

ARRANZ-BRAVO, A UNIQUE VIEW OF SPORT



By Ramón Balius Juli

In accordance with the admirable policy of endowing the future Olympic Museum in Lausanne with works reflecting different artistic trends by the most highly regarded artists, the IOC has recently acquired twenty seven paintings by the Catalan artist Arranz-Bravo.

Eduardo Arranz-Bravo, born in Barcelona in 1941, has a Basque father and an Argentinian mother, and roots in the Canary islands and Italy. From a very early age, he displayed an extraordinary drawing talent, which was to remain evident throughout his artistic career. Towards the

end of the fifties, he began to paint radically abstract paintings, one after another. It was at that time that he travelled to Paris and entered the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes de San Jorge in Barcelona. His short stay at that academy, however little bearing it had on his development, given the far

from progressive nature of the academic staff, gave him an opportunity to meet and make friends with many fellow artists such as Artigau, Gerard Sala, Puiggros, Serra de Rivera, Pedro Giralt, Robert Llimos and especially Rafael Bartolozzi, with whom he worked very closely in the seventies. Also at the Bellas Artes, he met the painter Carmen Mestres, who was to become his wife a few years later.

In 1961, he travelled to Italy and put on an individual exhibition at the Barcelona University Club, which is essentially a sports association. Towards 1967, his painting changed radically, taking on the form of freely drawn figures, a style his critics referred to as "the new figure-drawing". His fundamental theme was the human body, which he made no attempt to reproduce. He analyzed physical effects and defects and, on the basis of that analysis, recreated a cosmos which was at once invented and real, imaginative and true. Someone once said that Arranz-Bravo destroyed in order to recreate.

in all his work, his drawing remained essential and consummate, realistic or symbolic, the framework which supports the colour, which in turn acts as a sometimes violent counterpoint, transforming what at first appeared to be the fundamental concept.

During those years, he held many exhibitions, individual and collective, in different cities in Spain, and won many prizes, among them that of the Bienal Internacional del Deporte en las Bellas Artes, which he won with a picture on the theme of cycling, and the distinguished Ynglada-Guillot Prize for Drawing.

Between 1970 and 1980, without losing his artistic identity, he began to work very closely with Rafael Bartolozzi. Their co-operation took the form of exhibitions, painted buildings, publications, designs and montages. Some of the work of those years, especially the murals, could be categorized as what was known at the time as "pop art". This activity should be situated in the socio-political context of the country at the time and considered as a diversion

and a reflection of a keen longing for a sensation of freedom. The 2000 square-metre painting on the facades of the Titel factory, adjacent to one of the motorways into Barcelona, made a big impact in Catalonia. So much so that it was on the point of being removed, because the authorities considered that it could be a danger to motorists. Also from that period is the painting which decorates the Majorcan house of the writer Camilo José Cela, who recently received the Nobel Prize for Literature.

From 1981 onwards, he began to exhibit alone once more, and the shows became increasingly international. Paris, Heidelberg, Amsterdam, Rio de Janeiro and New York all viewed his work, which was also displayed in many Spanish galleries in Cadaqués, Barcelona, Saragossa, Madrid, Gerona, Oviedo, Valencia and elsewhere. In 1989, a retrospective was held in Barcelona under the patronage of the Department of Culture of the Catalan Government, constituting a major event in the Catalan artistic scene. In recent years, he has painted a number of thematic series such as "Abraçades" (embraces) "Pantocra-

Throughout the work of Arranz-Arroyo, the drawing remains pre-eminent.





The IOC has commissioned a series on Olympic sports from Arranz-Bravo.

tar", "Grups" (groups) or "Der Van Gogh Forget it", not to mention a number of brilliant incursions into the world of sculpture, using a variety of materials (bronze, marble or ceramic).

Arranz-Bravo is an tireless worker, active from dawn to dusk, for whom drawing, painting and modelling are a vital need. He does not work on commission or to sell, for he does not sell, he simply bears in mind the desires of those who wish to buy.

In 1990, the artist received a commission from COOB' 92, the Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games in Barcelona, to design three postage stamps - judo, weightlifting and hockey - in the pre-

Olympic series. For once, he broke his pattern and accepted the commission. Perhaps he did it because Arranz-Bravo is essentially a sportsman. We know that he only ever interrupts his working routine to play tennis, and that he uses his moments of leisure to enjoy swimming or yachting, activities he practises in Cadaqués, a town which has all the flavour of the Catalonian Costa Brava and in which he has set up his main studio. Also, if you look at his earlier work, you will come across a number of sporting images, among them some delightful and ironic drawings of swimmers in starting positions. The philatelic designs, which have an extraordinary force, are essentially realistic, the graphic element being the fundamental one, since the colours are diffuse and muted.

From these beginnings, the artist felt moved to continue his creations on the theme of Olympism and sport. Hence, the creation of the series subsequently acquired by the IOC. It consists of a collection of twenty-seven works, heterogeneous in form, size and technique - drawings, gouaches, oils, collage and mixed techniques - and style, which Arranz-Bravo moulds into a form that can be understood by the public at large.

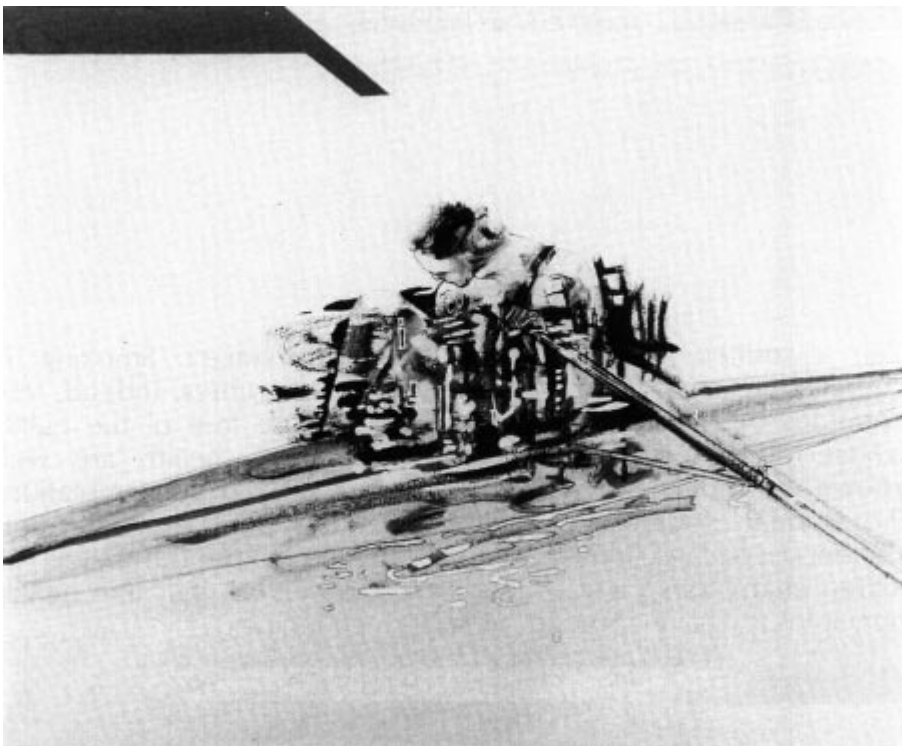
Marked by characteristics similar to those of the originals created for the pre-Olympic stamps, that is, by an apparent realism, are the paintings devoted to table tennis, swimming, wrestling, cycling and boxing. Badminton, basketball, rowing and riding are represented by the shuttlecock, the basket, the oar and the horse, essential elements of the game in question, in a surrounding colour appropriate to the particular activity.

The numerically largest group is made up of works in which pure, unadorned

drawings, perfectly executed and realistic, of the athlete in action constitute the essential elements of the scene. In all these pictures, the image drawn is reinforced by a number of irregular black and red blotches which create a contrapuntal effect. Within this group, we find baseball, fencing, football, gymnastics, shooting, tennis athletics, archery, volleyball, canoeing, modern pentathlon and handball. Finally, of the last two pictures in the collection, one, devoted to the finish of a race, is marked by the "new figure-drawing" style I described earlier; the other, the only oil painting of the series and also the largest work, is on the theme of yachting.

The sports-inspired works of Arranz-Bravo will undoubtedly be one of the great attractions of the future Museum in Lausanne, where they will form an interesting and striking contrast with the work of other artists belonging to different schools and traditions.

R. B. J.



Rowing, as seen by Arranz-Bravo.