



OLYMPIC DESIGN

GRADES 8-12



EACH GAMES HAS ITS OWN LOOK AND FEEL THAT REPRESENT THE HOST CITY AND COUNTRY. THE DESIGN OF THE LOGO, MEDALS, SPORT PICTOGRAPHS, TORCH, BANNERS AND IMAGES ALL CONTRIBUTE TO MAKING EACH OLYMPICS UNIQUE. IMAGINE THAT YOU WERE TASKED WITH DESIGNING AN OLYMPIC GAMES. WOULD YOU BE UP TO THE TASK?

DESIGNING THE LOOK OF THE GAMES

The excitement of winning the rights to host the Olympic Games has barely worn off when the organizing starts. The organizers have a million tasks to finish before the athletes arrive a few years later, but one of the first is designing the look and feel of the Games.

Min Wang, the Design Director for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, summarizes this challenge. “The Olympics is the largest, most complex design project. You are branding a city; you are branding a country.” The logo, graphics, torch and mascot all define how the host city will be remembered by athletes and spectators. The first task is designing a logo, because it will be featured on almost everything related to that Olympic Games.

So, what goes into a good Olympic logo design? The logo should profile the host city and country without being too patriotic. It often reflects the culture or history of the country or its First Peoples. This can be accomplished through the use of colours or shapes that tell a story about the region. Lastly, it must be functional. The logo will be featured on everything from buildings, to medals, to ball caps.



Tokyo City



SCHOOL PROGRAM

DESIGN PROCESS

Cities bidding to host the Olympic Games will include a logo in their bid books. But they rarely keep that design once they win the rights to host the Games. The actual logo is selected using design contests. Design companies from around the world submit their logo designs for consideration, and a winning logo is chosen.

Over 14,000 companies, school children and individuals submitted their logo designs to the Tokyo 2020 logo contest. A short list of the best designs was created, and the selection committee chose the winning design. The committee decided that the best design was the one created by Asao Tokolo called the “Harmonized Chequered Emblem”.

Tokolo’s logo is a chequered pattern using three different rectangles. This tells a story of diversity and different people coming together for a celebration. He stresses that all people are equal by using the same number of shapes for both the Olympic and Paralympic logos.

The logo features patterns and colours that have strong roots in Japanese history. Chequered patterns were very popular in Japan during the Edo period (1603-1867). This is a period when arts and culture flourished, and Japan was at peace. The traditional colour of indigo blue dates back to the 10th century. The strong plant-based dye was used to decorate cotton clothing when lower classes were banned from wearing silk clothing.

Once the logo is created, all the secondary graphics can be designed. The secondary graphics help complete the visual identity of the Games. These create the look and feel for the Games and often use parts of the logo and images from the country. These graphics are used for banners, backgrounds at competition sites and all other designs that are seen by participants and spectators. When you watch the Games on television, the background decorations at venues are examples of secondary graphics.

THE OLYMPIC TORCH

Since the Berlin 1936 Olympic Games, the Olympic flame has been lit in Olympia, Greece and carried by torch relay to the host country in time for the Opening Ceremony. As time has passed the torches have become more complex in design. Like the logo, they use shape, colour, and symbols to tell a story about the host country. Unlike a logo, a torch has design considerations like weight, ergonomics and flame. The torch can’t be too heavy for the relay runners, it must be comfortable to hold, and the flame can’t go out in the rain, wind or snow.

Tokyo 2020’s Olympic torch is made from pink aluminum and the top is shaped like a cherry blossom. In Japanese tradition, the cherry blossom represents the fleeting beauty of life and new beginnings. The aluminum used in the torch has been recycled from the temporary housing used after the Great East Japanese Earthquake of 2011.

MASCOTS

Since they were introduced at the Grenoble 1968 Olympic Winter Games, mascots have become an important part of every Games. These friendly and cheerful creatures help children connect with the excitement of the Games. They are also a major source of revenue for the hosts. Mascots are featured on everything from toys to pins to t-shirts. At first, Olympic Mascots were animals native to the host country, but now they include animals, humans, and mythical or imaginary creatures.

Tokyo 2020 is the first Games to let children choose the winning mascots. Tokyo 2020’s mascot is named Miraitowa and has the same blue-checked pattern as the Olympic logo. Its name combines the Japanese words “Mirai”(future) and “towa” (eternity). This mascot personifies how Japan values both heritage and innovation. It has a strong sense of justice and is very athletic. The mascot’s special ability is to be able to move anywhere instantly.

MAKING GAMES HISTORY

The design of the Games is part of what distinguishes it from previous Olympics and those yet to come. It becomes part of the on-going Olympic history and tells a story of the host city and country. A brilliant design builds lasting memories and sets a mood for the athletes and spectators.



BE ORIGINAL!

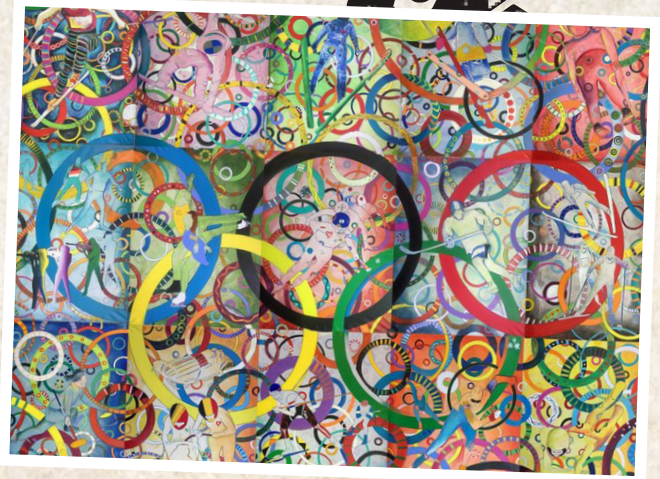
Right after winning the rights to host the 2020 Games, the Tokyo organizers launched a logo design contest. The winning logo featured a stylized “T” and used black, gold, silver and red. Not long after it was announced, there were concerns about its originality. It looked remarkably similar to the logo of Belgium’s Théâtre de Liège. To avoid the controversy, the Hosts decided to scrap the logo, and hold another contest. This highlights the importance of originality in design. Designers can’t copy the work of others or even create work that looks too similar to the work of other designers.

DESIGNING FOR THE ATHLETES

There are other design products that shape the look and feel of the Games. Pictographs and sport illustrations are images that represent the different sports. The pictographs have traditionally relied on simplified silhouettes to depict each sport. The sport illustrations are more detailed and present a more realistic and almost photographic image of the athletes. An important part of the story of an Olympic Games is the design of the medals. Hosts will design the medals using national art styles and materials. This helps distinguish their Games from all the previous Olympics.

THE OLYMPIC ART PROJECT

The PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympics developed a unique initiative to support the arts. They asked Olympic athletes who were also artists to create a painting of each of the winter sports. One new picture was painted each day of the 15 days of the Games. It was all part of the Olympic Art Project. The paintings were then arranged to create one image. There was also a large painting completed by hundreds of the athletes, the work of others or even create work that looks too similar to the work of other designers.



The Olympic Art - Pyeongchang



Talk About It!

Some designers feel that the use of design contests is unfair. It requires them to do a lot of work for free, with only a single winner. What is your opinion?

Use the internet to find the old Tokyo 2020 logo and that of the Théâtre de Liège. Do you think that the logos are too similar? Can you think of other cases where art or logos look similar? When is it considered adopting a style and when is it considered copying?



1. THE LOCAL OLYMPIC GAMES

The news is just out! The biggest city in your province has just won the rights to host the Olympic Games. Once the excitement subsides, the hard work begins. There will be three design contests, and your graphic design company will bid on them all. Work in teams of 2-3 students to design the following:

Logo: The Organizing Committee is looking for a distinct logo that profiles the city. They want it to visually represent the theme of the Games, “Uniting the World in Friendship”.

Olympic Torch: The torch relay will cross Canada over the span of six weeks. The torch design must tell the story of Canada using its shape, colour and materials. It is important to emphasize that this is Canada’s Games and not just the host province.

Medals: The medals must be uniquely Canadian in their design and materials. They must include the logo and tell the story of the Games. The theme of “Uniting the World in Friendship” should be evident in the design.

Write 2-3 paragraphs describing each of your designs. Describe your design and the symbolism of the shape, colour and images.

ACTIVITY EXTENSION

Design two mascots for the Games. Write 2-3 paragraphs that describe their stories and personalities. Do they have special powers?



2. DRAWING THE SPORTS



There is a 'pictograph' for each sport at the Tokyo Olympics. Using a simple drawing, they show the sport in action. Use the internet to find these pictographs. The pictograph style is unique to each Games, but typically it is simple and lacks detail. This is because some of their uses are for small items, like tickets and schedules.

Sport illustrations are more detailed, and their applications are bigger. The illustrations will be used on the sides of buildings, posters and banners. They often show the athlete from an interesting angle.

Design pictographs for three sports. They should have the same style. Design a sport illustration for one of these sports.

A large, empty white rectangular area intended for students to draw their own pictographs and illustrations.

ACTIVITY EXTENSION

The International Olympic Committee has announced that breakdancing will be included as a new sport in Paris 2024. Design a sport pictograph and illustration for the new sport.



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