Olympic glimpses

HELLENIC REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
Olympic glimpses
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Project Manager: Efthimis Kioumourtzoglou
Production and design team:
Nelly Arvaniti; Nikos Vasiliades; Kostas Georgiades; Heracles Kellis; Evi Lioubi;
Alekos Makris; Ioanna Mastora
Translation: Aris Berlis
Production: Livinis Publishing
Illustrations: Maro Alexandrou

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I was born in Olympia

I took my first steps in the thousand year old dust, in the imposing shadow of the sacred ruins.  
I played in the ancient stadium, on the earth where gods and heroes trod.  
I heard the stones tell myths and legends to the wind.  
In the soft, tranquil light of the sunset or in the harsh light of summer, the ineffable beauty of the statues and monuments appeared simple to my innocent eyes. Simple, like the ripples of the sea and the scent of the pines.  
The Temple of Zeus.  
In my dreams Nike crowned me with a branch of wild olive.

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I was born in Olympia!  
And since I took my first steps I have stumbled upon history.  
Statues teach me beauty and serenity.  
With my fingers I trace Praxiteles's touch upon the stone.  
I stroke the ruined columns and I see the sun with new eyes.  
Once upon a time Hercules laboured here.  
Once upon a time Diagoras walked here.  
Once upon a time the Olympic Spirit was born here.  
The sacred flame was kindled and the world was dressed in light.  
And the road that leads to the civilizing of man was opened.

«...I belong to a small country. A stony promontory in the Mediterranean, which has no other wealth but the struggle of its people, the sea and the sunlight. Our country is small but its tradition is vast.».

George Seferis  
from the Nobel Prize Speech, 1963.
«A few Arcadian deserters came in - men who had nothing to live on and wanted employment; they were taken to Xerxes and questioned about what the Greeks were doing. There was one Persian in particular who put the question, and he was told in reply that the Greeks were celebrating the Olympic festival, where they were watching athletic contests and chariot-races. When he asked what the prize was for which they contended, the Arcadians mentioned the wreath of olive-leaves which it is our custom to give. This drew from Tritanaechmes, the son of Artabanus, a remark which proved his true nobility of character - though it made Xerxes call him a coward; for when he learned that the prize was not money but a wreath, he could not help crying out in front of everybody, «Good heavens, Mardonius, what kind of men are these that you have brought us to fight against - men who compete with one another for no material reward, but only for honour!»

Herodotus, Book 8, 26. Translated by Aubrey de Selincourt.
«Mother of the gold-crowned Games, Olympia, mistress of truth, 
Where seers interpret burnt offerings 
And test the bright thunderer Zeus 
If he has any word about men 
Who yearn in their hearts to win 
great glory 
And a breathing space after toil.

In return for reverence 
Men’s prayers are accomplished. 
O wooded place of Pisa by Alpheos, 
Welcome this company and wearing of garlands. 
His glory is great for ever 
Whom your glittering prize attends. 
To each man come different goods, and many 
Are the paths of success 
When the Gods give help».

Pindar, Olympian Ode VIII, For Alkimedon of Aegina, winner in the boys’ wrestling, 460 B.C. 
Translated by C.M. Bowra

From the ground of the Stadium, 
Down on the running track 
Still echoes with the 
Glory of Korivos, you think.

The glory for Victory 
The winner receives 
From the judges 
The freshly-cut olive branch

The branch of each wild olive 
Thrice-glorified 
Recalls from afar 
The glory of Greece

And the glare of those stark slabs

Representation of games on ancient amphorae.
Memory

Of white marble
Like a ray of light
Bright in my eyes.
Extract from “Olympic” – N. Kiparissis, Athens 1927
Translated by Anne-Marie Stanton-Ife

...Here on this magical site the gods competed before men did. The games became a favourite theme in art, expressed, like nature, according to the laws the gods laid down. So both man and creation spoke in the language of their place, and were thus able to achieve immortality.

This is the power of Olympia, a power that moves the mind insistently to peace and reconciliation, a power that turns men from the strife of society and the anxieties of present-day life.

I walk among the ancient ruins where the games took place. They are solitary, silent, in romantic abandonment. They resemble dead giants, lying they competed, the effort
and the glory depicted on their stony faces. They stand before me, a long row of marble statues, sculptured pieces on which every form of human joy is expressed.

The passage of time, new ideas and the coming of barbarians, nature and Chronos-Cronus have devoured everything and little remains to comfort our souls.

And yet these fragments, these few remaining sacred pieces, are enough to revive historical memory, to give life back to what they had expressed, to give forth grandeur again. Even if the visible heritage of the games has been disfigured, even if memory has faded, the flame is still there, hidden, waiting for the torch that will take it out of oblivion. This flame I want to find, a flame from the place that was sanctified by the young bodies of competing athletes, they who transformed wreaths of laurel into immortal historical symbols.

I see everything, I touch everything, I try to feel everything that has crystallised in the memory of the people and has become legend - the festivals for the gods, the competing young men, the noisy crowd of spectators. I imagine, beyond the banks of the Cladeus, the roar of the games, like the sound of a swarm of bees. Trumpets and lyres filling the air with their sweet notes, men and women... the banks throbbing with people and animals, multi-coloured dresses glowing in the superb sun. Pilgrims of Zeus pouring into the taverns on the beach to celebrate a victory, drinking and getting drunk...
“Whatever is excessive is hostile to nature”

Hippocrates
The Olympic Festival

in the name of the god.
And the motley stalls would be set up,
selling meat, nuts, toys and idols made
of clay...

N. Vasiliades, «Pierre de Coubertin, Voyage to Greece», Cultural
«You must always try to excel and to be the best of all.»

Homer

Los Angeles, 1984.
Opening Ceremony.

Sydney, 2000
Greek supporters of the Olympic Games at the Greek kiosk for Athens 2004.

Sydney, 2000
Opening Ceremony.

Los Angeles, 1984.
Opening Ceremony.
The Games educate

1896, Olympic Games poster.

*History*, painting by N. Gyzis.
The aim of the International Olympic Movement is the preservation and propagation of the Olympic Spirit and the study and application of the Olympic Principles as they were enacted by the ancient Greeks and the revivers of the modern Olympic movement on the initiative of Pierre de Coubertin.

The International Olympic Academy was founded in 1961 and its seat is in Olympia. It operates as an international centre for Olympic studies and as a place for the free expression and exchange of ideas among the members of the Olympic family - intellectuals, scientists, athletes, educationalists, artists and the youth of the whole world.

Olympic education, Australia 2000

Demetrios Vikelas, President of the International Olympic Committee.

The International Olympic Academy at Olympia.
The Olympic Movement is open to the youth of the whole world, whose future task will be the spreading of the Olympic ideal - tolerance, solidarity, and brotherhood.

Juan Antonio Samaranch, President of the International Olympic Committee
The opening and closing ceremonies of the Los Angeles Games in 1932 were the creation of Walt Disney.

The Olympic Games have inspired many artists and particularly cinema producers and directors who found rich material in them for stories about Olympic athletes.

Los Angeles, 1932.

Posters of films about the Olympic Games
"When nothing can pierce the shell of human inertia, you must use that great means of reconciling contradictions - Art."

Angelos Sikelianos, Greek poet

Chariots of Fire, a film based on the Paris Olympic Games 1924, won the Oscar prize of 1981 for the best soundtrack, composed by the Greek composer, Vangelis (Papathanassiou)

Posters of films about the Olympic Games

Stockholm 1912, Opening Ceremony.
The Games express

Poster for the First Winter Olympic Games in Chamonix, 1924, by the famous painter Auguste Matisse.

Poster creating is a wonderful opportunity for painters and sculptors to express the spirit of their times.


Poster for the First Winter Olympic Games in Chamonix, 1924, by the famous painter Auguste Matisse.
The Greek painter Nikolaos Gyzis designed the winners’ certificate for the First Olympic Games, Athens 1986.

Famous painters and sculptors of the past have left their mark on the Olympic Games by creating uniquely beautiful works.


Spiros Louis, sculpture by Pavlos Kouyoumtzis.
The Games are imaginative

Olympic Arts Festivals, as the Cultural Olympiads are usually called, are good opportunities for the promotion of the cultural tradition of the host city.
The Opening and Closing Ceremonies are becoming more and more spectacular; a vast show where artistic creation and imagination find a fertile ground to grow and thrive.
Technology and the Games

The proper use of technology is a crucial factor in the success of the Olympic Games. A fully equipped modern media center is needed for international radio and television broadcasting.

In Sydney were used:

- over 5000 computers
- over 1500 printers
- 1500 fax machines
- 25000 telephone lines
- 15000 mobile telephones.
The Olympic Movement has often been criticized. It is a human enterprise and therefore imperfect. Let us all try to improve it and strengthen its foundations.

Lord Killanin, President of the International Olympic Committee

Medical services during the Games consist of emergency and first aid units, doping control and a central general hospital in the Olympic Village.

Seoul 1988,
Doping control service
The economic extent of the Games

«If we take away sponsorship and commerce, what is left of athletics? A vast, technologically advanced, perfect machine, developed within the span of a hundred years, with no fuel».

Richard Pound, Vice-president of the International Olympic Committee.

Advertising posters produced by Olympic Games sponsors.

Part of the base of an ancient votive monument. According to the inscription it was an offering commemorating child winners in the Pyrrhic competition at the Great Panathenaeas festival. National Archaeological Museum, Athens.
2004 in numbers

16,000 athletes and escorts
20,000 journalists and media technicians
45,000 volunteers
3200 coaches and 4000 private cars
5,400,000 tickets
2,000,000 nights’ accommodation
1,800,000 meals for athletes and escorts
1,500,000 meals for games’ staff
1,500,000 pieces of furniture and equipment for the Village
150,000 uniforms for volunteers, judges and other staff
50,000 sheets and 140,000 towels
1,850,000 pages of results
100,000 maps and city guides
If...

Anabolics - Doping
Politics - Boycotts
Overspending
Violence
 Discrimination - racism
Commercialization
Ecological catastrophe

Then, What Games;
If...

Clean Games
Peace, Friendship
Moderation
Fair competition
Equal participation, respect for others
Volunteerism
Respect for the environment

Then, Olympic Games!
All Present

In 1928, in Amsterdam, the International Olympic Committee voted to end the exclusion of women from the Olympic Games. The participation of women produced many and diverse reactions in the world of athletics. Initially women’s events included the 100m., the 800m., discus, high jump and the 4x100m. relay race.

Berlin 1936
Runner Domnitsa Lanitou-Kavounidou (center) was the first Greek woman athlete to participate in track and field events.

Barcelona 1992
Voula Patoulidou, 100m. hurdles gold medal winner
The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part.

Pierre de Coubertin, President of the International Olympic Committee.

The Olympic Games have a particular meaning and importance because they can extend and strengthen the bonds of friendship among the various peoples of the world.
The Games unite

«In the modern world the Olympic Movement can become a school for moral nobility, purity of heart, friendship and unity among the peoples of the world».

Olympic Charter

Sydney 2000. Athletes from North and South Korea parade together.

Scenes of friendship and brotherhood.
The Olympic Flame, symbol of unity, is carried by relay from ancient Olympia to the host city.

Konstantinos Kondylis was the first torch-bearer at the Olympic Games in Berlin, 1936.

The ceremony of the lighting of the Olympic flame at ancient Olympia.
The Games award

Since the Olympic Games in Antwerp in 1928, the face of winners’ medals has depicted Nike, the goddess of Victory, seated and holding a palm branch in one hand, while with the other she raises an olive wreath. On the back an ancient stadium is shown with a depiction of horse races at its base.

Since the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972, the host country has had the right to put its own subject, usually the emblem of the Games, on the back of the medal.
“Every athlete’s victory, Greek or not, is an equal honor for Greece and should be greeted with enthusiasm.”

Demetrios Vikelas, President of the International Olympic Committee

Thirteen medals were won by Greek athletes in Sydney, a record for Greece.
Volunteers, the power of the Games

The «army of the volunteers» plays a crucial role in the success of the Olympic Games. Their enthusiasm and dedicatory spirit are guarantees of the normal operation of the Games and a friendly atmosphere for athletes and supporters.

Handbook for volunteers
Brochure for the volunteers of the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Festival of Human Will

The Summer and Winter Paralympics are the most important athletic meetings for the physically handicapped and they demonstrate the achievement of those people that are able to overcome the limitations imposed on them by their handicaps with their will for life and success. The Paralympics were formally organized for the first time in Rome in 1960. The idea came from Sir Ludwig Guttmann who organized games for handicapped Second World War veterans at Stoke Mandeville in 1948.
The Paralympic Games always take place in the same year as the Olympic Games and, since 1988, in Seoul, have taken place in the same venues as the Summer Olympic Games, one week after their close.

«The flag you carried ripples proudly in the breeze, your feat becomes a cry of the will, a heroic exploit...»

Paralympic Games Hymn, 1st stanza

PARALYMPIC ATHLETES
THE EMBLEM

The «kotinos» (ancient Greek name for the branch of olive and, consequently, for the winner’s wreath) a spare, simple emblem, but at the same time unique, bright and enduring, symbolizes the historical role of ancient Greece, the everlasting cycle of life and the character of the modern Olympic Games. Thus is the unity of the past and the present best emphasized. This universal symbol is a creation of freedom, hope and simplicity, a source of inspiration for athletes and for all the citizens of the world. The dominant blue and white brings to mind the clear Greek sky, and the transparence, the limpidity and the movement of the Greek sea.
The 2000 Olympic Games taking place in Athens has given us the opportunity to put into effect or complete infrastructure works which will improve the quality of our life.

In the planning and constructing of the Olympic works, care has been taken to protect sensitive ecological systems by using new, environmentally friendly technologies. Studies have been made on possible ecological consequences in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, research centers and university departments.

During the Games the Olympic Village will accommodate 16000 athletes and escorts.

It consists of houses, shops, offices, clinics, recreation grounds and training installations.

The Athens metro
The Olympic Movement wishes to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of the good example and respect for moral principles.

Olympic Charter
The Games become of our life

The spirit and character of the Olympic Games are affected by the culture and the history of the host country. The expression of this cultural tradition reaches its peak during the Games.
«The goal of Athens 2004 is the activation of all forms of expression of the Olympic Spirit». From the project file for the Athens 2004 Olympic bid.
Cultural Olympiad

Every Olympiad sets itself the task of realizing the two dimensions of the Olympic Movement - athletics and culture. Athens 2004 aspires to offer the world a unique experience which combines athletic spectacle with spiritual/cultural creation in their historical setting.
"The Olympic flame warms the hearts of men throughout the world. With the same warmth Athens must welcome the Olympic family to the greatest celebration of athletics, culture and peace."

Yanna Angelopoulou-Daskalaki, President of the Organising Committee, ATHENS 2004.
Welcome Home,
Olympics
Athens 2004
«I discern great sanity in the Greek attitude. They never chattered about sunsets, or discussed whether the shadows on the grass were really mauve or not. But they saw that the sea was for the swimmer, and the sand for the feet of the runner. They loved the trees for the shadow that they cast, and the forest for its silence at noon. The vineyard-dresser wreathed his hair with ivy that he might keep off the rays of the sun as he stooped over the young shoots, and for the artist and the athlete, the two types that Greece gave us, they plaited with garlands the leaves of the bitter laurel and of the wild parsley, which else had been of no service to men». 

Oscar Wilde, De Profundis
Olympic glimpses

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