

Bradstock's Olympic vision

Former British Olympic javelin thrower Roald Bradstock has some cutting-edge plans for London 2012. STEVE LANDELLS spoke to him about his artistic vision for the Games

BBC COMMENTATOR Paul Dickenson branded Roald Bradstock 'the Olympic Picasso' and if the veteran javelin thrower secures his dream, he hopes to bind sport and art together in an ambitious project for London 2012.

The London-born but American-based Bradstock was on a three-week mission last month with organisers of the 2012 Olympics about his vision for using art at the Games as a unifying and educational tool.

Bradstock called the visit to his homeland from his Atlanta home a lobbying trip, to sell his ideas to the great and the good of 2012. He spoke to Olympic ambassadors for the Games such as two-time former Olympic decathlon champion Daley Thompson and world triple jump record-holder Jonathan Edwards and hopes to make a another visit to the capital later this year to further make his case.

His desire to become involved was



Roald Bradstock: two-time Olympian in 1980s



Roald Bradstock's piece entitled *2000 Rings* is an example of the work the javelin thrower believes can promote the 2012 Olympic Games in London

fuelled on July 6 last year – the date on which London was memorably awarded the Games. It was a day he recalls with clarity because it coincided with the launch of his art company, Fitness Works, set up to create, reproduce and distribute these dynamic images to the health, fitness and sporting industries. And it set the wheels in motion for the art graduate to form a detailed proposal of how to marry art and sport as one in 2012.

"The principle is to promote athletes through imagery, which transcends language and cultures," said Bradstock. "It is branding 2012 through imagery. I remember watching the art exhibition at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics called *The Five Rings* and I felt very disconnected. The various paintings and sculptures did not make any sense to me and I'm an artist!

"What I want to do is include people in the build up to 2012 and get them directly involved."

Bradstock is keen to use more than just a basic painting or sculpture but he wants to take this a step further by using the image of a specific athletic performance in a series of bio-mechanically sound sequences. In this way he hopes the imagery can also be used as an educational tool for the benefit of the coach and athlete.

"It is more than just interpretation. It is about inclusion," added Bradstock. "The idea is to get kids of all ages to understand the basic ownership of 2012."

Bradstock, 44, who competed for Great Britain at the 1984 and 1988 Olympics, still throws today and last year achieved 70 metres. He is, by any stretch of the imagination, a workaholic. He rises at 5am every morning and rarely goes to bed before 1am and besides competing at a very high level and working for his art company, he also coaches America's

No.1 thrower Breaux Greer and is a personal fitness trainer. But his main priority is to see his vision for art at the London 2012 Games come to fruition and he has created a six-point plan.

Point one, says Bradstock, would use art and imagery to replicate specific Olympic performances. One example the Englishman has created is that of a giant mosaic of Asafa Powell, the world 100m record-holder.

But, he argues, rather than using a simple photograph, which he says can become dated and have a limited shelf-life, he would work on creating



Olympic Runners, by Roald Bradstock, who coaches American No.1 javelin thrower Breaux Greer

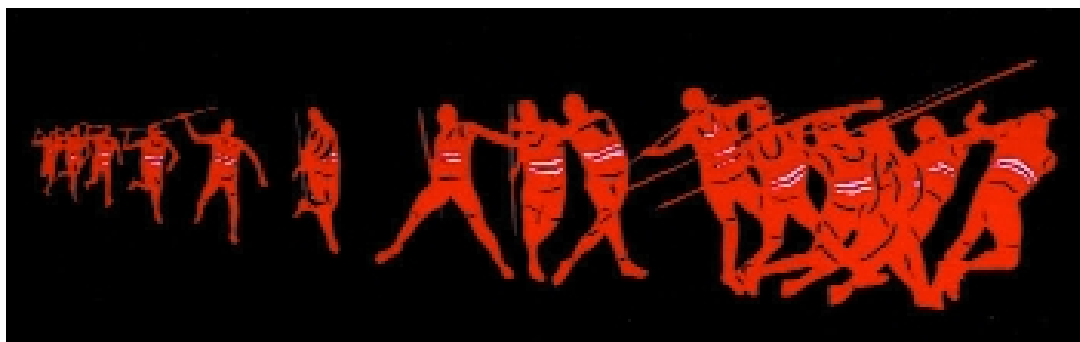


a more real image which he believes can attract top sponsorship and be marketed successfully.

The second element to his proposals he believes was sent from heaven because the organisers of 2012 have named the Games' super-quick transport system 'Olympic Javelin' – a 12-carriage train service which will take passengers from Kings Cross/St Pancras to Olympic Park in just seven minutes.

"This offers a very clear opportunity to celebrate British Olympic javelin throwing," said Bradstock. "What a gift. From underground stations to the side of the train carriages we could show an image sequence of say Tessa Sanderson's winning Olympic javelin throw or Fatima Whitbread or Steve Backley in action."

The third strand to Bradstock's project is to marry art into a multi-educational pack involving primary, secondary and college level students focusing on Olympic history and how events and techniques have changed over time. He would like to provide the images and branding for the scheme



and added: "The scope for this is massive and I would like to be involved."

Part four would be to have a prominent role in the Olympic gardens, and work closely with horticulture and botany. The ambitious plan involves a close study at what flowers would bloom at a particular time of year.

"I would want the flowers to change colour with the seasons which would show clear images over the months," he explained. "It would be very visual, as if actually living figures and runners would move across the flower beds over time."

The fifth element would be an extension of part four but would use

Veteran eyes comeback

ROALD BRADSTOCK plans to compete in next summer's AAA Championships some 13 years after he last appeared in the historic event.

The former Enfield & Haringey athlete, who threw a lifetime best of 83.84m back in 1987 and competed in the 1984 and 1988 Olympics has continued to train and after competing in the US Nationals

in 2004 he plans to give it a bash back in Britain.

"I qualified for the US Nationals again this year by throwing 70.44m, but I didn't end up going because I had too much on," said Bradstock.

"I'm still a British citizen, so I would like to compete in the British nationals. I turn 45 next April and what I really want is to throw a world age best of 70.80m."

flowers and plants to create huge athletics images which could be seen from the sky. "It would be a bit like the giant white chalk horses created on mountain sides except with an Olympic theme, which could be viewed from anyone coming into land at say Heathrow or Gatwick airport."

Bradstock's sixth and final part would set in place nationwide sport-based art exhibitions involving everyone from primary school children to university students.

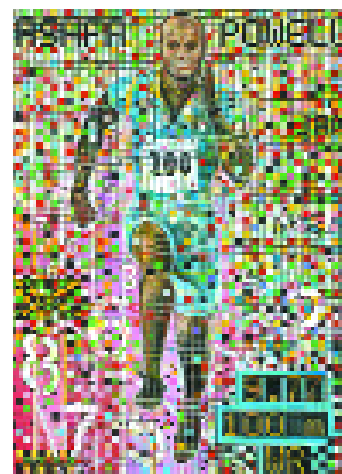
The former Enfield & Haringey athlete is under no illusions as to the enormity of his plan, but he is desperate to have a direct role with London 2012.

"I would want to be involved in all six areas," he added. "I would want my images to be used and in other areas I would want my input. I want to bridge sport and art and bring the Olympics and Paralympics closer together."

Bradstock has also approached Lynne Williams, the senior consultant and project manager for the Olympic Friendship Business, Phil Lane the chief executive of the British Paralympic Association, Jonathan Edwards, Steve Cram and Daley Thompson and he has received some excellent feedback.

His good pal Paul Dickenson has even spoken to London 2012 chairman Lord Coe about the former javelin thrower's vision.

A former winner of the International



Roald Bradstock's poster of Asafa Powell

Sports Artist of the Year award, Bradstock has also had his work showcased on ABC and CBS television and reviewed in the *New York Times*, one of the United States marquee newspapers.

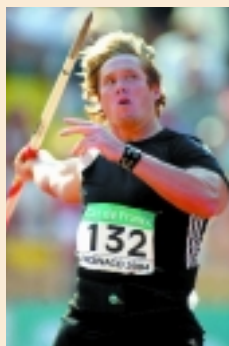
And there is little doubt about the seriousness of his bid.

"The Olympic plans have now become my full-time focus. Art is something I've always enjoyed and got very excited about," added Bradstock. "It's just a joy. I can't really explain it. I was born and brought up in Broxbourne in North London and the reason I went to the States was to improve my javelin and my art but now things have turned full circle and I might even return to Britain."

Greer is down but not out

ROALD BRADSTOCK, the coach of American No.1 Breaux Greer (right), believes his man can still prove a force at the Beijing Olympics.

Greer has been bedevilled by injury and underwent his ninth operation earlier this year after snapping his anterior cruciate ligament for the second time in three years at the Golden League meeting in Paris.



is one of the older guys."

Greer has a lifetime best of 87.68m dating from 2004.

"He has had so much bad luck with surgery to his knee and his elbow," said Bradstock. "He is an incredible talent, but if he can stay healthy for 12 months before 2008 he will be hard to beat. But javelin is a high-risk volatile event and he