOC President about this in very friendly words.²⁵ However, his diplomacy was not successful due to OC Secretary Kristian Hellström acting like a loose cannon. Without bringing Balck in agreement, Hellström wrote a nonchalant message to Coubertin – also on 26th January 1911:

*"Monsieur,
Revenant à votre honorée lettre du 15 écoulé nous vous demandons bien pardons de ne pas avoir répondu plus tot. Par la présente nous avons le regret de vous informer qu'un nombre d'artistes suédois, lesquels nous avons consulté concernant la question d'un Concours d'Art à l'occasion des Jeux Olympiques à Stockholm 1912, s'y sont opposés. La décision définitive du Comité sera prise à la prochaine assemblée, qui aura lieu le 6 Février, et nous vous informerons du resultat aussitot que possible."*²⁶

It remains a mystery why Hellström has sent this undiplomatic, almost gruff letter arbitrarily, when on the same day Balck as OC commissioner for the Olympic Art Competitions had ensnared Coubertin with friendly words so that he had been very close to solve the crisis in accordance with the expectations of the IOC President.

More clearly, however, was the prompt response of Coubertin to Hellström's letter. He declared "war" on the Stockholm OC on 31st January 1911:

*"Monsieur le Secrétaire,
Vous ne semblez vraiment pas vous rendre compte de la gravité de la demarche que vous venez de faire au nom semble-t-il de votre Comité. Comment pouvez penser un instant que je vais sacrifier mon œuvre de vingt années et se qui à mes yeux est l'essentiel de l'Olympiade c.à.d. l'alliance des Sport, des Lettres et des Arts et les décisions au Congrès International de 1906 – tout cela parceque 'Mss. les artistes suédois (qui n'ont rien à faire dans la question) s'y sens opposée'! ----- [sic!] Après m'etre consulté avec de Blonay et en considération des difficultés que vous semblez éprouver à mettre debout le Concours d'Art, nous vous avons proposé un règlement qui ne vous engage que pour des frais minimales et nous laisse à nous toutes les difficultés de l'entreprise.
Et tranquillement vous venez me dire que ce reglement ne sera pas adopté parceque les artistes suédois s'y opposent!! [sic!][...]
Je sera dans la guerre. Vous l'aurez voulu. Votre persistante opposition à quelque chose de si simple est un véritable defi que vous nous jetez. En vérité, si je travaille vingt ans en depensant sans compter mon temps et mon argent pour que la rente soit soudain narrée par un groupe d'artistes sué-*



Letter from Coubertin to Balck of 31st January 1911. Riksarkivet.

dois qui donnent l'impression de n'être nous que par la jalousie professionnelle en cette affaire. Non, Messieurs, il ne l'ont pas compter que nous cederons et je le repete nous ne cederons pas. [...] Veuillez recevoir, Monsieur le Secrétaire, l'expression de mes sentiments très distinguée
Pierre de Coubertin"²⁷

These unambiguous words of Pierre de Coubertin left no room for doubt as to just how important "his" Olympic Art Competitions were to him. The decisive word of "war" in Coubertin's letter could also imply something else: With his harsh letter, Hellström had undiplomatically snubbed Coubertin. The fact that the OC not only detailed its difficulties with staging the competitions, but also the attitude of the Swedish artists, who viewed the competitions as worthless, must have insulted Coubertin. After all, the inclusion of the Concours d'art in the Olympic competition program had been his idea.

Balck got a letter from Coubertin on the same day, too. Again, the IOC President showed himself to be absolutely determined on the merits, but more moderate in

suédois n'ont rien à voir dans cette question qui ne concerne que notre comité et le votre – et vous et nous sommes liés par le congrès de 1906. Il n'y a donc pas à discuter sur le principe mais seulement sur l'application. [...]

Votre obstination à repousser la solution si avantageuse pour vous que nous vous avons proposée ouvrirait le plus regrettable conflit. Je vous supplie d'y réfléchir avant de recourir à cette extrémité.

Aucune entente n'est possible entre nous que sur les taxes proposées. Je vous serai bien reconnaissant de m'aviser par depeche du vote que vous emettrez le 6 Février afin que je sache si c'est la paix ou la guerre que vous nous offrez."²⁸

The two letters made a big impression in Stockholm: The OC decided unanimously during its next meeting on 6th February 1911 that Coubertin should stage the first Olympic Art Competitions and that for this purpose, the Swedes made the required 5,000 Francs available for the IOC.²⁹ On 7th February 1911 Balck sent a telegram with the words "Comité suédois a accepté votre projet de Concours d'art" to Coubertin³⁰: the planning of the Stockholm Games could go on "peaceful" and the way to the premiere of the Olympic Art Competitions was paved.

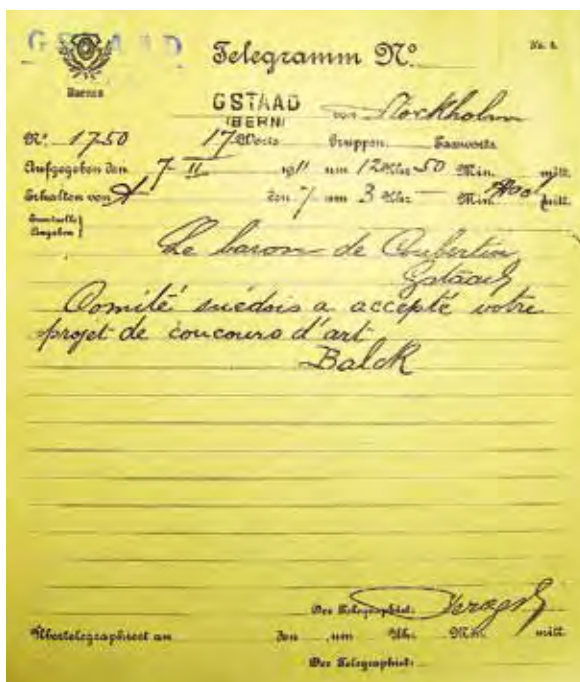
The implementation of the first Olympic Art Competitions

Since the decision of the Stockholm OC was not carried out until February 1911, there was only a little over a year for Coubertin to realise the first Concours d'art as the submitted works still had to be classified before the Games so they could be presented during the Stockholm feast in 1912. However, the division of responsibility in the constellation IOC President / Stockholm OC was resolved after all: Coubertin could send his wishes and demands and the men around Balck would arrange everything.³¹ After these duties had been resolved, the issue of the Olympic Art Competitions rested for a while in the correspondence between the two parties.

But not within the IOC: Coubertin used the achieved agreement with the Swedes for advertising his Concours d'art. Already in March 1911, suggestions for details of the new Olympic "discipline" were published in the *Revue Olympique*.³² At the 1911 IOC session held at the end of May in Budapest Coubertin also presented a draft for the rules of the Art Competitions and announced to publish these regulations in the *Revue Olympique*.³³ But the Concours d'art was not an issue beyond that in Budapest. However, with the exception that Coubertin reported a week before the meeting that the winner of an architectural competition under the theme of "Sports facilities" had been chosen.³⁴

At the same time, the correspondence between the

Telegram from Viktor Balck to Coubertin of 7th February 1911. IOC Archive.



tone. However, at first Coubertin complained to his IOC colleague about the OC Secretary's indiscretion:

"Monsieur le Président,
Permettez moi de vous dire à quel degré j'ai été blessé de ce que la lettre si détaillée si complete et si amicale que j'ai adressée à votre comité il y a plus d'un mois ait provoqué la sèche et incroyable réponse que je viens de recevoir de M. Hellström et dans laquelle il m'annonce que les concours d'art n'aurait pas lieu parce que les artistes suédois s'y sont opposés. J'ai le regret de vous faire observer que les artistes

IOC President and the Stockholm OC regarding the Art Competitions reconvened³⁵, and the official announcement of the Olympic Art Competitions was published in the *Revue Olympique* in September 1911:

1° *The Vth Olympiad will include competitions in Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Music and Literature.*

2° *The Jury can only consider subjects which have not been published or exhibited before and which have some direct connexion with sport.*

3° *To the winner of each of the five competitions will be awarded the Prize medal of the Vth Olympiad. The exhibits selected will, so far as possible be exhibited, published or performed during the Olympic games.*

4° *Competitors must notify their intention to enter for one or more of these competitions before January 15th 1912 and the exhibits themselves must be in the hands of the Jury before March 1st 1912.*

5° *No limitation of size or form are laid down for manuscripts, plans, drawings or canvasses. But sculptors are required to send in clay models not exceeding 80 centimetres in height, length and breadth.*

6° *For further information as for forms of entry, application should be made to M. le Président du Comité International Olympique, 20, rue Oudinot, Paris, or Olympiska Spelen, Stockholm.*"³⁶

It was certainly advantageous that Coubertin had made such vaguely formulated regulations for the competitions. With accurate given conditions for the artist's participation, the already small target audience would have been further reduced again. So, now the practical work for the Concours d'art started: After the announcement of the competitions, artists got regularly in contact with Coubertin, asking for more information or announcing their participation.³⁷

Within the Stockholm OC it was decided that the support of the Olympic Art Competitions from now on should be in the hands of the Finance Section since the Swedes were apart from their duty to find a suitable exhibition hall for the presentation of the works only financially involved in Coubertin's project. As responsible OC delegate for the matter, Walter Murray³⁸, member of the Finance Section was chosen.³⁹ With him Coubertin thenceforth had a contact person in Stockholm, which – unlike the "laggards" in the OC during the past months – really tried to support the IOC President on the "home stretch" of his Concours d'art.

The deadline for contributions to the Olympic Art Competitions had been postponed by Coubertin to 1st April 1912,⁴⁰ and the judging of the submissions was made during the following weeks. It can be assumed that the jury consisted only of the IOC President, since information about other jury members can not be found

in the existing documents. As the letters from Murray to Coubertin show, were the first winners of the concours were chosen in April 1912.⁴¹ Gradually, their works were sent to Stockholm. A month before the start of Olympic Games the project of Olympic Art Competitions seemed to find a happy ending when Murray wrote to Coubertin:

"Je suis très heureux d'apprendre que vous avez mené à bonne fin le travail considérable qui aurait dû revenir au Comité d'organisation. Vous y avez certainement mieux réussi que nous. Inutile de vous dire que les choses seront arrangées exactement d'après vos indications. [...]

*En attendant que nous ayons le plaisir de vous recevoir, veuillez agréer, cher Monsieur, avec nos remerciements pour toute la peine que vous vous êtes donnée, l'expression des meilleurs sentiments du Comité, auxquelles je joins les miennes d'une façon toute spéciale. Je dois ajouter que, pendant mon absence de Stockholm, motivée par mon service, deux objets d'art sont arrivés, la porte de gymnase et les peintures de M. Pellegrini. Je n'ai pas encore eu l'occasion de les voir mais je sais qu'ils sont arrivés en bon état."*⁴²

According to Murray's letter, the gold medal winning artwork of Pellegrini (painting) and the silver medal sculpture of Dubois had been sent to the Swedish capital in May 1912 to be shown in the Concours d'art-exhibition. There, the Stockholm OC had decided not only to exhibit the awarded works but also all IOC Challenge cups and the medals for the Olympic Games of 1912.⁴³ The preparations for the exhibition were completed on the Swedish side, after Murray in June 1912 had informed the OC about his plans to rent a showroom for 300 SEK at Karlaplan, near the stadium.⁴⁴

But the sport diplomatic disputes about the Concours d'art between Coubertin and the OC were not over yet: With the Karlaplan, Murray had just picked a Stockholm court, where an exhibition of the Konsthärförbundet had taken place during summer 1912. This was an association which a year before had been very critical about Coubertin's idea to stage Olympic Art Competitions and had advised the Swedish organisers to speak out against the Concours d'art.

In specially constructed building, the Konsthärförbundet presented a large exhibition from June to August, entitled "Sweden in Art". Amongst others, Prince Eugene, one of the sharpest critics of Coubertin's Olympic Art Competitions, took part in this exhibition.⁴⁵ Ironically, this presentation was entitled as "Olympic exhibition" in the press because it was shown near the stadium and during the 1912 Olympic Games.⁴⁶

Probably, both exhibitions could have taken place in peaceful coexistence at the Karlaplan, if the Swedish IOC Member Clarence von Rosen had not sent the

Aftonbladet article "Konstnärskörbundets olympiska utställning. Öppnas i morgon" (Olympic exhibition of the Artist's Association. Opening tomorrow) of 3rd June 1912, sent to Coubertin by Rosen on 7th June 1912. IOC Archive.



Aftonbladet article "Konstnärskörbundets olympiska utställning" (Olympic exhibition of the Artist's Association) to Coubertin with best intentions:

"Je vous envoie ci-joint deux coupures de journaux de Stockholm, démontrant qu'il existe pourtant, parmi le monde artiste, un sentiment de relation entre l'Olympiade et l'art. Voici une de nos associations d'artistes – et la plus importante – qui prend un grand risque et montre une initiative qu'elle n'a pas osée émettre à d'autres occasions. Et le titre des articles montre aussi que les journaux et le public voient et sentent le lien entre cette exposition d'art et les Jeux Olympiques.

Que démontre cette exposition encore?

Elle démontre que si nous avions eu, dans le Comité International, un membre suédois, élu expressément et seulement pour s'occuper des intérêts artistiques et de la réalisation, sous une forme ou autre, de vos idées et idéals dans cette question, nous aurions eu un succès olympique sur ce point, tout aussi bien qu'avec les Jeux Équestres. C'est pourquoi j'ai écrit à Brunetta, avec la prière de mettre à l'ordre du jour

Advertisement for the Concours d'art exhibition, Daily Program of the Olympic Games of 10th July 1912, p. 50. IOC Archive.



*de notre session: "que [sic!] chaque pays ait un membre de plus, élu pour s'occuper uniquement de l'art (la sculpture, la peinture, etc.), la littérature et la musique. Nous autres nous n'avons pas le temps. Nous avons bien assez avec les sports, si nous les soignons bien."*⁴⁷

The letter shows that Rosen had just wanted to show his enthusiasm for the subject of "Olympic Games and art" by pointing out his plans and ambitions as an IOC Member. But he had misjudged the situation in two respects: First, the exhibition of the Konstnärskörbundet was mainly about folkloric inspired works, not sports. Secondly, and much worse, Rosen was probably not aware that Coubertin would interpret the "wrong" Olympic exhibition as an absolute affront: His critics presented an exhibition which was entitled "Olympic" by the press. Consequently, Coubertin reacted immediately and complained bitterly to OC President Balck:

*"Nous avons été émus par la nouvelle que les artistes Suédois dont l'opposition aux Concours d'Art s'est manifestée avec une volonté si passionnée que vous avez dû renoncer à les organiser et m'en laisser toute la charge, organisent maintenant une exposition voisine du Stade et à laquelle ils prétendent donner le nom d'Olympique."*⁴⁸

Balck handed the matter instantly to Murray, the OC's representative for the Concours d'art. He mollified Coubertin by pointing out that the term "Olympic" regarding the exhibition's title was the result of bad journalistic work.⁴⁹ By blaming the Swedish press for the faux pas, Murray was able to appease the angry IOC President. Thus, the last obstacle in connection with the Olympic Art Competitions was removed and the submitted artworks were presented in the rented showroom at Stockholm's Karlplan.⁵⁰

Now, only the official awards ceremony had to follow. Even though *The Western Daily Press* announced in June 1912, the art winners would get their medals from the hands of King Gustaf V at the same time as the athletes – this meant during the award ceremony on 15th July 1912⁵¹ – the Stockholm OC's records show that the winning artists⁵² were not honoured at the central ceremony in the stadium.⁵³ One exception might have been the victorious writers Hohrod / Eschbach also known as Pierre de Coubertin. However, for obvious reasons, the IOC President was not able to receive the gold medal in public after he had awarded it to himself.⁵⁴ In the Official Report of the Stockholm Games an award ceremony for the Olympic Art Competition winners is not mentioned, either.⁵⁵

Even if the premiere of the Concours d'art was thus far from glamorous, it can still be regarded as an initial success for Coubertin. One has to keep in mind that

the French baron had implemented the competitions in the face of opposition from the Swedes and almost without help from the other IOC Members which were much more interested in sport than art. After the initial implementation of the new "discipline", Coubertin could in retrospect at least identify that against all odds, the first step on the way to the "marriage of muscle and mind" had been achieved in Stockholm.⁵⁶

- 1 P. de Coubertin, *Mémoires olympiques*, Lausanne 1931, p. 77.
- 2 R. Stanton, *The forgotten Olympic Art Competitions, The Story of the Olympic Art Competitions of the 20th Century*, Victoria 2000, pp. 17ff.
- 3 Viktor Balck (1844–1928), IOC Member from 1894 to 1920, President of the Stockholm Organising Committee for the 1912 Olympic Games. The Officer Balck – characterised by the Swedish gymnastics system rejecting competitive sport and, apart from his military career, professionally employed at the Stockholm "Gymnastiska Centralinstitutet" (Central Gymnastic Institute) – progressed to become in the 19th century one of the most outstanding figures in the Swedish sports movement. Without denying his gymnastic roots, he had become increasingly dedicated to sport, to which as an ardent patriot and supporter of the Swedish national movement he attributed "patriotic" significance: Swedish gymnastics should continue to serve the maintenance of the health of mankind. The training of fearless energetic men for the good of the fatherland, however, should be part of the sporting "School of Life". Balck also regarded the participation of local athletes on the international competitive stage as patriotic; as the athletes should show Sweden to its best advantage by their success. Balck tirelessly promoted "his" sport movement for decades. With his fundamental patriotic conservative conviction, he gained the support of the Swedish upper class and the sport-loving royal family, thus contributing decisively to sport establishing an early foothold in Sweden.
- 4 Letter from Balck to Coubertin of 16th October 1908. IOC archive: "Jeux Olympiques de Stockholm 1912", Box 1: "JO-1912S-ARTPR-COJO", File 1 / SD 1.
- 5 E. Bergvall (Ed.), *The fifth Olympiad: The official Report of the Olympic Games of Stockholm 1912*, Stockholm 1913, p. 806.
- 6 Johan Sigfrid Edström (1870–1964, usually called J. Sigfrid Edström or just Sigfrid Edström), IOC Member from 1920 to 1952 and (commissary) IOC President from 1942/46 to 1952. Edström, who had studied and worked as an engineer at the end of the 19th century in Gothenburg, Zurich and Pittsburgh, made an early career in Sweden in the energy industry: As early as 1903, he became managing director of ASEA (Allmänna Svenska Elektriska AB, a company founded in 1883 in Västerås which merged in 1987 with the Swiss company Brown Boveri to form ABB – Asea Brown Boveri Ltd). As a student, Edström had been a very fine track and field athlete and had set many national sprint records.
- 7 Minutes of the OC meeting of 14th February 1910, p. 2. Riksarkivet: "Stockholmsolympiaden 1912", File A I / A I:1. In the Riksarkivet, the Swedish National Archive in Stockholm, the complete OC records of the 1912 Olympic Games are kept. The archival storage's system can be seen at www.ra.se. All translations from Swedish by the author.
- 8 Minutes of the OC meeting of 28th February 1910, p. 2. Ibid.
- 9 Minutes of the OC meeting of 2nd May 1910, p. 2. Ibid.
- 10 Minutes of the OC meeting of 17th May 1910, p. 4. Ibid.
- 11 Minutes of the 1910 IOC Session, p. 30. IOC Archive: "Sessions 1894–1985".
- 12 Count Clarence von Rosen (1867–1955), IOC Member from 1900 to 1948, was one of the most outstanding personalities during the pioneering phase of sport in Sweden. Apart from Tennis, Rowing and various winter sport disciplines, Rosen was primarily concerned with Equestrian sports. In this discipline, he celebrated his greatest successes and became a Swedish Equestrian sport idol during the 1890s. As an official, however, Rosen also made a name for himself in Motorsport, Bandy and Football. As the first President of the Svenska Fotbollförbundet (Swedish Football Association) founded in 1904, Rosen donated the trophy which was awarded as a challenge cup to the current Football league win-

- ners until the year 2000. Research in recent years into the Rosen family involvement in Swedish Nazi Organisations during the 1930s and 40s resulted in the Svenska Fotbollförbundet withdrawing the Cup donated by Rosen. Both Clarence von Rosen himself and his brother Eric von Rosen (1879–1948) in particular, were declared by the latest research to be active supporters of Swedish National Socialism.
- 13 Ibid., p. 31.
- 14 Minutes of the OC meeting of 8th August 1910, pp. 5f. and 22nd August 1910, p. 2. Riksarkivet: "Stockholmsolympiaden 1912", File A I / A I:1.
- 15 Letter from Coubertin to the Stockholm OC of 15th December 1910. Riksarkivet: "Stockholmsolympiaden 1912", File F IV / F IV:1. The letter only exists as a Swedish copy at the Stockholm Riksarkivet.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Georg von Rosen (1843–1923), painter and Professor at the Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna (Royal Academy for Free Arts). Relative of the Swedish IOC Member Clarence von Rosen.
- 18 Gustaf Cederström (1845–1933), painter and Director of the Kungl. Akademien för de fria konsterna (Royal Academy for Free Arts).
- 19 Ludvig Looström (1848–1922), art historian and Director of the Nationalmuseum.
- 20 Tor Hedberg (1862–1931), author and Director of the Kungl. Dramatiska Teatern (Royal Dramatic Theatre).
- 21 Torben Grut (1871–1945), architect and former Tennis player.
- 22 Their names were not mentioned in the conference's minutes.
- 23 Copy of the non-authenticated minutes of the OC initiated art expert's meeting of 12th January 1911 in the matter of the Concours d'art, p. 2. Riksarkivet: "Stockholmsolympiaden 1912", File F IV / F IV:1.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Letter from Balck to Coubertin of 26th January 1911. IOC Archive: "Victor Gustaf Balck", File 2 / SD 2.
- 26 Letter from Hellström to Coubertin of 26th January 1911. IOC Archive: "Jeux Olympiques de Stockholm 1912", Box 1: "JO-1912S-ARTPR-COJO", File 1 / SD 2.
- 27 Copy of the letter from Coubertin to Hellström of 31st January 1911. Annex to the minutes of the OC meeting of 6th February 1911. Riksarkivet: "Stockholmsolympiaden 1912", File A I / A I:2.
- 28 Letter of Coubertin to Balck of 31st January 1911. Riksarkivet: "Stockholmsolympiaden 1912", File F IV / F IV:1.
- 29 Minutes of the OC meeting of 6th February 1911, pp. 2f. Riksarkivet: "Stockholmsolympiaden 1912", File A I / A I:2.
- 30 Telegram from Balck to Coubertin of 7th February 1911. IOC Archive: "Jeux Olympiques de Stockholm 1912", Box 1: "JO-1912S-ARTPR-COJO", File 3 / SD 2.
- 31 H. Sandblad, "Kulturen och Stockholm-OS eller Så fick Coubertin sin guldmedalj", in: *Idrott, historia och samhälle – Svenska idrotts-historiska föreningens årsskrift 1987*, Stockholm 1987, pp. 89–109, here p. 100.
- 32 Anon. [P. de Coubertin?], "Les Concours d'art de 1912: suggestions aux concurrents", in: *Revue Olympique*, 3(1911), pp. 35–38.
- 33 Minutes of the 1911 IOC Session, p. 10. IOC Archive: "Sessions 1894–1985".
- 34 Ibid., p. 7. This international competition had been organised by the Paris School for Architecture, the participants were given the task to create a draft for a "modern Olympia". The first prize was won by the architects Eugène Monod und Alphonse Laverrière from Lausanne who also won the Gold medal in Architecture at the premiere of the Concours d'art in 1912. See G. Trelat, "Rapport sur le Concours d'Architecture", in: *Revue Olympique*, 8(1911), pp. 116–120 as well as Anon. [P. de Coubertin?], "Rapport sur les Concours artistiques et littéraires de la Vme Olympiade", in: *Revue Olympique*, 7(1912), pp. 102–107, here p. 106.
- 35 See letter from Coubertin to Hellström of 27th July 1911 regarding the allocation of medals for the Concours d'art, Riksarkivet: "Stockholmsolympiaden 1912", File F IV / F IV:1, as well as Hellström's answer of 10th August 1911. IOC Archive: "Jeux Olympiques de Stockholm 1912", Box 1: "JO-1912S-ARTPR-COJO", File 3 / SD 2.
- 36 Anon. [P. de Coubertin?], "Règlements des Concours littéraires et artistiques de 1912", in: *Revue Olympique*, 9(1911), pp. 131f.
- 37 Several letters in the IOC Archive show that Coubertin from the winter of 1911/12 was in contact with different artist who were interested to take part in the Olympic Art Competitions. Furthermore, a handwritten notice of Coubertin, entitled "Concours d'art" exists in the archive. Nearly three dozen names, divided into the

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five categories of architecture, sculpture, painting, music and literature are stated on the notepad, including the future Olympic gold medalists Monod and Laverrière (architecture), Winans (sculpture) and Pellegrini (painting). Undated notepad "Concours d'art" from Coubertin. IOC Archive: "Jeux Olympiques de Stockholm 1912", Box 1: "JO-1912S-ARTPR-COJO", File 3 / SD 1.

- 38 Walter Murray (1871-1957), Swedish attorney, politician and promoter of sports.
- 39 Minutes of the OC meeting of 26th March 26. März 1912, p. 9. Riksarkivet: "Stockholmsolympiaden 1912", File A I / A I:3.
- 40 Bulletin du Comité International Olympique, in: *Revue Olympique*, 1(1912), p. 15.
- 41 Letter from Murray to Coubertin of 28th April 1912. IOC Archive: "Jeux Olympiques de Stockholm 1912", Box 1: "JO-1912S-ARTPR-COJO", File 3 / SD 2.
- 42 Letter from Murray to Coubertin of 1st June 1912. Ibid.
- 43 Minutes of the OC meeting of 21st May 1912, pp. 9f. Riksarkivet: "Stockholmsolympiaden 1912", File A I / A I:3.

- 44 Minutes of the OC meeting of 4th June 1912, p. 3. Ibid.
- 45 The exhibition had twelve rooms, about 300 artworks from 21 different artists were presented. See also letter from Nordström, member of the Artist's Association, to the Stockholm OC of 7th June 1912. Riksarkivet: "Stockholmsolympiaden 1912", File Ö I d / Ö I d:1.
- 46 Anon., "Konstnärslörbundets olympiska utställning. Öppnas i morgon", in: *Aftonbladet*, 3rd June 1912, p. 7. Anon., "Hur leda främingsströmmen till våra utställningar?", in: *Stockholms Dagblad*, 14th July 1912, p. 3 as well as A. Lindhagen, "Sverige [sic!] i konsten. Från Konstnärslörbundets utställning i Stockholm i sommar", in: *Morgonbris. Tidning för den socialdemokratiska kvinnorörelsen*, (7)1912, pp. 6f.
- 47 Letter from Rosen to Coubertin of 7th June 1912. IOC Archive: "Jeux Olympiques de Stockholm 1912", Box 1: "JO-1912S-ARTPR-COJO", File 1 / SD 4.
- 48 Copy of the letter from Coubertin to Balck of 11th June 1912. Riksarkivet: "Stockholmsolympiaden 1912", File F IV / F IV:1.
- 49 Letter from Murray to Coubertin of 14th June 1912. IOC Archive: "Jeux Olympiques de Stockholm 1912", Box 1: "JO-1912S-ARTPR-COJO", File 3 / SD 2.
- 50 Bergvall, *The fifth Olympiad*, p. 809. Unfortunately, no informations exist about the exhibition's course. It is not known whether it was opened already in June 1912. However, from a letter from Murray to Coubertin it becomes clear that Coubertin sent not only award-winning works to the Swedish capital. Explicitly mentioned are the sculptures of the Canadian McKenzie and the Bohemian Spaniel. Accordingly, the Concours d'art exhibition included probably artworks, too, which were not honored in Stockholm. See letter from Murray to Coubertin of 12th June 1912. IOC Archive: "Jeux Olympiques de Stockholm 1912", Box 1: "JO-1912S-ARTPR-COJO", File 3 / SD 2.
- 51 Copy of the newspaper announcement of 18th June 1912. Riksarkivet: "Stockholmsolympiaden 1912", File F IV / F IV:1. The announcement was well placed by Coubertin, *The Western Daily Press* mentioned the French newspaper *Le Figaro* as origin of the notice.
- 52 Monod / Laverrière (architecture), Pellegrini (painting), Winans and Dubois (sculpture, 1st and 2nd place) and Barthelemy (music).
- 53 Walter Winans who also won a silver medal as a rifleman in Stockholm, was not honoured for his sculpture at the award ceremony on 15th July 1912 in Stockholm. This shows his letter to the Stockholm OC of 17th September 1912, where he complains about the fact that he still has not received the gold medal for his sculpture "An American trotter". Letter from Winans to the OC of 17th September 1912. Ibid. At the Riksarkivet, there are letters of autumn/winter 1912/13 from the other winning artists, too, asking when they could expect to receive their gold medals.
- 54 Coubertin's "outing" was until several years later. But in the 1920s he was free to tell that it was him who had won the Olympic gold medal for literature in 1912. B. Kramer, *Die Olympischen Kunstwettbewerbwerke von 1912 bis 1948, Ergebnisse einer Spurensuche*, Weimar 2004, S. 76.
- 55 Bergvall, *The fifth Olympiad*, pp. 806ff.
- 56 Coubertin, *Mémoires*, p. 124. ■

A. Molzberger, *Die Olympischen Spiele 1912 in Stockholm: Zwischen Patriotismus und Internationalität (= Studien zur Sportgeschichte, Herausgegeben von M. Lämmer, Bd. 9)*, St. Augustin 2012

On the basis of the original records, kept in the Swedish National Archive in Stockholm and the IOC Archive in Lausanne, this book provides new and authentic insights into the planning, realisation and aftermath of the 1912 Olympic Games.