

# ATHLETES AND ARTISTS IN POLAND



*Wojciech Zablocki, congratulated  
by the great Irena Szewinska.*

## STRENGTH AND BEAUTY

*By Wojciech Zablocki*

Beauty and strength were the two qualities of the ideal man in ancient Greece. Out of the stadia and the arenas, there arose a new citizen who aspired to an all-round development of body and mind. Thus, Pythagoras of Samos, an eminent philosopher and mathematician, was a boxing champion at Olympia. Plato also took part in the Games. And Alfred Hajos, best Hungarian swimmer of the Games of the first modern Olympiad in Athens, received the gold medal for architecture in the art competition of the Games of the VIII Olympiad in Paris.

**T**he exhibition "Strength and Beauty" prepared by the Polish NOC on the occasion of the XXV Olympiad presented throughout last year the professional or amateur artistic work of twenty-five Polish athletes, several of whom are Olympic medallists. The works on display date from the years 1924-1991. The main purpose of this exhibition was to show that the ancient Greek ideal of the har-

monious fulfilment of man has lost nothing of its relevance over the centuries.

The pursuit of all-round development by acquisition of physical and mental mastery can be considered as one of the ways in which the individual can seek self-fulfilment in the search for the inner self. This search simply signifies the pursuit of full psychologi-

cal equilibrium in accordance with the psychoanalytical theory of C.G. Jung.

Sports and artistic activities converge on a number of points; according to physiology, both are the product of an excess of energy (F. Schiller, K. Gross). If man's fundamental needs are satisfied, energy is directed towards pleasure and leisure activities (sport, art,...). The taste for imitation (mimesis) and for rhyme and harmony, prime characteristics of the creative impulse according to Aristotle, well reflect the art of high-level sport.

Man's intellectual training begins with the artistic phase and each individual has the capacity for self-expression. Sports successes and the Olympic training which goes with them take precedence over intellectual development and disturb the equilibrium. At this stage, artistic potential is often pushed back into the subconscious, to be realized at the end of the athlete's Olympic career in compensation for success in the sports arena. This could explain the artistic activity, amateur or professional, of former athletes. Simultaneous careers in sport and art are rare at the present time and very difficult to sustain.

If Olympic athletes devote themselves to art, it is generally to confirm their own aptitudes and express their authentic experience. The art of Polish athletes is characterized by realism. They represent the reality that underlies all shared experiences. Their paintings are dominated by the landscape, in faithful imitation of nature, but surrealism is also to be found (Pastusinski). Their literary prose is based on studies of social mores and psychological analyses - memoirs and reportages. Most frequently, they present accounts of their travels, full of descriptions of the countries they have visited. Also among their favourite themes are sports events and a psychological study of the competitor at the moment of maximum stress. As for the poetry, it is generally the work of women and is characterized by realism with expressionist tendencies. Finally, the architectural work is dominated by expressionism in the design of the constructions and the dynamic roof surfaces.

Our exhibition sets out to prove that success in sport and art rarely go hand in hand,

but that particularly gifted individuals nevertheless achieve both. Often, athletes have to choose between sport and art. It is for the Olympic Movement to support the efforts of these athletes capable of achieving Olympic completeness thanks to their mastery of these two callings, sporting and artistic. Perhaps the practice of sport and art, elevated to a theory of the "two callings", would guarantee a balance in Olympic sport, threatened as it is by commercialization at the end of the twentieth century.

***Jacek Pastusinski in front of his picture. Above, a oil by Jerzy Winkler.***

