

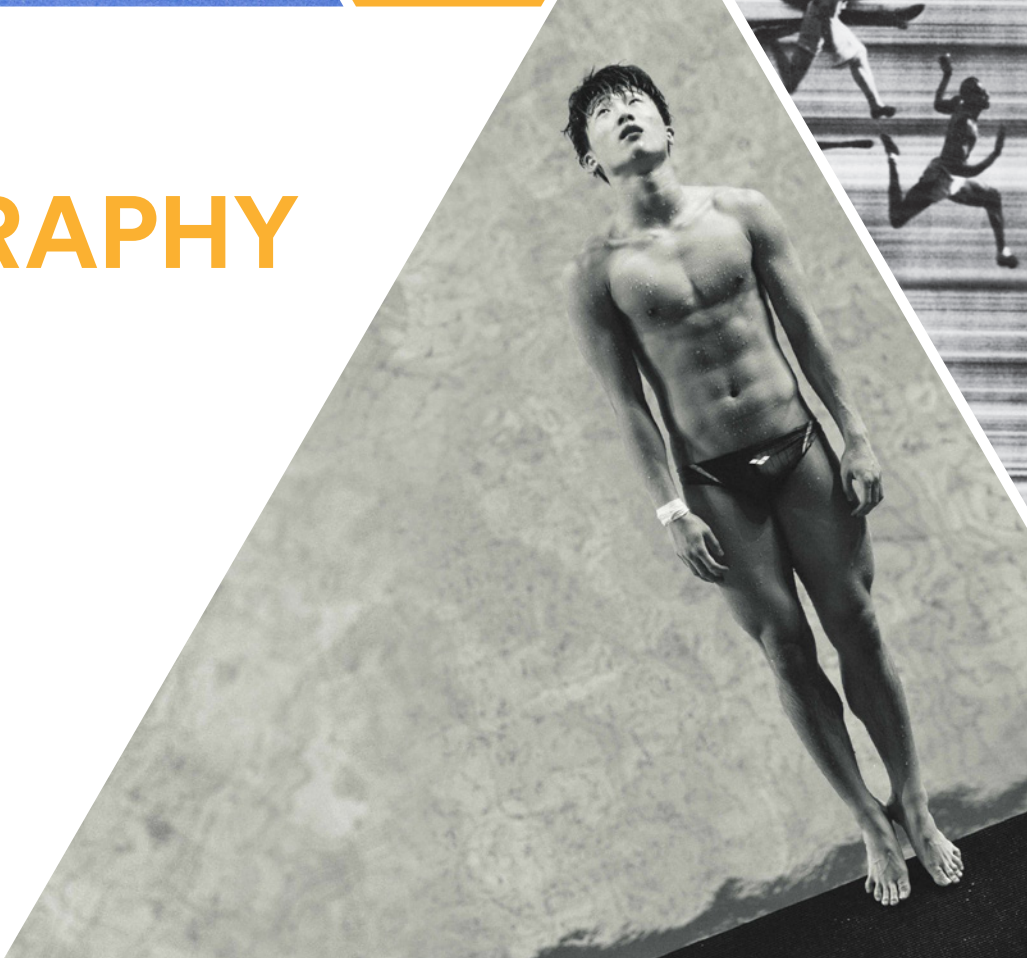
TOM SCHOOLS

Information
sheet

TEACHERS



SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY



Contents

How to use this sheet	1
Introduction	2
Sports photography, a unique discipline and a mirror of its time	
Sports photography, a reflection of the leisured classes	4
The unique features of sports photography	5
Sports photography and the Olympic Games	9
Sports photography and its connection with advances in photographic techniques	
Zoom in on some ground-breaking advances	11
Role and functions of sporting images	
Sports photography, its customs and messages	16
Sports photography in different contexts	18
Glossary	20
Credits	21

How to use this sheet

Sports photography is about sharing a moment, an instant in time. It captures the intensity of sports competition, and freezes a fleeting moment.

It relies on the talent and creativity of the photographers, as well as on the technical advances that make it possible to capture those ephemeral events and depict them as accurately as possible.

This sheet focuses on:

- The close links between sports photography and the history of photographic techniques.
- The documentary and artistic aspects of sports photography.
- The unique challenges of being a sports photographer.
- The variety of messages conveyed by images of sport.
- The different ways sports photographs are used.

The activity sheet gives children aged 9 to 15 the opportunity to learn more about sports photography in a way that brings the topic to life.

→ Download from: www.olympic.org/education
> Teaching materials

An educational video explains how to shoot with short exposures, and provides the tools for conducting a practical in-class workshop on the visual image.

→ Available in french from: www.olympic.org/pedagogie

This document should be used in conjunction with the activity sheet on the same topic.

Introduction

Sports photography captures an instant of sport, and the people watching it, by conveying a strong image. The photographer is the key person in charge of this task, and has many challenges to overcome. It's by no means an easy job!

As sports photographer Franck Seguin says:

“Sports photography is the most difficult field [of photography] because it requires physical ability, technical ability (e.g. using different lenses, studio work and working outdoors), the ability to adapt to different locations: sea, stadium, mountains, desert, boats, helicopters, etc. That’s the job of a sports photographer: to produce the best image despite the rules you have to follow, and the many obstacles.”

Gail Buckland, *Who Shot Sports, A Photographic History, 1843 to the Present*, (Knopf, 2016).

This expert sports photographer started out photographing skiers because he thought it would be a fun way to earn a living!

Sports photography has a history all its own. This information sheet gives a brief overview. After an introduction to the history of sports photography and some of its special features, the second half of the document focuses on the connections between the discipline and the history of the techniques it relies on. The third part looks at the traditions and messages of sports photography, focusing its main actors: the photographers. Finally, there is a glossary of the keywords used when analysing an image.



**Sports
photography,
a unique discipline
and a mirror
of its time**

Bob Martin

Diving, Tracey MILES (GBR) with the Sagrada Familia
In the background, Barcelona 1992. © Getty Images

Sports photography, a reflection of the leisured classes

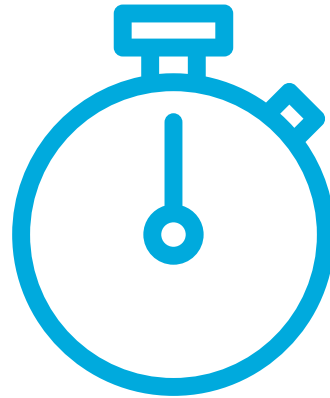
By the end of the 19th century, the industrial revolution had fundamentally changed western society. These more liberal societies began to turn their attention to leisure, and devoted more time to recreation and sport. It was around that time, in 1894, that Pierre de Coubertin revived the Olympic Games, and global sporting events were now scheduled every four years. This context, which combined technical advances with social liberalisation, contributed to the rise of sports photography, which continued to develop at an incredible rate throughout the 20th century.

The rise of Sports photography has evolved incredibly throughout the 20th century.



The American delegation posing at the Panathenaic Stadium, during the first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896.

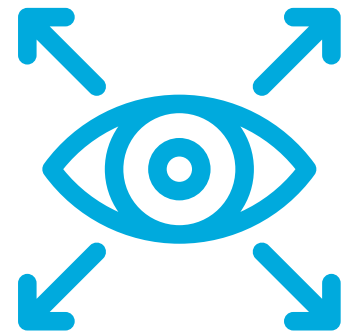
The unique features of sports photography



Spotting the decisive moment

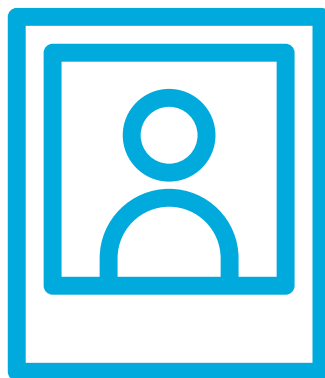
Photographers must use all their intuition to capture the most powerful instant.

Sports photography features a number of highly specific aspects, which form a sort of user's guide that all good sports photographers follow to ensure they take photos that will make an impression.



Choosing original viewpoints

The viewpoint is what gives the photo its depth.



Taking striking portraits

It gives the photographer an opportunity to identify a more private aspect of the athlete.



The decisive moment

The “decisive moment” is a key concept of sports photography.

The concept was articulated by French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, who identified it as the moment the photographer chooses to capture his image:

“Photography implies the recognition of a rhythm in the world of real things. What the eye does is to find and focus on the particular subject within the mass of reality; what the camera does is simply to register upon film the decision made by the eye. (...) In photography there is a new kind of plasticity, the product of instantaneous lines made by the movements of the subject. We work in unison with movement as though it were a presentiment of the way in which life itself unfolds. Photography must seize upon this moment and hold immobile the equilibrium of it.”

– Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Images à la Sauvette* (Verve, 1952).



The photographer has the perfect view of this diver preparing to dive below him.

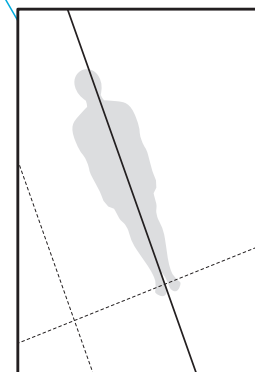
Photographers use their intuition to capture the most powerful instant.

This moment is not necessarily the moment when something happens. It could be just before, for example. Photographers use their intuition to capture the most powerful instant, the most graceful or the most striking moment, of a situation. They must be able to see how an event is going to proceed, and choose the most appropriate moment to capture it in a photograph. That’s not easy!

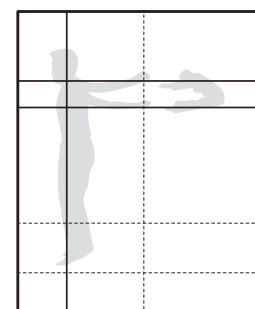
Crossing the finish line, or scoring a goal, are not necessarily the decisive moments that photographers choose to immortalise. A photographer is looking for something transcendental. The best sports photographers are looking to produce images that are aesthetically powerful, which at the same time transcend the sporting action.



Just a fraction of a second earlier, or later, this image would lose all its meaning. Perfect timing by photographer Jason Evans!



Right to the minute! The image’s construction of those two images would not have been captured without the sharp look and the intuition of the photographer.



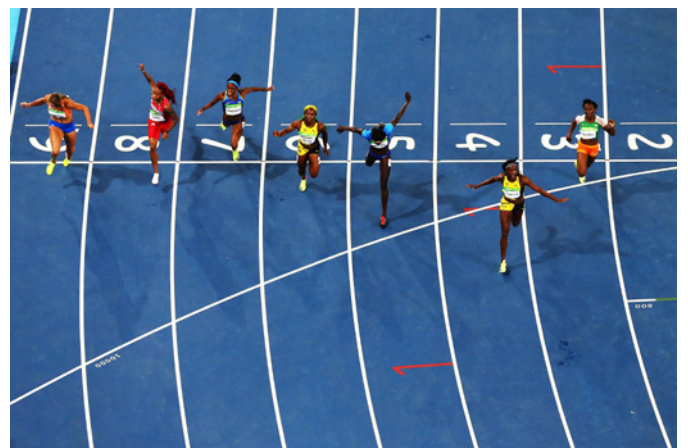


Viewpoint

The viewpoint is the place where the photographer chooses to put his or her camera, and this a crucial element of sports photography. The viewpoint is what gives the photo its depth. It can also show a scene from an unusual perspective, which a spectator would not have the opportunity to experience.

They are many different viewpoints:

- high angle
- low angle
- aerial view
- frontal view



Those three pictures illustrate a same moment captured from three different vantage points.

Thanks to technical progress, photographers no longer have to be with their camera to take advantage of the most unusual viewpoints. Cameras can be controlled remotely, mounted on drones, or controlled by computer.



Portraits as sports photography

Portraits focus on the face and its expressions. They are completely different from the kinds of sports photographs that try to capture the body in motion.

They also provide a way for the general public to identify with athletes they admire. Portraits are often published in the form of items that can be collected and kept (stickers, posters, etc.).

Whether or not the athlete concerned is famous, a portrait gives the photographer an opportunity to identify a more private aspect of the athlete, and show another side of their personality.

A portrait gives the photographer an opportunity to identify a more private aspect of the athlete.



Candid portrait of judoka Yolande Bukasa, a member of the Refugee Olympic Team. This shot was taken during a training session at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio.

Sports photography and the Olympic Games

The Olympic Games are just as important for photographers as they are for the athletes. They come together for two weeks every four years, and they need to perform at the highest level, just like the athletes do. Photographers also have to prepare carefully for the Games to keep up with the pace of competition.

The Olympic Games provide an opportunity to try out new, sometimes experimental techniques. Some camera manufacturers will lend the photographers new cameras and lenses to try out before they are released onto the market. It's a good opportunity to ensure that the professionals use them, and are seen using them on the television! Not a bad marketing strategy.

At the Olympic Games, the photographers also direct their lenses towards the athletes' entourage. They may focus on the emotions expressed on the faces of the many people involved in a sports competition – doctors, coaches and referees – or more generally on the spectators.



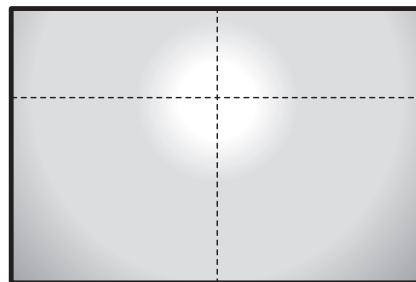
This American coach, surrounded by his team, is talking strategy with his players, who are seen as blurred silhouettes in the foreground.

The Olympic Games provide an opportunity to try out new, sometimes experimental techniques.

Sports photographers have privileged access behind the scenes of the competition, and they provide a glimpse into a world that is generally closed to spectators. Athletes are seen in a different, more personal light.



Photographer John Huet catches the Australian women's rugby team moments before they go onto the field for the final. Their faces are a picture of concentration.



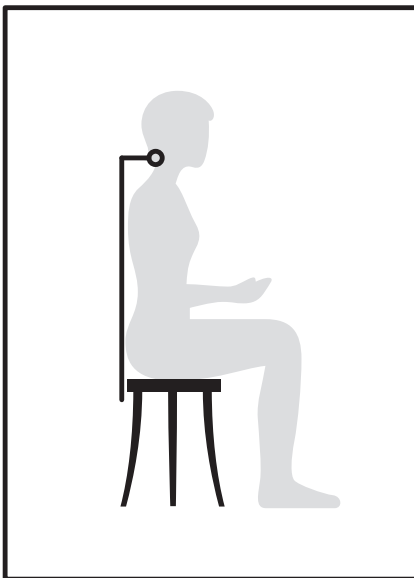
By using focus and centering the two photographers chose to emphasize on one point, which gives an intimist setting to those pictures.



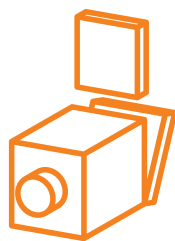
**Sports
photography
and its connection
with advances in
photographic
techniques**

Zoom in on some ground-breaking advances

The history of sports imagery owes a great deal to the progress made in photographic techniques. It is also important to note that sometimes it is the photographers themselves who pioneered these innovations!



Posing chair used for body fixing in the daguerreotype photography.



Daguerreotype

This process perfected in the late 19th century by Louis Daguerre was a way of creating high-definition images without a negative, **on copper plates coated with silver**. Daguerreotypes were usually displayed in a glass case, and the reflections this caused meant they had to be tilted slightly to be seen properly. They were protected from light by a wooden lid. This was the beginning of photography!

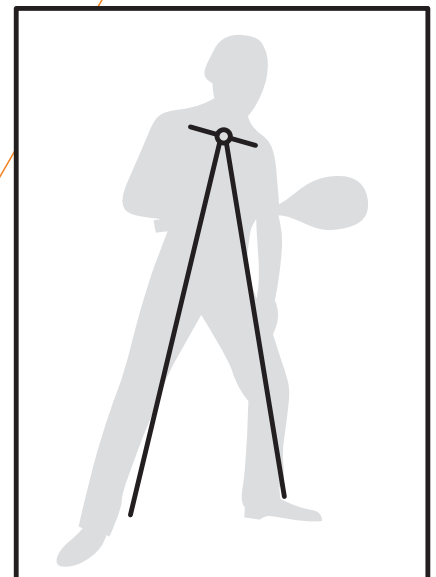
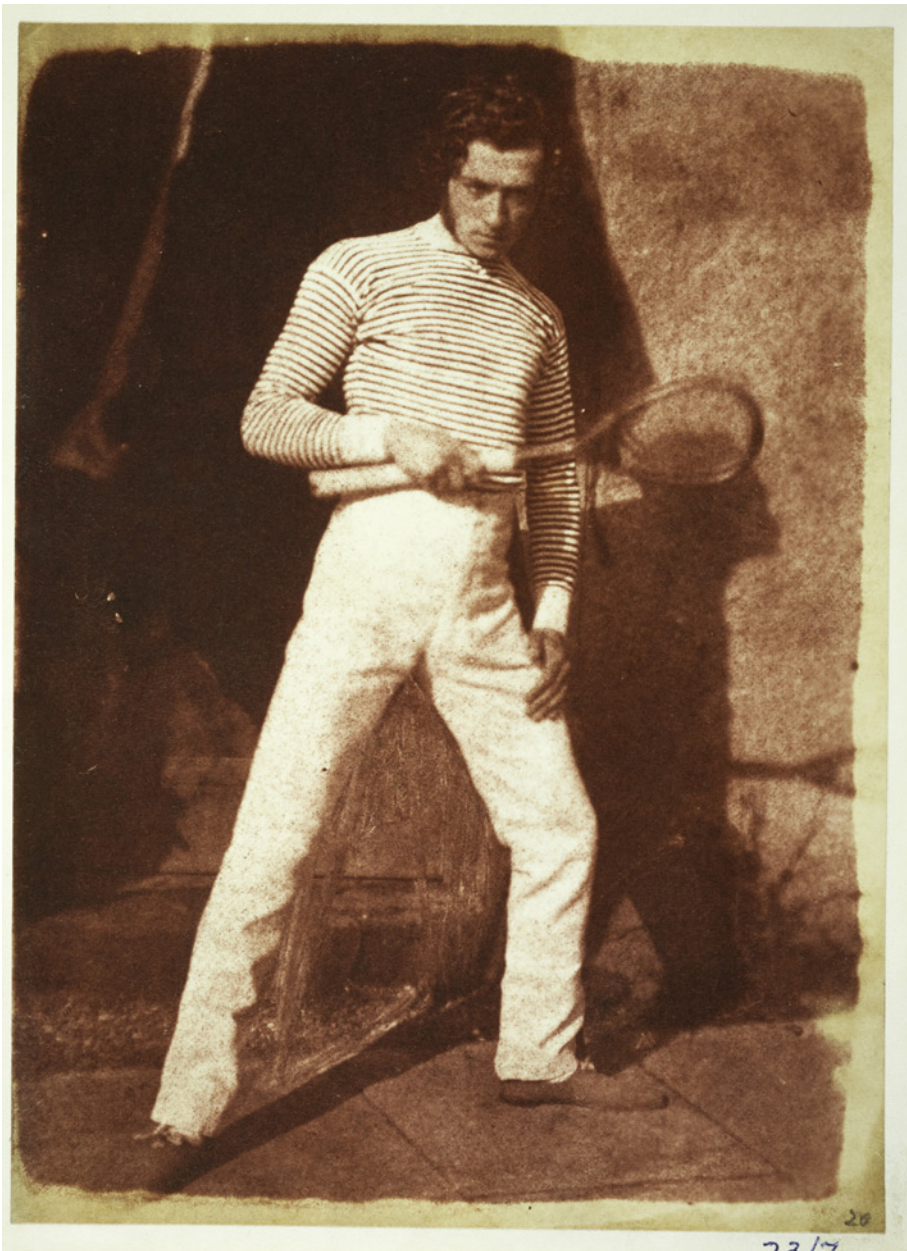


Calotype

The calotype was used for the first known sports photograph, taken by David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson. Patented in 1841 by Henry Fox Talbot, it produced a paper negative, which made it possible to reproduce images by contact. This was the first photographic development process.

The first sports photograph shows Mr Laing posing with his tennis racquet, conveying an attitude of strength.

The calotype produce a paper negative, which makes it possible to reproduce images by contact.

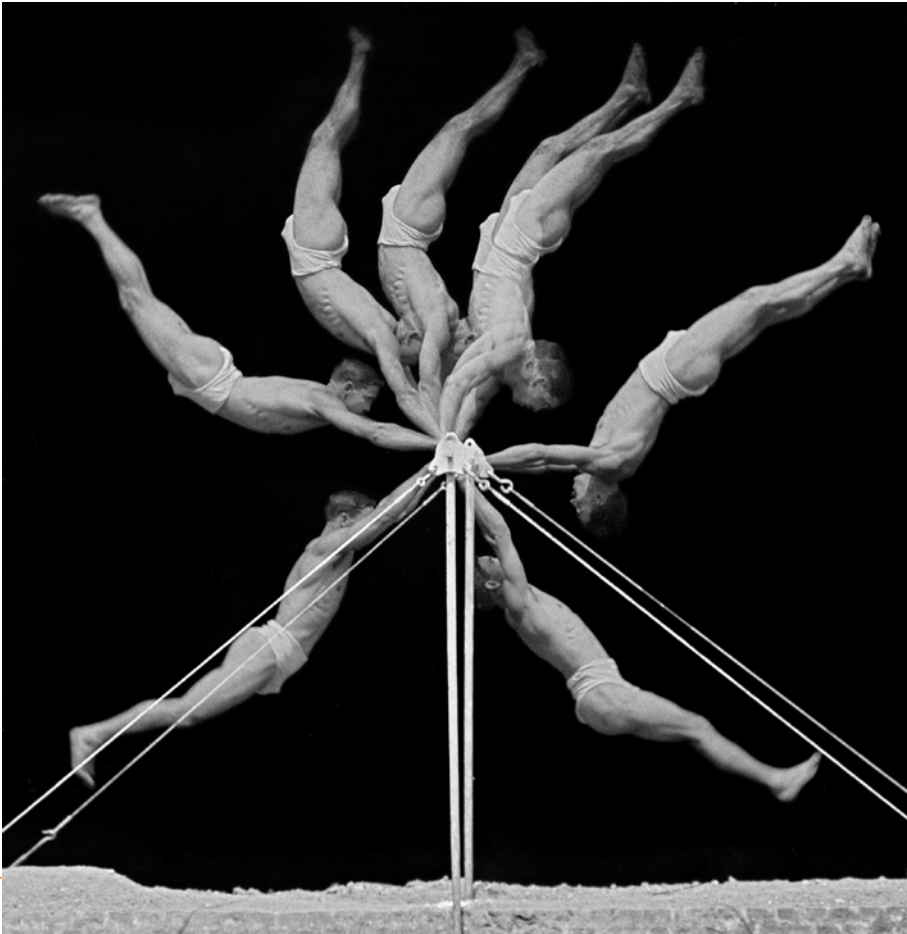


Mr Laing had to hold this pose for several minutes. A hidden metal framework helped to ensure he didn't move. This was the first sports photograph!

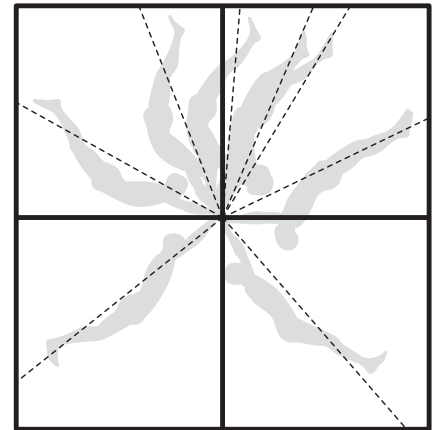


Chronophotography

Still at the end of the 19th century, in 1883, **Etienne-Jules Marey and his assistant Georges Demenÿ perfected a way of taking a succession of shots at fixed intervals.** This provided a way of deconstructing movements, making it possible to study them scientifically. Initially, the various phases of a single movement were photographed onto a fixed plate. Later, he would use a moving film, with which he could secure up to 50 photos at a rate of 20 images per second.



Eight in one! With chronophotography, it became possible to isolate every phase of a gymnast rotating around a horizontal bar.



By deconstructing and studying the movements chronophotography helped athletes to improve training.

*At this time,
a film could secure
up to 50 photos at a rate
of 20 images
per second.*

20th century revolutions

A new procedure using silvered glass plates in conjunction with a rapid gelatin emulsion would revolutionise the world of sports photography. Thanks to a technique perfected by Jules Beau, photographers were finally able to leave their studios and capture images of athletes in action. Nevertheless, the early 20th century would remain essentially a time of studio portraits. The exposure time required by early photographic plates meant lengthy poses.

Then, little by little, photographers gradually began to seek out original viewpoints (even without the benefit of telephoto lenses!) and began to explore concepts of time and motion thanks to innovations including flash photography and shorter exposure times.



These athletes look as if they're ready to spring forward. But in fact they had to remain motionless for several minutes while the photo was taken. Sounds like a recipe for cramp!



Brilliant colours are a feature of the BMX final at Rio 2016. In fact, this photo was taken with a mobile phone.

Another revolution arrived in the 1980s with the invention of digital photography.

Another revolution arrived in the 1980s with the invention of digital photography. The time between taking a photo and publishing the shot got shorter and shorter, and at the same time it became possible to freeze dynamic action shots, and work with remote-controlled cameras mounted on robots and drones. Sports photographs have become more graphically effective, capturing the emotion and speed of the moment, in vivid colours.

Pawel Kopczynski

Men's Discus Throw finale, Lawrence OKOYE (GBR),
London 2012. © IOPP Pool /Getty Images



Role and functions of sporting images

Sports photography: customs and messages

The functions of sporting images

Sports photography fulfils a number of different functions. First of all there is the aesthetic dimension, **emphasising the beauty** of the athlete's body, and giving an artistic depth to the portrayal of movement.



David Burnett ticked all the boxes to come up with this uniquely composed image. Usain Bolt appears to be alone, when in fact the stadium is filled with several thousand spectators.

Sports photography also has a **documentary value**. It records the events of a competition and conveys information about it to people who were not there, through newspaper reports, for example.

Finally, because it provides the ability to understand and deconstruct movement, or simply because it provides a way of precisely establishing who crossed the finish line first, sports photography can have a **scientific value**.

In the early 20th century very few women practiced sport, which is why there are far fewer photographs of them.

Influence on the image of women

Sports photography has also played a role in modernising the image of women. The advent of magazines such as French publication *La vie au grand air*, which published photographs of women riding bicycles, helped to promote more modern representations of women. Nevertheless, in the early 20th century very few women practised sport, which is why there are far fewer photographs of them.



The first female international tennis star, Suzanne Lenglen, nicknamed "The Divine", immortalised mid-stroke.

The strength of political messages

Sports photography can also convey a political message, and the Olympic Games provide some potent examples. The photos of African-American sprinter Jesse Owens, who won four gold medals at the 1936 Games, provided a powerful counter-argument to Nazi theories about the superiority of the Aryan race.

At the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico, US athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos, gold and bronze medal-winners in the 200 metres, used the Olympic podium as a platform to raise their black-gloved fists in **protest against the racism and segregation that continued to divide the United States**. This instant was captured through sports photography and published all around the world. The athletes became iconic figures in the African-American community's struggle for equality.

This instant was captured through sports photography and published all around the world. The athletes became iconic figures in the African-American community's struggle for equality.



This photo left its mark on history. The now iconic shot reveals nothing of the sanctions the athletes were subjected to as a result of their protest (they were banned from the Games and ostracised by the media).

Sports photography in different contexts

Sports photographs can be seen in a variety of different situations. They can be published in specialised magazines or general-interest publications. They can also be exhibited in art galleries, or used by scientific research laboratories looking into the human body and movement. These are known as different reading contexts.

The birth of the magazine

Accompanying as it did the social changes of the end of the 19th century, **sports photography enjoyed greater visibility thanks to the birth of the news magazine.** *La vie au grand air*, founded in 1898, was entirely devoted to sports news, and featured the latest in graphic design. In those days, photography consisted mainly of studio photographs, because it remained technically very challenging to create instant shots.

Sports photography, a documentary medium

Sports photography can of course be appreciated for its documentary and informative function. It provides a record of sporting news in the same way as a newspaper article, or a radio or television programme. **Photojournalist Nate Fein won the Pulitzer Prize in 1949**, the first time this press photography prize had been won by a sports image, for a photo of baseball player Babe Ruth's last professional appearance.

Sport photography can be seen as a work of art.

Photography in an aesthetic context

Sports photography also has an aesthetic dimension. It can be seen as a **work of art** and presented as such in a gallery or exhibition. Annie Leibovitz, a photographer known for her portraits of famous people, has also worked at several different Olympic Games.



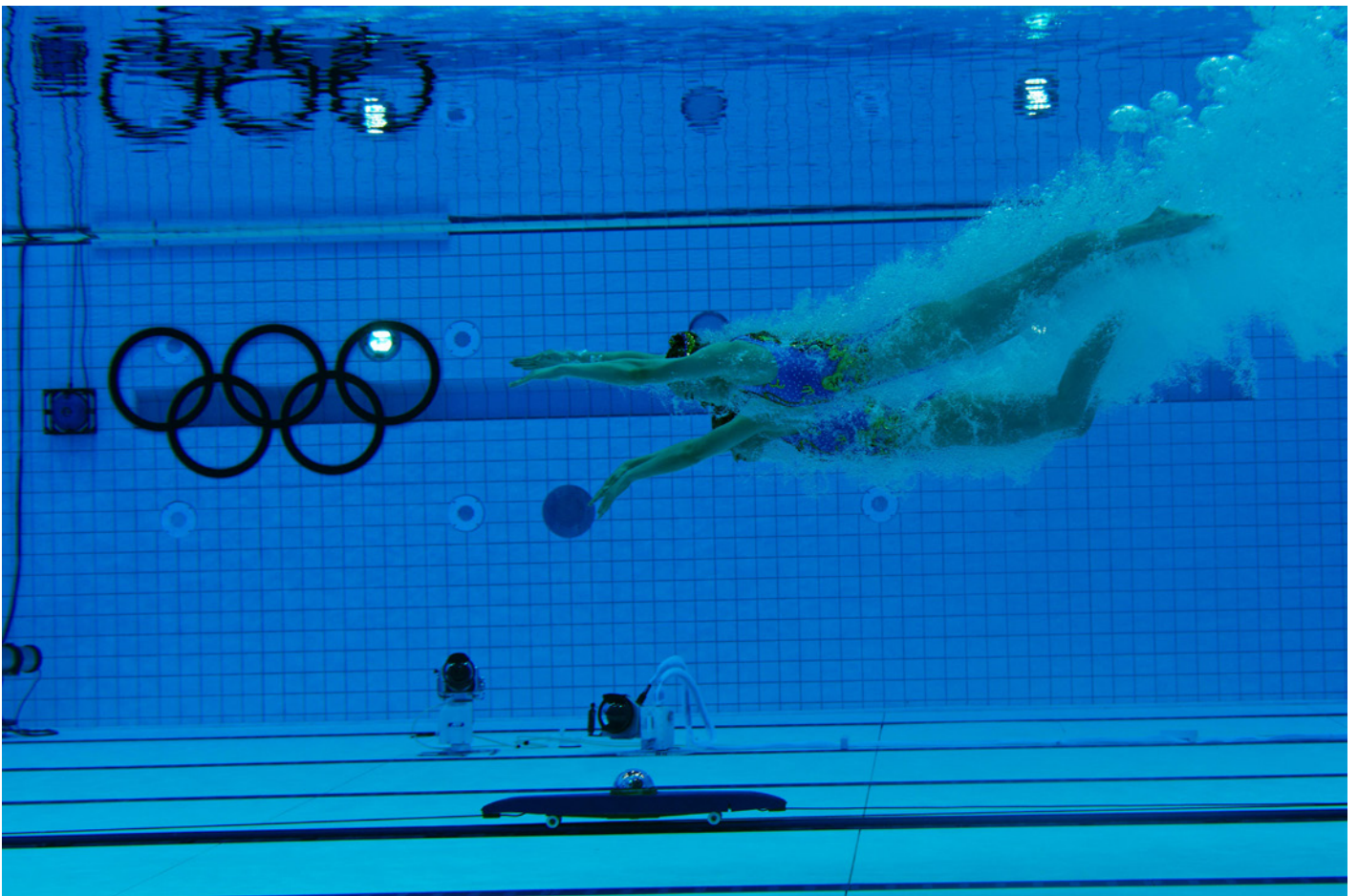
Athlete portraits by Annie Leibovitz, from a temporary exhibition at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne.

Scientific photography: robotics and unusual viewpoints

Finally, sports photography can provide an opportunity to appreciate technical prowess and discover unique points of views.

For example, working with a camera positioned at a remote location reveals some unexpected perspectives. Since 1992 and the Barcelona Olympic Games, **it has become possible to shoot swimmers from the bottom of the swimming pool.** It's an unusual effect!

*Sport photography
provide an opportunity
to appreciate technical
prowess and unique
points of views.*



These two synchronised swimmers don't let themselves be put off by the many cameras lying on the bottom of the pool where they are performing their programme.

Glossary

Composition

Composition refers to the way photographers arrange the elements of the image they are about to shoot, in order to draw the focus to where they want it to be.

They have to think about the elements in each of the different levels or planes of the photograph – foreground, midground and background.

Photographers also look at perspective, and the volume and the depth of the photograph in each plane of the image. Finally, they think about how the image is framed.

Photographic genres

There are many different photographic genres, which fulfil different functions.

Artistic photography is the creation of a work of art, to the extent that it aims to provoke an aesthetic response in the person looking at the photo.

Documentary photography provides the most realistic and neutral images possible in order to record an event.

Scientific photographs are, in general, taken by scientists to use in their research.

Frame-within-a-frame

This technique describes how one work is placed within another, multiplying the same image infinitely.

Staging

A staged photograph aims not to capture a moment in time but to tell a story by using tools of composition, lighting and sometimes studio work, including selected accessories.

Photomontage

A composition of several images or parts of images to create a new photograph. Photomontage can be accomplished with collage, through the developing process itself or using software. The new work thus has a different meaning from that of its original components.

Plane

A plane is a virtual vertical surface in which people or objects are arranged. Different planes represent different degrees of depth, from the closest (foreground) to the furthest away (background), with a number of intermediate planes in between.

Viewpoint

The viewpoint is the position chosen by the photographer to photograph his or her subject. The viewpoint conveys a meaning.

A **high angle** shot captures the subject from the top to the bottom. It can give the impression that the subject is smaller than it really is.

A **low angle** shot is when the subject is captured from the bottom to the top, which makes it look bigger.

When the photograph is taken from an aeroplane, for example, this is called an **aerial view**.

A **frontal view** means placing the camera directly in front of the subject. It can feel intrusive, but it also brings the subject closer to the viewer.

Post-production

In photography, post-production means all the operations carried out on a photograph between the time the shutter is released and its final publication. These tasks can include shot selection, photo editing, and working with lighting, contrast, saturation, sharpness and cropping.

Shooting

Shooting is the action of capturing the subject or visual field that the photographer wishes to photograph.

Printing

Producing paper proofs from an original image that can be transferred to film or digital media. At the end of the 19th century, dry plates were coated with negative emulsions made of gelatin or silver chloride, to reveal the images. Cyanotype, another negative monochrome procedure, produced cyan blue or Prussian blue prints.

Credits

COUVERTURE

Jason Evans

Rio 2016 Olympic Games, Hockey Men, Final – Argentina (ARG) 1st, Belgium (BEL) 2nd. Teh team of Argentina (ARG) hug, Manuel BRUNET, Lucas VILA, Juan LOPEZ et Juan GILARDI.

© 2016 / International Olympic Committee (IOC)

David Burnett

Rio 2016 Olympic Games, Judo women's -70kg (middleweight), training – Yolande BUKASA (ROT).

© 2016 / International Olympic Committee (IOC)

David Burnett

Rio 2016 Olympic Games, Swimming, 50m freestyle Men, Qualification – Meli MALANI (FIJ) (golden swim cap), Ahmed ATTELLESEY (LBA) (black swim cap) and Dulguun BATSAIKHAN (MGL) (red swimming suit).

© 2016 / International Olympic Committee (IOC)

Anonymous

London 1948 Olympic Games – Photo finish of the men's 100m final.

© 1948 / Comité International Olympique (CIO)

Jason Evans

Rio 2016 Olympic Games, Diving, 10m platform Men, Training – Haram WOO (KOR) at the start of his dive.

© 2016 / International Olympic Committee (IOC)

PAGE 3

Bob Martin

Diving, Tracey MILES (GBR) with Sagrada Familia in the background, Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games.

© Getty Images

PAGE 4

Athens 1896 Olympic Games – The American delegation inside the Panathenaic Stadium.

© 1896 / International Olympic Committee (IOC)

PAGE 6

Jason Evans

Rio 2016 Olympic Games, diving – Training session: two divers from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea train on the trampoline.

© 2016 / International Olympic Committee (IOC)

Jason Evans

Rio 2016 Olympic Games, diving – Training session: two divers from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea train on the trampoline.

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PAGE 7

Matthew King

Rio 2016 Olympic Games, athletics, 100m Women finale – Elaine THOMPSON (JAM) 1st, Tori BOWIE (USA) 2nd, Shelly-Ann FRASER-PRYCE (JAM) 3rd.

© 2016 / International Olympic Committee (IOC)

Matthew King

Rio 2016 Olympic Games, athletics, 100m Women finale – Elaine THOMPSON (JAM).

© 2016 / Comité International Olympique (CIO)

Ian Walton

Rio 2016 Olympic Games, athletics, 100m Women finale – Elaine THOMPSON (JAM) 1st, Tori BOWIE (USA) 2nd, Shelly-Ann FRASER-PRYCE (JAM) 3rd.

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PAGE 8

David Burnett

Rio 2016 Olympic Games, Judo women's -70kg (middleweight), training – Yolande BUKASA (ROT).

© 2016 / International Olympic Committee (IOC)

PAGE 9

John Huet

Rio 2016 Olympic Games, Men's basketball final – United States (USA) 1st, Serbia (SRB) 2nd. Mike Krzyzewski, the US coach.

© 2016 / International Olympic Committee (IOC)

John Huet

Rio 2016 Olympic Games, Women's rugby sevens finals – Australia (AUS) 1st, New Zealand (NZL) 2nd. Entrance of the Australian team.

© 2016 / International Olympic Committee (IOC)

PAGE 10

Etienne-Jules Marey

Untitled, ca. 1890.

© Collection Musée Marey, Beaune, France

PAGE 12

David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson

Mr. Laing or Laine, 1843.

© National Galleries of Scotland

PAGE 13

Georges Demeny

Chronophotograph of an Exercise on the Horizontal Bar, 1906.

© INSEP Iconothèque

PAGE 14

Athens 1896 Olympic Games, Athletics – Herbert Jamison (USA), Robert Garrett (USA), Francis Lane (USA) and Albert Tyler (USA). In the starting blocks.

© 1896 / International Olympic Committee (IOC)

John Huet

Rio 2016 Olympic Games, BMX cycling, men's individual final.

© 2016 / Comité International Olympique (CIO)

PAGE 15

Pawel Kopczynski

London 2012 Olympic Games, Men's Discus Throw finale – Lawrence OKOYE (GBR).

© IOPP Pool / Getty Images

PAGE 16

David Burnett

Rio 2016 Olympic Games, athletics, 200 m men's final – Usain BOLT (JAM) 1st.

© 2016 / Comité International Olympique (CIO)

Anonymous

Antwerp 1920 – Suzanne LENGLEN (FRA), gold medalist, singles and mixed doubles.

© Getty Images

PAGE 17

Mexico 1968 Olympic Games, Athletics, men's 200 m medal ceremony – Peter Norman (AUS) 2nd, Tommie Smith (USA) 1st and John Carlos (USA) 3rd.

© 2017 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / United Archives

PAGE 18

Catherine Leutenegger

"Olympic'Art" temporary exhibition, Olympic Museum Lausanne, 20/11/2008 - 01/03/2009 – "Modern pentathlon, Michal Gostigian" (left) and "Athletics, Gwen Torrence" (right), 1996, taken by Annie Leibovitz (1949–), USA.

© 2009 / International Olympic Committee (IOC)

PAGE 19

John Huet

London 2012 Olympic Games, Synchronised swimming, duet women's final – Xuechen Huang and Ou Liu (CHN), 3rd.

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