In Search of the Lost Champions of the Olympic Art Contests



by Bernhard Kramer

My research into the Olympic Arts competitions began some 40 years ago at the suggestion of Professor Carl DIEM at the *German Sport University Cologne*. He made his archive available for research into this ill documented area of Olympic study as I worked for my diploma thesis. This fired my enthusiasm and ever since I've been researching the unknown story of the art contests.

In the course of these studies it was possible to shed light on numerous hitherto forgotten or lost facts about the competitions, the artists and their works of art which were awarded Olympic medals at the seven Olympic Art competitions from Stockholm 1912 to London 1948.¹

Recently even some of the most cryptic cases like e. g. Barthélemy (Gold medal Music 1912)² or some artists of the 1920 Games of Antwerp³ could be solved.

But the results are far from being complete, some Olympic Art champions persistently remain hidden. These artists have obviously left no mark in the history of the Olympic Games and art in general, one reason being that all taking part in the Olympics were "minor" artists. The "professionals" completely ignored competitions in general, let alone Olympic ones.

So here is a kind of checklist of those artists, who have not yet been fully identified. We will be very grateful for any assistance (life dates, works, whereabouts of the "medal"-work) that readers can offer.

1. Stockholm 1912

Most riddles of the Stockholm Games have been answered.

The HOHROD and ESCHBACH enigma has been deciphered⁴, BARTHÉLEMY'S anonymity has been unveiled, even the score of his *Marche Hymne* is available.⁵ And Richard STANTON, author of the

first comprehensive study of the *Forgotten Olympic Art Competitions*, has successfully followed the trail of those who took part in the first Olympic Art competitions.⁶

But what about Georges Dubois?

Dubois (1850(?)-1934) won a silver medal for his Model of the entrance to a modern Stadium.

According to the *Bio-bibliographischer Index* "Saur" his name was first mentioned in 1887.⁷ The artist worked in his birthplace Paris mainly as a sculptor creating portrait busts and medallions of famous personalities and allegorical works like *Cet âge est sans pitié* (1889), *Siècles futurs* (1891) and *Après la faute* (1899). His most famous work was a Chopin statue, which he made in 1910. Originally it was in the Jardin du Luxembourg. It was said to be lost. Can it be that the sculpture representing Chopin at the piano with a personified muse listening at his feet in the Paris Parc de Monceau is Dubois'?

According to N. MÜLLER "the French intellectual Georges Dubois" took part in a detailed discussion about possible arts at the Consultative Conference of 1906 for architecture.8 It is almost certain that he is one and the same man as the artist whose work was honored in Stockholm. Dubois had submitted a sketch and a description of his contribution, which must have been a kind of architectural sculpture. The Stockholm jury proved as broad-minded. They held that the terms "manquettes", "clay models" and "Tonmodelle" were not completely synonymous and committee was instructed to present a restrictive formula next time, and to state in advance precise requirements, which competitors had to follow.9

In the description of Dubois' work the artist is called a practical man, because he had added a

¹ Of great help were the support of Karl Lennartz of the *Carl and Liselott Diem-Archive* at the *German Sport University Cologne* and my correspondence with Richard Stanton, who was the first among the Olympic historians to tell the complete story of *The Forgotten Olympic Art Competitions*, Victoria B.C. 2002.

² KRAMER, B., "Richard Barthélemy: Gold medalist in the first Olympic Music competition at Stockholm 1920", in: *Journal of Olympic History* 11 (2003)2, p. 11 -13.

³ Sportimonium Sporterfgoed Beleven [of the Sportmuseum Vlaanderen], Leuven o.J. and N.N. "Een nieuw licht op de Olympische kunstprijskampen te Antwerpen 1920" in: Sportimonium. Nieuwsbrief van het Sportmuseum Vlaanderen (verderzetting van de Nieuwsbrief van de Vlaamse Volkssport Centrale) 16(1996)3, p. 49-54.

⁴ DURRY, J., "Hohrod und Eschbach. A mystery finally solved", in: Olympic Review 32(2000)4/5, p. 26-28.

⁵ KRAMER, "Barthélemy".

⁶ STANTON, Competitions, and STANTON, R., "In Search of the Artists of 1912", in: Journal of Olympic History 9(2001)2, p. 3-13.

⁷ SAUR, K.G. (ed.), Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon. Bio-bibliographischer Index A - Z, München/Leipzig 1999 and THIEME U./ BECKER F.(eds.), Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. 37 vols. Leipzig 1907-1950, from vol. 16 (1923) edited by VOLLMER, H. München 1992. Vol. 9, p. 606.

⁸ MÜLLER, N., Von Paris bis Baden-Baden. Die Olympischen Kongresse 1894-1981, Niedernhausen 1983, p. 58.

⁹ Revue Olympique 12(1912)7, p. 105.



Alfred Ost

De Voetballer

(Silver medal

Painting and

Graphic Arts)

declaration of how and at what costs the monument could be erected. The dimensions were 14 m (height) and 16 m (breadth), almost like a triumphal arch.

"C'est l'entrée d'un stade moderne, l'entrée à laquelle on pourrait reprocher au point de vue archtectural, un aspect un peu funéraire. La décoration par contre est d'un symbolisme heureux. Un aeroplane couronne l'ensemble d'une ligne gracieuse et originale. A gauche le passé représenté par les vieillards qui viennent revivre leur jeunesse en contemplant les athlètes, coureurs, lançeurs de disques, etc., à droite l'avenir incarné par des mères amenant leurs enfants au gymnase."

(The artist of this entrance to a stadium could be blamed for giving those who enter it the impression of coming into a mortuary. But the decoration is of a blissful symbolism. On the left the old ones who come to live their youth again at the sight of athletes, runners, discusthrowers etc., on the right side the future, depicted at the example of mothers guiding their children to the tilting field.)¹¹

Up to now no illustration of Dubois' has appeared anywhere.

2. 1920 Antwerp

The Official Report of the Antwerp Games of 1920 is unique, because it is typewritten and was only published some years after the games by Alfred VERDYCK.

This document pays little attention to the Art Competitions. They are only mentioned on p. 80 and even then it includes a mistake listing a PARSEN (instead of SINDING-LARSEN).

Though a few riddles have been clarified by Sportimonium¹², some names remain mysterious.

The life and work of the Belgian Maurice BLADEL (1886-?) is little known. He won a Bronze medal for Louange des dieux.

Information about him is scarce in any of the renowned encyclopedias or bibliographies, A Bibliographie de Belgique (Bruxelles 1919) mentions a publication Vampires by him, which had appeared in 1915. The National Union Catalog (Mansell 1969) cites two works of the author, an investigation about Flemish painters (1924) and another about Georges ECKHOUD (1924), with a preface by E. VERHAEREN.

But is there anyone who knows about BLADEL'S Louange des dieux?



Henriette Brossin de Polanska (1878-1925) won the silver medal in the painting Competition (gold was not distributed) for France for *L'élan*.

The name of the artist appears in different forms: *SAUR's Künstlerlexikon* offers three variations of her surname: BROSSIN DE POLANSKA, BROSSIN DE BLANSKA and BROSSIN DE MÉRÉ. In the *Official Report* she is called *"Mme. Brossin de Polanska"*. ¹³

The artist was of Polish stock, born in Charkow in 1878. From 1909 until her death she lived in Paris and Italy. In 1921 she became a citizen of Switzerland. She mainly created portraits, types of character, statuaries, still life, frescos and drafts for stage decorations. She distinguished herself by her most famous picture, *Le Lac Leman*.

A reproduction of the $L'\acute{e}lan$, which won her the silver medal in Antwerp, is untraceable. Who has ever seen a reproduction of $L'\acute{e}lan$?

Albéric Collin's *La Force* is another example of the *"introuvables"* of the Olympic Art Competitions. Albéric Collin (1886-1962) worked in Antwerp, where he was a well-known sculptor of animals. Among his most famous works are *Lionne et Lionnceaux* (1931) and a monumental elephant (in metal concrete), which he had made for the Congolese pavilion at the international Exhibition in Brussels in 1935. ¹⁵

¹⁰ Revue Olympique 12(1912)7, p. 105. (Translation B.K.)

¹¹ Translation B.K.

¹² N.N., "licht".

¹³ Comité Exécutif de la VIlme Olympiade (ed.), Rapport Officiel des Jeux de la VIème Olympiade Anvers 1920, Manuscript, p. 80.

¹⁴ SAUR, Künstlerlexikon, vol. 20, p. 392.

Though a reproduction of Alphonse de CUYPER'S Coureur exists, for which the Belgian artist won the Bronze medal in Sculpture, the identity of the artist is questionable.

But the identity of the Antwerp bronze medallist de Cuyper is doubtful. Thieme/Becker/Vollmer offers two Belgian artists of this name, including the Christian name. 16

Alfons de CUYPER was a Belgian sculptor who was born in East Flanders in 1877 and who died in 1937

But most certainly the Olympic medallist is Alfons de CUYPER, born in Heverlee (Löwen) in 1887 and who died in Gent in 1950.

Above all he was a painter of landscapes (Lys), towns (Gent) and seashores. From 1924 on he taught at the Gent Academy, where he later held a professorial chair. In the course of time his originally melancholic method of presentation was replaced by the use of bright colors.¹⁷

A winter-landscape (from 1928) fetched 75.000 Belgian Francs at an auction in 1986

Even the *Nieuwbrief* does not clarify the de CUYPER-puzzle. On p. 52 he is called "Jozef De Cuyper" and his memorial medallion for the games of Amsterdam 1928 and Berlin 1936 is especially mentioned. But in the caption of the Loper the artist's name is "AJ De Cuyper", but in the additional "Summary" again "Alfons De Cuyper" (p.53).

His gripping sculpture Loper (cast-iron?) shows the runner immediately after the start in the phase of straightening-up.

Alfons CUYPER was also present for Belgium in the sculpture competition at the 1928 Olympic Games. According to the Exhibition catalogue Alfons Josef de Cuyper proposed two bronze sculptures: *Coureur* and *Lanceur de poids.*¹⁸ The Catalogue of the Olympic Art Exhibition of Berlin 1936 shows that Alfons de CUYPER was also present in the Berliner sculpture competition. He submitted his *Lanceur du Poids.*¹⁹

It is interesting that a certain "Decuyper, Alphons" won a bronze medal for France in the water-polo team of "La Libellule, Paris" at the Olympic Games of Paris in 1900.²⁰ If this water-polo player is identical with the Belgian sculptor and later bronze medallist of 1920, he would be beside Walter Winans and Alfred Hajós - the third man to be successful as well in an artistic and sporting competition.

3. 1924 Paris

In the (undivided) Literature competitions of Paris a total of 5 medals were distributed: one gold, two silver and two bronze.

Two of the medal-winning artists still resist any unveiling of their work and identity.

The little known British poetess Margaret STUART (1889-1935?) won the silver medal for her *Sword Songs*. She had to share the medal with the Danish poet Joseph PETERSEN.

Margaret Stuart lived in Kew in Surrey and was "Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature". Her poem is also lost.

Who has ever seen STUART'S Sword songs?

In the same competition the otherwise little known French man of literature Charles A. GONNET (1897-?) won a Bronze medal for France for *Vers le Dieu d'Olympie*. KLUGE calls it "Angesichts des Gottes von Olympia" ²². No documentary evidence can be given at the moment.

gaunt and quivering.

Amber eyes searching mine. "I want him, "I answered,

As a friend. "They were satisfied then.

They wrote on the paper,

One brown dog. "





¹⁵ SAUR, Künstlerlexikon, vol. 20, p.308.

¹⁶ According to THIEME/BECKER, Lexikon, p. 504. SAUR, Künstlerlexikon, vol. 23, p. 140, the life dates for "Cuyper, Alfons de" are 1878-1950.

¹⁷ N.N. (ed.), Le Dictionaire des Peintres Belges du XIV. Siècle a nos jours, Brussells 1995, p. 271.

¹⁸ N.N. (ed.), Concours et Exposition d'Art Olympique. Catalogue de l'Exposition au Musée Municipal d'Amsterdam [Amsterdam 1928], p. 14/15.

¹⁹ According to Organisations-Komitee [1936], Olympischer Kunstwettbewerb. Katalog der Olympischen Kunstausstellung, p. 18, it was created in 1920. Perhaps DE CUYPER presented in Berlin a new version of the work, which had won the bronze medal in Antwerp 1920.

²⁰ KLUGE, V., Olympische Sommerspiele. Die Chronik I. Athen 1896 - Berlin 1936, Berlin 1997, p. 76.

²¹ PINE, G. (ed.), The author's and writer's Who' Who, London 1960, mentions by Margaret STUART e.g. "The Boy through the Ages", "The Girl through the Ages" and "The Children's Chronicle". When the author contacted the address given (66 Gloucester Court, Kew Road, Kew Gardens, Richmond Surrey) Jill Clarke wrote: "She lived here in my flat, No. 66 Gloucester Road, from 1950-1956. Prior to that, she lived in Flat 132. She had Mungo, the dog - subject of the poem." In vain did Jill Clarke try find any trace of the poetess and the Sword Songs. In another letter (Jan 17/2003) she had to confess: "The search for information on Dorothy has not produced anything and, as you said, it is almost as if she did not exist." The poem mentioned, a little piece called One Brown Dog, is a moving lyric of three stanzas. Here is the first:

[&]quot;The Office door closed, dulling the din from the kennels.

[&]quot;What do you want this dog for?" I was asked austerely.

[&]quot;House-dog, watch-dog?" I looked at him,



In the Index *Biographique Français* (1998) GONNET is described as a "rugbyman, auteur, scénariste".²³ But in bio-bibliographical Indices of earlier years his name in nowhere mentioned. Only *La Librairie Française* for the years 1946-1955 enumerates by "Gonnet (C.-A.)" altogether nine titles of mostly narrative character:²⁴

Aloha, le chant des îles. (Collection "Provinces"; 1946), La Belle de Toulon (1946), Diana a-telle trahi (1952), L'envoyé spécial a disparu (1946), Himalaya (1946), La nouvelle Helène (1946), Terreur sur Londres (1946), Un avion s'est disparu (1945) and Une flamme dans le ciel (1952). The French register Livres disponibles (Paris 1981) mentions for the year 1980 another work by GONNET, entitled La Tendresse de Satan. According to N. N. (ed.), Biographies des plus grands champions français 1949-51 and SEIDLER, É./Parienté, R., Dictionaire des sports (1963) GONNET was "un homme orchestre du sport", who had won regional titles in swimming, track and and roller-skating field. boxing and represented his country sixteen times as "un of the described as des rares rugby national team, talonneurs de l'équipe de France" before he settled in Lyon as an author and journalist.

Who has ever seen an example of GONNET'S Vers le Dieu d'Olympie?

4. Amsterdam 1928

In 1928 more than 1200 works of art were presented to the jurors of the Arts Competitions are sufficiently documented with only three problematic cases:

In "Architecture" the French architect Jacques LAMBERT (b. 1884 or 1891-?) won a Silver and Bronze medal for his *Stadion de Versailles*.

No documentary evidence can be given of his plan, a perspective drawing of the stadium of Versailles. Thieme/Becker names a painter Jacques Henri Jean Lambert, born in Sèvres in 1877, whose well-known "Lute player" is in the Simu Museum in Bucharest. In is questionable whether this painter is identical with the architect, who won a Silver- (Town planning) and Bronze medal (Architecture) in the Amsterdam Arts Competitions.

Another from the Amsterdam games to remain in the shadows is the Frenchman Alexandre VIROT, who won a silver medal in the drawings competition for "10 Voetbalteekeningen".

Again the drawing is missing. Nothing is known about VIROT'S life and work.

We know about we know about the winner of the bronze medal (Graphic Arts) of 1928, the German Max Feldbauer (1869-1948), but his prize-winning "Mailcoach" is another work that remains unknown.

5. 1932 Los Angeles

In "Town Planning" John Hughes (1903-1977) won the Gold medal for Great Britain for his *Design for a Sports and Recreation Centre with Stadium for the City of Liverpool.* In the same competition the Belgian architect André Verbeke received the Bronze medal for his *Design for a Marathon Park.* No biographical details of Verbeke are available.

The author has not found any trace of the architectural designs by Hughes or VERBEKE.

The German architect Richard Konwiarz (1863-1960) won a Bronze medal for *Entwurf für die Schlesierkampfbahn im Sportpark Breslau*.

Konwiarz who was an "Oberbaurat in Breslau" has been called "Baumeister des Sports". According to his maxim that "the culture of the playground should be the pride of every municipal corporation" and "every sports field should be a gem" he associated his stadiums with studios of artists thus giving the whole concept a cultural note by calling in the fine arts.

At his 75th birthday the German Olympic society conferred a silver medal of honour "for his merits for the advancement of the Olympic idea".²⁶

In the paintings competition Gerhardus Bernardus Westermann (1880-1971) won a Bronze medal in the subgroup "Water Colors and drawings" for his Horseman.

The painter and graphic artist Westermann was a lecturer at the *Reichsakademie* in Amsterdam from 1918-1948 In his work he preferred land-scapes with horses or accessory riding figures. As a writer he discussed the relationship between sport and art. A reproduction of his *Horseman* could not be found.

In the Graphic Art Competition the American Joseph Webster Golinkin (1896-1977) won the Gold medal for his *Leg Scissors*.

GOLINKIN was "Maler, Litograph und Marine-offizier". ²⁷ He was especially known for his water-color paintings, illustrations and etchings. As a lithographer he designed a number of American stamps.

²³ N.N. (ed.), Index Biographique Français, München 1998, vol. 4, p. 1505.

²⁴ La Librairie Française, Auteurs 1946-1955, Paris [1956], p. 955.

²⁵ THIEME/BECKER, Lexikon, vol. 22, p. 253. BENEZIT, Dictionaire, vol. 6, p. 401, calls him "peintre d'histoire".

²⁶ ABELBECK, G., "Prof. Richard Konwiarz †" in: Olympisches Feuer 11(1961)2, p. 17-18.

²⁷ N.N., Who's Who in America, vol. 25, p. 933, Chicago 1948/49.

In his *Leg scissors* he realistically presents a wrestling-scene. In the center of the ring two male figures are closely intertwined. One of the wrestlers is lying on his back, locking his opponent's head between his lifted legs. In the background a bald-headed referee examines the position of the fighters.

The glaringly illuminated bodies are effectively contrasted to the dark background of the arena and the first row of the spectators at the lower margin. At the right margin of the top the spectators' gallery juts into the picture.

The work which reminds us of Ruth MILLER'S painting *Struggle*, for which the American painter won the silver medal in the subgroup "Paintings".

There is a lamentably bad reproduction in the Los Angeles Times of August 3, 1932. It bears the headline "Games Foster Competition in Genius".

It is doubtful whether this wrestling-scene is really an example of stimulating arts through sport.

6. Berlin 1936

The Berlin Games are amongst the most well documented in Olympic history. As the Nazis wanted to show their superiority they only too willingly included the Art Competitions in their counting of the medals.

Nonetheless some artists of the Berlin games remain little known e.g. the Italian Bruno FATTORI.

Bruno FATTORI (1891-1985) won a "lyric" silver medal for *Profili Azzuri*.

In lots of the works of the Italian poet and writer Bruno FATTORI (1891-1985) war has a central role.²⁸ No extract of his *Profili Azzuri* can be presented.

But in the *Berliner Tageblatt* a W. STENDEL gives the following highly pathetic description of the work, which he translated as *"Blaue Silhouetten"* (Blue Silhouette):

"Die Gedichte des Italieners sind Hymnen an die Sieg- und Schönheitsseligkeiten des Sports vom Hochjauchzen bis zur stillen Freude, vom Jubelrausch bis zur Besiegtenwehmut. Sie schwelgen in Klängen, türmen Bilder und steigen in Tiefsinn. Die Gedichte erheben zu Jugendstolz und Altersgelassenheit. Und sie haben Würde und Sicherheit."²⁹

"The poems of the Italian are hymns to sport's ecstasies of triumph and beauty from the jubilation to quiet joy, from happiness of



Front Page of the Olympia-Zeitung August 1, 1936

jubilation to woefulness of the vanquished. They revel in sounds, pile up images and amount in depth of thought. They raise the reader to pride of thought and calmness of old age. And they have dignity and security."³⁰

Who has ever seen an issue of FATTORI'S *Profili Azzuri?* And what about the winner of the Bronze medal in "Water colors and Drawings", the Japanese artist Sujaka Suzuki and his "Classical Horse Racing in Japan? We could not find out anything about the artist and his work.

And nothing is known about the German Alfred HIERL, who won the silver medal in the "Graphic Arts" for his *Internationales Avusrennen*. We have the reproduction of his work, but the artist remains in complete darkness.

In the sculpture competition of Berlin in the subgroup "Medallions" the Italian Luciano MERCANTE (1902-1982) won Silver for *Medals*. ³¹ Who has ever seen a picture of MERCANTE'S work?

The winner of the bronze medal in this section was the Belgian artist Josuë DUPON (1864-1935).

²⁸ N.N., Chi è? Dizionario Biografico degli italiani d'oggi, Rom 1948: "Canti di guerra di un caporale" (1914), "La voce dei perduti" (1919), "Linée Azzure" (1928), "Il sergante di Farja" (1936), "La donna del soldato" (1942).

²⁹ STENDEL, W. "Olympioniken der Feder", in: Berliner Tageblatt (8.8.36)374.

³⁰ Translation B.K.

³¹ LENNARTZ, K./BORGERS W./HÖFER, A., Olympische Siege. Medaillen, Diplome, Ehrungen, Berlin/München 2000, p. 250.



DUPON had died in Antwerp a year before the Berlin art competition and received his medal posthumously. According to the catalogue of the Berlin exhibition Equestrian medals were created in 1934. They entitled Hindernis, Achtung Doppelsprung; Teddy! Liebkosung, Vor dem Hindernis Pokalsieger.32

Nils OLSSON Bath and Sporting Hall

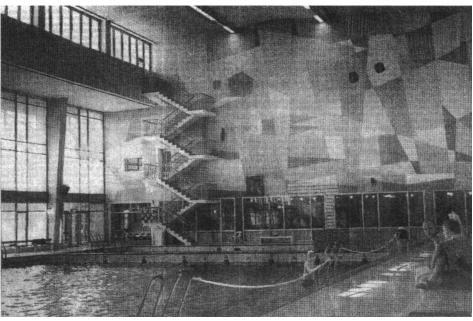
Dupon's medals seem to be lost. The Belgian for Gothen- Sportimonium 96/3 does burg not even mention them.

> DUPON was a good friend of Albéric COLLIN, who had won a gold medal in the sculpture competition in Anvers 1920. Both Belgian sculptors are listed in the de la Catalogue Sculpture (Brussels) under "La sculpture animalière".

> DUPON, who came to the fore in 1898 with his "Eagle defending his prey", later, became a wellknown Belgian sculptor and medallist. He worked in Antwerp, where he was a professor at the academy. His works comprise small ivory-figure, monumental groups and decorative figurines, his specialty being larger-than life monuments of exotic animals. The artist's most important works are: Simson, killing a lion (1891), Diana (1897), monumental figures at the Hotel Weber in Antwerp (1901), Monument of Count de Mérode (1905), medals of the Belgian king and queen (1912).³³

> At an auction in 1984 his Simson brought 1984 330.000 Belgian francs.

> DUPON'S draft of the winner's medal for the games of Antwerp 1920 is 60 mm in diameter. So it is larger than the previous medals. The obverse shows an athlete with a palm-branch and winner's wreath; on the reverse there is the monument of the hero BRABO, who is closely connected with the history of Antwerp.34



7. 1948 London

All in all 25 nations sent their artists to take part in the Olympiad in London, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Portugal and Turkey for the first time ever. But in spite of this favorable response the Olympic Art Competitions at the 7th Olympiad in London were the last. Because of the comprehensive catalogue at least the fine arts can be sufficiently documented.

Only the Swedish Bronze medal winner in "Architecture", Nils Olsson and his draft of the Bath and Sporting Hall for Gothenburg could not be substantiated up to now.

But Richard STANTON found a reproduction, which is "proudly presented" here.35

Music was one of the Olympic Art Competitions. All in all 17 medals (among them five golden) were awarded.

The story of the prize-winning Olympic compositions of Stockholm, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Los Angeles, Berlin or London (there was no music medal in Paris 1924) is frustrating and fascinating at the same time. The trail will be continued in future editions.

³² Organisations-Komitee 1936, Katalog, p. 18.

³³ THIEME-BECKER, Lexikon, Leipzig n.y., p. 161 (works until 1913).

³⁴ LENNARTZ, K./BORGERS W./HÖFER, A., Siege, p. 168.

³⁵ Letter to the author August 10/2003.