

by Thomas Zawadzki

During Olympic Games, it has been the custom for cities to stage exhibitions about the presence of the games and about the history and future of the movement. These exhibitions happen in the Olympic city but also in other countries.

There were expositions in Athens (GRE), Bonn (GER), Warsaw (POL) and Munich (GER), all dealt with similar themes but in Warsaw alone five expositions on Olympic matters took place. The following article is a description of these, complemented by pictures and bibliographical data. The order of these exhibitions is not chronological but by topic, as the exhibitions are all finished by now.

Ancient Olympic Games

Under honorary patronage of Polish president of state Aleksander KWAŚNIEWSKI the National Museum in Warsaw opened its gates and introduced its visitors to the Exposition "**Olympiad. Sport in Greek Art between Vth Century BC and Vth AD**", which was shown in two large halls and offered a perfect supplement to the permanent exposition. The works shown were mostly modern copies of works which one should continue to appreciate. For example there was *Doryphoros* (spear carrier) by POLYKLEITOS of Argos, a 2.21m high statue originally dated around 440 BC. The bronze original was irretrievably lost, but it was reconstructed in 1910 to 1912 by Georg RÖMER according to Roman copies and is usually shown at the *Stettin National Museum*; There were also several vases and amphoras with athletic and mythological themes as well as some other smaller and life-sized statues. The centre of the Exposition was in one of the trespass-halls, in which the *Doryphoros* flanked by oversize pictures (2 x 4 metres) of the ancient stadium of Olympia and two glass cabinets with coins with athletic motives were on show. A catalogue with colour photographs, arranged by Witold DOBROWOLSKI and the team of the National Museum, was issued for this exhibition.¹ It includes excellent reproductions of all the works and information about them. In addition Witold DOBROWOLSKI and Wojciech ZABŁOCKI, Olympic medallist in Fencing 1956, 1960 and 1964, edited large format 300

page monograph featuring illustrations of the ancient exhibits and photographs from today of athletes in action.² Another big attraction for visitors was the copy of the *Charioteer of Delphi*, who has been only shown at the museum of Delphi until very recently (This museum has undergone renovation thanks to the Athens 2004 games) as well as the wrestling or running respectively youths, whose copies can also be found at Syntagma Square in Athens.

The Greek capital offered the Olympic visitors many bigger and smaller exhibitions. The newly re-opened *National Archaeological Museum* of Athens displayed "**Agon**", which set into light Exhibits with athletic motives and featured the musical competitions of ancient Greece.

With the motto of PINDAR'S First Olympic Ode "*Look no further for any star warmer than the sun shining by day through the lonely sky, and let us not proclaim any contest greater than Olympia*" opened the exhibition in the *Museum of Cycladic Art* 23 June to 2 October. The first room was dominated by the *Charioteer of Motya*, dated 475-450 BC, which whetted the visitors appetite for further wonderful exhibits. In fact this hope was met. "**Magna Graecia. Athletics and the Olympic Spirit on the Periphery of the Hellenic World. Southern Italy and Sicily**" displayed discoveries from the excavation sites in southern Italy, which can be traced back to the early 6th until the late 2nd Centuries BC. Divided into the different athletic disciplines the visitor could get a good overview through the small red- and black-figurine vases, the bigger amphoras, scrapers, and other utensils with athletic artwork or references. Of particular interest was the attempt to interest the younger audience. At the exit each visitor received a small booklet (29 x 21 cm), which explained on 40 pages a history of ancient competitions in Greek and English language and ended chapter by chapter with working questions.³

Young researchers organized at the *Academic Museum of Arts* in Bonn a very attractive exhibition "**Sports Review. Ancient Athletes in Action**". With 70 large and small size exhibits, sports equipment, statues, and statuettes the collection provides a general idea on Greek

¹ DOBROWOLSKI, Witold (Red.), *Sport i igrzyska Olimpijskie w starożytności. Wystawa w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie. 15 maja – 4 lipca* [Sports and Olympic Games in Antiquity. Exhibition in the National Museum in Warsaw. 15 May – 4 July], Warsaw 2004, 210 p.

² JENDRYCZKO, Tomasz (Red.), *Piekno i gorzyc sportu* [Sports' Sweetness and Bitterness], Warsaw 2004.

³ Organising Committee of the Athens 2004 Games / N.P. Goulandris Foundation – Museum of Cycladic Art. Education Programmes Department (ed.), *Travelling with Glaukos to Olympia in 476 BC*, Athens 2004.

agonistics, which covers an era from the 6th Century BC to 2nd AD. Moreover two models complement the exposition: Eva MALLWITZ developed in 1960 the model of Olympia, which was lent from Münster, and the plastic authors reproduced a model of an ancient training site especially for this exposition. An extensive 250 page catalogue illustrated this "Sports Review".⁴

In the Olympic City of Munich visitors were ensnared by the **"Attracting Laurel – Sports and Games in Antiquity"**. In the *National Antiquity Collections* diskoi and halteres, stigiles and aryballoi, as well as small and large plastics displayed the athletic practice of ancient contestants. The illustrations of the vases and vessels offered a view on wrestlers, pugilists and pancratiasts, runners and pentathletes and lastly the competitors in the horse and chariot races. The display also featured the other pan-Hellenic wreath festivals: Delphi, Isthmia and Nemea. This exhibition also offers a catalogue.⁵

Worth a mention also are the permanent collections in the cities: The museums of Delphi, Isthmia and Nemea, the archaeological Museum and the Museum of the Ancient Olympic Games in Olympia, complemented by the Museum of Excavations, the Museum of Elis,... to the Museums in Athens all give information on athletics and agonistics in Ancient Greece, additionally the permanent expositions of the Sports and Olympic Museums all over the world.

Modern Olympic Games

The time in-between the ancient and modern Olympic Games is seldom set into light, and very seldom done in a comprehensive fashion! A ray of light in the field of expositions was the exhibition in the old parliament building of Athens **"Athens 1896. I International Olympic Games"**, for which also ISOH-member and collector of Greek first editions Georgios DOLIANITIS offered exhibits from his private but world renowned collection. This way the old parliament clothed itself into Olympic colours and displayed first issues of PINDAR'S odes or PAUSANIAS' Periegesis, highlighted photographs from the Zappas Games, offered original documents from the first Athenian Gymnastic Club, and finally showed a collection of photographs of dignitaries, Olympic Winners and Olympians of the first Olympic Games of modern times in Athens. The closing point was

set by the torch, which carried the Olympic spirit through the whole world and back to Athens in 2004. For this exhibition another catalogue was issued which contains pictures, original documents and informative texts on 114 pages.⁶

The exhibition organised by the *International Pierre de Coubertin Committee* around Jean DURRY and Norbert MÜLLER **"Pierre de Coubertin and the Greek Miracle"**, opened in the Technopolis-Gazi 17 June to 30 August. On display were for example the original draft of "Une Olympie Moderne"⁷, the original logo of the *Union des Sociétés Françaises des Sports Athlétiques* (U.S.F.S.A.) with the blue and red ring or the copy of COUBERTIN'S original bureau. Contributors to this exposition were besides the *Olympic Museum* in Lausanne, the *Sports Museum* in Paris and Georgios DOLIANITIS also the *French Archaeological School in Athens*, the *Athletics-Museum* in Athens and the *Historical Archives* as well as the *Greek National Bank*. Sadly no catalogue was produced for the exhibition **"Olympic Palace"** in the Polish capital. This was staged at the *Palace of Culture and Science*, the central building in Warsaw, a present by "big brother" Soviet Union. It was a wise choice of location. On two floors the organisers – *Polish Olympians' Society* and a marketing agency – offered Olympic Memories for display: many photographs, medals, diplomas and stamps let the heart make somersaults. Additional exhibits were the official clothing of some athletes and some selected torches, even if they were well "hidden" in the corners. But this was an exhibition in two parts, the first shown on the ground floor the other Olympic memorabilia awaited visitors on the 30th floor – the Palace's observatory platform and Warsaw's viewpoint no. 1. This view was only allowed during the duration of the "Olympic Palace" to ticket holders. Many well-known Polish Olympians and winners contributed to this exposition: e.g. Irena KIRSZENSTEIN-SZEWINSKA, president of the *Polish Olympic Committee*, gave her spikes, her medal and diploma, Wojciech ZABŁOCKI, Olympian in Fencing and originator of the idea of a Polish candidacy for the 2012 Olympic Games, (unfortunately not adopted), gave his designs.

ZABŁOCKI set the scene for a unique exposition about **"Olympic Art Competitions"**, which took place in the games from Stockholm 1912 to

4 N.N. (ed.), *Sportschau. Antike Athleten in Aktion. Katalog zur Ausstellung im Akademischen Kunstmuseum Bonn. 17.06.-31.10.2004*, Bonn 2004.

5 Staatliche Antikensammlungen München (ed.), *Lockender Lorbeer– Sport und Spiel in der Antike*, München 2004.

6 SOLOMOU-PROKOPIOU, Aliko (ed.), *Athens 1896. I International Olympic Games*, Athens 2004.

7 Compare also the exhibition of Wojciech ZABŁOCKI and newly edited: KRAMER, Bernhard, *Die Olympischen Kunstwettbewerbe. Von 1912 bis 1948. Ergebnisse einer Spurensuche*, Weimar 2004, 292 p., pp. 73-75.

London 1948. Together with Richard STANTON⁸ he collected information and exhibits which had a dignified frame in the *Historical Museum of the city of Warsaw*, situated in the centre of the old town of Warsaw. In May and June the exhibition included the following: "An American Trotter" by Walter WINANS (SCAPS, Stockholm), gold medal awarded by the jury in Stockholm, the 1928 with a gold medal honoured "Le Boxeur" by Paul LANDOWSKI (*Musée-Jardin Paul Landowski*, Paris), or the planning sketch by Alphonse LAVERRIÈRE and Eugène MONOD "Une Olympie Moderne", which received a gold medal in 1912. In four halls the Museum displayed large size tableaux in English and Polish with a brief description of artist and piece-d'art. Additionally prize-winning literature was displayed in some showcases. A 176 pages strong catalogue contained several b/w-illustrations and descriptive texts to the Exhibition in English and Polish.⁹

Co-organizer of a parallel staged exhibition in the neighbouring *Archive of State in Warsaw*, also was Wojciech ZABŁOCKI, who realized during a visit to Cologne that the Exhibition "**Olympic Victories. Medals – Diplomas – Awards**" would be a perfect supplement to his own. Soon he convinced Warsaw honoraries and the exhibition, which was conceived by Karl LENNARTZ for the Olympic Games of Sydney, was invited to Warsaw. In three rooms it displayed medals of the Olympic Summer Games and tableaux with photographs of winners, their diplomas and further descriptive texts. The contents were translated from German into Polish language. A second part of this exposition comprised posters from the Olympic Games up to the present day and other Olympic memorabilia by Polish athletes. These were shown in the glass-roofed sunshine court of the State Archives. A short catalogue about the awards 1896 to 1936 and the Polish participation from 1924 onwards was issued in addition to the existing catalogues and visitors received a free guide.¹⁰ Both expositions attracted the attendance of many Polish star athletes and honoraries like Irena SZEWINSKA or Maria KWASNIEWSKA, who attentively listened to

the opening speeches by Wojciech ZABŁOCKI or Karl LENNARTZ.

The exhibit "**Polish Olympic Debut 1924. Chamonix, Paris**" reflected Polish participation in the Olympic Games, from its 1924 debut with an autonomous team. This was held in the exhibition of the *Museum of Sports and Tourism* in Warsaw. The exhibition marked the establishment of the Olympic Centre on the bank of Vistula River. For the 80 years jubilee of Polish participation crowned by two medals, ISOH-member and director of the Museum of Sports and Tourism Iwona GRYS selected exhibits which best featured Poland's first Olympic appearance. These came from her museum and others throughout the country. Of course the Olympic Games 1924 were dominated by Paavo NURMI, Johnny WEISSMULLER or ice-skating wonder Sonia HENIE in Chamonix, but the Polish cyclists Józef LANGE, Jan ŁAZARSKI, Tomasz STANKIEWICZ and Franciszek SZYMCZYK won a silver medal at 4000 metres and Adam KRÓLIKIEWICZ took bronze on his horse "Picador". Divided into five sections – Polish Sports 1918 to 1924, Polish Committee for the Olympic Games, Winter Sports Week in Chamonix 1924, Games of the VII. Olympiad Paris 1924 and Polish Olympic Team – the displays gave many details and showed a range of pictures to visitors. A 20 page brochure added further information and pictures.¹¹

Manfred BERGMAN, coordinator of the IOC collectors commission and himself an internationally recognized collector, organized the "**Olympophilex 2004**", which was unfortunately staged far away from Athens city centre on half way between *Panathinaikon Stadion* and the Olympic Village. On display there were from 12 to 22 August nearly all known stamps, vignettes and postmarks, also some coin editions and other olympiaka directly or indirectly connected to the games. Jacques ROGGE opened the exposition and both ROGGE and IOC life President Juan Antonio SAMARANCH, a keen philatelist who offered the *Olympic Museum* his collection of stamps made their way through the open labyrinth of 750 display tableaux. The inter-

⁸ Please compare STANTON, Richard, *The Forgotten Olympic Art Competitions*, Victoria, B.C. 2001.

⁹ ZABŁOCKI, Wojciech / STANTON, Richard (ed.), *Olimpijskie Konkursy Sztuki. 1912 – 1948. Olympic Art Competitions*, Warsaw 2004.

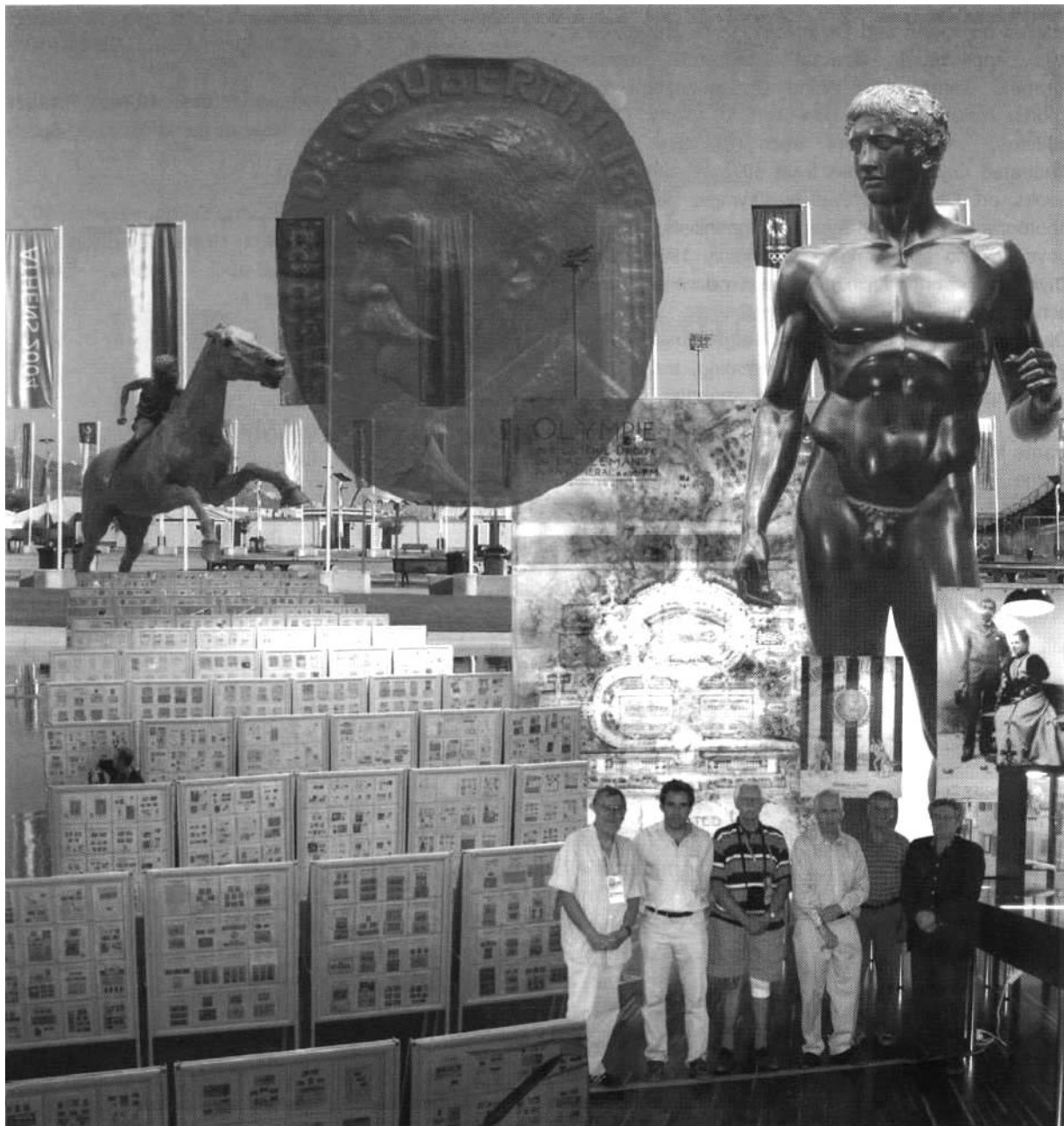
¹⁰ LENNARTZ, Karl / HÖFER, Andreas (ed.), *Olimpijskie Medale, Dyplomy i Nagrody Honoru. Wystawa w Archiwum Państwowym m.st. Warszawy. Maj-Czerwiec 2004* [Olympic Medals, Diplomas and honorary awards. Exhibition at the State Archive of Warsaw. Mai – June 2004], Warsaw 2004. Compare also: LENNARTZ, Karl / HÖFER, Andreas / BORGERS, Walter: *Olympische Siege. Medaillen, Diplome, Ehrungen*. [Olympic Victories. Medals, Diplomas, Awards] Berlin 2000. 484 p. and LENNARTZ, Karl / HÖFER, Andreas, *Im Zeichen des Sieges. Olympische Medaillen, Diplome, Siege* [In sign of Victory. Olympic Medals, Diplomas, Victories], Cologne 2000.

¹¹ GRYS, Iwona, *Polski debiut Olimpijski 1924. Chamonix, Paryż. Wystawa w Centrum Olimpijskim* [Polish Olympic Debut 1924. Chamonix, Paris. Exhibition in the Olympic Centre], Warsaw 2004.

national collections became a magnet for interested visitors who could enrich their own collections at some collectors' stands.

With this exposition Olympilex overshadowed even better located exhibitions. The "1896 – 2004. Olympic Stamps & Works of Art Exhibition" situated in direct neighbourhood of the *Panathinaikon Stadion*, had a better location but with only a few exhibits the less interesting contents. In ten glass cabinets and several push-collectors the *Greek Post* displayed some sporting stamps and some modern art in perfect quality. Probably the most unobtrusive Philately Exhibition in Athens was shown 2 August to 30 October.

Finally it should be stated that the Olympic Idea, equal to the form of display (here of course in form of expositions), is reanimated especially for the Olympic year. It is mainly apparent in the cultural field where expositions and museums are swimming with and on the wave "Olympic Games" and organize exhibitions to coincide with the games. It would be worth cooperating with specialists in sports history and science to enhance these and thus improve the diffusion of the Olympic ideal.



The Expositions 2004: The young rider - "Agon", National Archaeological Museum Athens; Pierre de Coubertin - "Olympic Palace", Palace of Culture and Science Warsaw; Une Olympie Moderne - "A Greek Miracle", Technopolis-Gazi Athens; Doryphoros - "Olympiad", National Museum Warsaw; Stamps and Vignettes - "Olympilex", Athens.