



Town planning at the Olympic Games? Yes, it really happened!

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Medals were awarded for town planning, as a sub-set of the architecture category, at the Olympic games from 1928 to 1948 as part of the Olympic art competitions. These also included literature, music, painting, and sculpture. Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic movement, believed that such competitions alongside sport were vital in emphasising the human ideal of physical prowess in combination with a healthy and creative mind and best reflected the original Greek approach to Olympism. By the 1920s the art competitions were considered internationally relevant to campaigns for promoting public awareness of art as a whole.

All entries to the art competitions had to be inspired by sport. Hence successive town planning gold medals were awarded for stadium designs for Nuremberg and Liverpool, a Reich Sport Field in Germany, and an athletics centre in Varkaus, Finland. Whether any of them were actually built is not recorded. Anyone familiar with the windswept New Zealand sports stadiums that were endured until the 1990s will realise that local town planners never entered.

The art competitions were abandoned after 1948 in part because they lacked international organising structures and were therefore more difficult than sport for Olympic hosts to organise, and also because the likes of artists and town planners were considered to be professionals who may benefit materially from their Olympic success whereas Olympic athletes were required to be amateur and competing purely for the love of sport.

See: Richard Stanton, (2001) *The Forgotten Olympic Art Competitions*, Victoria: Trafford Publishing

	Gold	Silver	Bronze
1928	Alfred Hensel (GER)	Jacques Lambert (FRA)	Max Lauegeur (GER)
1932	John Hughes (GBR)	Jens Klemmensen (DEN)	André Verbeke (BEL)
1936	Werner & Walter March (GER)	Charles Browning Lay (USA)	Theo Nussbaum (GER)
1948	Yrjo Lindegren (FIN)	Werner Schindler & Edy Knupfer (SUI)	<i>Ilmari Niemeläinen (FIN)</i>

Table 1: Olympic Games Town Planning Medallists (Adapted by editors from: Wikipedia)