

Bradstock's Olympic Ring Series: The Story

In 1981, Roald Bradstock moved from England to the United States to pursue a dual career as an Olympic athlete and artist—an opportunity that did not exist in his home country at the time. He made his first Olympic team in 1984, graduated the following year with a degree in studio art, and went on to compete in his second Olympic Games in 1988.

In 1996, Bradstock relocated to Atlanta, Georgia, where he began focusing on what would become his Olympic art career—even though no defined pathway for Olympic-related visual art existed at the time.

Struggle for Perfection (1997)

In 1997, Bradstock created *Struggle for Perfection*, his first artwork based on Pierre de Coubertin's iconic five-ring Olympic symbol. As he painted the 36" × 60" acrylic work, he visualized it one day hanging in the Olympic Museum at the IOC headquarters in Lausanne—despite having no association, contacts, commission, or knowledge of any future Olympic art competitions or exhibitions.

In 1998, the painting was purchased by **Herman J. Russell**, the influential Atlanta-based developer and civic leader who played an important behind-the-scenes role in the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. Russell was involved in major Olympic and sports venues including Centennial Olympic Stadium (later Turner Field), the Georgia Dome, the Georgia World Congress Center, and Olympic-driven expansions at Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport. He was also a close friend and trusted supporter of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement.

In 2000, *Struggle for Perfection* won the **United States Olympic Committee Sport Art Competition**, hosted by the United States Sports Academy (now the United States Sports University). The painting was exhibited at the IOC's Olympic Museum in Lausanne for nearly a year as part of the cultural program for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

This achievement later led the **BBC** to nickname Bradstock the “**Olympic Picasso**,” a descriptive phrase that has since been widely used by media, curators, and audiences worldwide.

2012 Rings

The second work in the Olympic Ring Series, *2012 Rings*, was created to celebrate the London 2012 Olympic Games. It was featured on the BBC website in 2012, referenced during a BBC World Service radio interview in 2025, and included—alongside three other works—in the UK's national high school art examination in 2013.

2018 PyeongChang

The third work in the series, *2018 PyeongChang*, is a monumental 15-panel painting created in the months leading up to the 2018 Winter Olympic Games. The piece was completed on site in the Olympic Village with the participation of 111 fellow Olympians. This project became the starting point for the IOC's **Olympian Artists Program**, which will hold its fifth edition at the 2026 Milano Cortina Winter Olympic Games. The IOC will exhibit the work for the first time at the Olympic Club in Milan during the Games (February 7–22, 2026).

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Olympic Strong (Tokyo 2020)

Olympic Strong was one of four paintings commissioned by the IOC for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games as part of the second Olympian Artist-in-Residence program. Large-scale reproductions of the four works were printed on traditional **Noren curtains** and displayed throughout Tokyo alongside the work of four Olympian artists and one Paralympian artist.

Paris 2024 – Together

The fifth work in the Ring Series, *Paris 2024 – Together*, marked Bradstock's first use of paper collage as a medium. The 10-panel, 24,000-piece collage was created to celebrate the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games and pays homage to two major French influences: **Henri Matisse's** pioneering collage work and **Georges Seurat's** pointillism technique.

Symbols on Ice

Symbols on Ice is a 36" × 60" acrylic painting created in celebration of a partnership with New York's Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA). The work references the 1932 and 1980 Winter Olympic Games in Lake Placid, with a special focus on the historic "Miracle on Ice" hockey game between the USA and USSR. The painting is currently on loan and on display at the Lake Placid Olympic Center.

Together (Centennial Winter Games)

Together is a 24-panel acrylic painting measuring 80" × 144", created as part of the first-ever **Art-in-Sport educational program** based on the Olympism Art Genre. The collaborative work celebrates the first 100 years of the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, depicting every winter sport, host city, and host country. The final stage of the project involved contributions from 100 high school students representing six schools across Lake Placid and the North Country.

LA Rising Together

The eighth work in the Olympic Ring Series, *LA Rising Together*, is a large-scale charcoal drawing created in response to the 2025 Los Angeles wildfires and the upcoming LA 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Completed on site in Grand Rapids in September 2025 with the participation of approximately 1,000 people, the work debuted as the **sole featured exhibition** at the ArtPrize Festival and marked the first-ever exhibition dedicated exclusively to the **Olympism Art Genre**.

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The Meaning Behind Bradstock's Olympic Rings–Inspired Artwork

Bradstock's Olympic Ring creations expand upon the symbolism of Pierre de Coubertin's iconic five interlaced Olympic rings, designed in 1913 to represent the union of the five inhabited continents—Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania—and the gathering of athletes from around the world at the Olympic Games. The symbol embodies unity, inclusivity, and the global reach of the Olympic Movement.

In his ring-inspired artworks, Bradstock visually interprets and artistically expresses the Olympic Movement, the Olympic family, and his own Olympic journey and experience. The rings function as powerful symbols representing people, families, athletes, and coaches; local, national, and international sports organizations; as well as communities, companies, and institutions. Each is interconnected to varying degrees and intensities, reflecting the relationships and interactions that contribute to the success of the Olympic Movement and forming the underlying structure of Bradstock's compositions.

1. [Olympic symbols - Wikipedia](#)
2. [Olympic rings - Symbol of the Olympic Movement](#)
3. [Roald Bradstock | The Olympic Rings Series](#)
4. [The Olympism Art Genre Explained \(November 2025\).pdf](#)

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“Struggle for Perfection”



In *Struggle for Perfection*, each ring is painted entirely by hand, resulting in subtle imperfections and irregularities. No matter how hard Bradstock tried, achieving a perfectly formed ring proved impossible. This deliberate approach was intended to visually express the central pursuit of elite athletes throughout their careers: the relentless striving to perfect their craft, while knowing true perfection can never fully be attained.

1. [Finding the art in sport | CNN](#)
2. [In Conversation with Roald Bradstock | Features, The Art of Sporting Heritage Month | Sporting Heritage](#)
3. [Herman J. Russell - Wikipedia](#)
3. [Herman Russell - Georgia Historical Society](#)

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“2012 Rings”



2012 Rings is Bradstock’s least favored work within his Olympic Ring–inspired series. The piece was created with a single focus: how it would appear on a computer screen. While the original painting can appear raw, cluttered, and intentionally unrefined when viewed in person, it transforms when seen digitally—coming alive with energy, movement, and depth that fully reveal the artist’s intent.

1. [PPT - GCSE Fine Art Exam2013 PowerPoint Presentation, free download - ID:1607140](#) (pages 22,23,24 & 25)

* *2012 Rings* was included in the Britains National High School Art Exam in 2013 along with [Marcel Duchamp](#), [Henri Matisse](#), [William Turner](#) and the [Italian Futurists Umberto Boccioni](#), [Luigi Russolo](#), [Carlo Carra](#), [Giacomo Balla](#) and [Gino Severini](#)

2. [BBC Wales - Colin Jackson's Raise Your Game - 2012 - Roald Bradstock](#)

3. [BBC Audio | Sportshour | A life of two halves](#)

4. [This Olympian Is Bringing Art Back to the Olympic Games](#)

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“PyeongChang 2018”



This 15-panel acrylic painting, measuring 120” × 150”, is significant for two key reasons. First, it marked the launch of the IOC’s **Olympian Artist Program** in 2018, which Bradstock led inside the Olympic Village during the PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games. Second, it introduced the **Olympism Art Genre** to a global audience—a genre Bradstock had been developing for decades.

The painting fully embodies the core elements of the Olympism Art Genre, from its subject matter and repetitive visual components to the creative process, mindset, and context in which it was produced. Equally central to its meaning are the questions of who participated, how the work was created, where it took shape, and why and when it was made. This work was the first in the Olympism Art Genre to incorporate a **community-based collaborative component**, and the first to involve **multiple Olympians**, making collective participation integral to both its structure and significance.

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“PyeongChang 2018”

1. [Olympic Museum - Olympian Artists at PyeongChang 2018](#)
2. [Olympic Art Visions](#) (IOC article #1)
3. [Roald Bradstock | 2018 PyeongChang Olympic Games](#) (Bradstock website)
4. [Olympic Museum - Olympian Artists are people who are both artists and Olympic athletes.](#)
5. [Olympic Museum - Roald BRADSTOCK](#)
6. [Olympic Art Visions](#) (IOC article #2)
7. [Academy 2003 Sport Artist of the Year Roald Bradstock Featured in Historic Art Event at Pyeongchang Olympics – United States Sports University](#)
8. ['Olympic Picasso' combines love for sports, art :: WRALSportsFan.com](#)
9. [Why Olympian's focus at Winter Games is on art project](#)
10. [Olympic Winter Games blend culture with sport - Olympic News](#)
11. [Olympians invited to help create art in Olympic Village](#)
12. [4 Athletes Selected as Artists in Residence at the Olympics - The New York Times](#)
13. [Instagram #1](#)
14. [MC26-Olympic-Club-artworks-descriptions.pdf](#) (IOC Olympic Club Milan Cortina 2026)
15. [Former Olympian Combines Art and Sport – NBC Boston](#)
16. [06 ART - Arts and the Olympic Games 2020 \(2\).pdf](#) (Vogue Italia)
17. [The-Olympism-Art-Genre-Explained-November-2025.pdf](#) (page 13)

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“Olympic Strong”



Olympic Strong is not about the finished image, but about process, endurance, and resilience. Created during the global pandemic, the work reflects the uncertainty and strain of that period, which weighed heavily on Bradstock throughout its creation.

In this painting, the smaller rings take on a secondary symbolic role: they appear to strain against and attempt to break apart Pierre de Coubertin’s five interlaced Olympic rings, yet ultimately fail. The Olympic Rings remain intact—interwoven and strong—serving as a visual metaphor for unity and perseverance in the face of global disruption.

Bradstock worked on the painting for six weeks, often spending more than ten hours a day in the studio. While the image itself was completed in the first two weeks, the remaining four weeks were devoted to a deliberately repetitive and redundant process, emphasizing endurance, discipline, and the act of showing up—values shared by both athletes and artists.

1. [Olympic Museum - Roald BRADSTOCK](#)
2. [Olympic Museum - Olympian Artists at Tokyo 2020](#)
3. [A connection between Olympic athletes and art](#)
4. [Exploring the work of 10 Olympian artists ahead of the 2024 Summer Olympics](#)
5. [Olympic athletes showcase their artistic endeavors at the Tokyo 2020 games | Creative Boom](#)
6. [This Olympian Is Bringing Art Back to the Olympic Games](#)

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“Paris 2.024 - Together”



Bradstock spent four months creating *Paris 2.024 – Together*, a 10-panel, 24,000-piece paper collage executed without the use of glue. Instead, he developed an innovative technique using tape applied entirely to the reverse of the panels, requiring more than 1,200 feet of tape to construct the work.

The piece pays homage to two of Bradstock’s most influential French inspirations—**Henri Matisse**, for his pioneering use of collage, and **Georges Seurat**, for his pointillist method of building imagery through repetition. *Paris 2.024 – Together* celebrates the dialogue between past and present, combining a traditional, paper-based medium with contemporary technology through the integration of QR codes, pointing toward the future of visual storytelling.

Embedded within the collage are the logos of all **206 National Olympic Committees**. While invisible when viewing the work from a distance, these symbols are hidden in plain sight and form an integral, interconnected layer of the composition—reflecting the global structure of the Olympic Movement and the collective effort behind its success.

1. [The ‘Olympic Picasso’ finally finds recognition for his athletics-inspired art | CNN](#)

2. [CNN International The "Olympic Picasso" interview.](#)

3. [Art of the Olympians shares international art at Downtown Market in Grand Rapids during ArtPrize](#)

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“Symbols on Ice”



Bradstock created *Symbols on Ice* to celebrate the historic partnership between the **Al Oerter Foundation**, the **Art of the Olympians** program, and New York’s **Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA)**, marking the launch of a new educational **Art-in-Sport** program rooted in the globally recognized *Olympism Art Genre*.

The overall composition is designed as an aerial view of the 1980 Olympic ice hockey rink—the site of the legendary “Miracle on Ice” game in which the USA defeated the USSR. Embedded within the ice are subtle references to Lake Placid’s other Olympic venues, along with an additional Olympic ring symbol that nods to the first time Lake Placid hosted the Winter Olympic Games in 1932.

1. [Roald Bradstock Archives - NYS Olympic Regional Development Authority](#)
2. [Artwork created by Olympic Athletes unveiled in Lake Placid](#)

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“LA Rising Together”



LA Rising Together began as a dark charcoal drawing created by Bradstock, deeply layered with symbolism—from its subject matter and choice of medium to the ways and places in which it was produced. The charcoal drawing took three months to complete in his studio in Atlanta before traveling 1,000 miles to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where it became the central work in the first-ever **Olympism Art Genre** exhibition at the 2025 **ArtPrize Festival**.

Over the course of the 17-day festival, approximately 1,000 visitors and members of the local community added color to the original charcoal surface. Through this collective act, the work was transformed from darkness into light and color, becoming a powerful visual message of love, resilience, and support sent from one community to another. This piece was the third in the Olympism Art Genre to incorporate a **community-based collaborative component**, but the first to involve the public.

1. [Be Part of the Art - Grand Rapids Magazine](#)
2. [Art of the Olympians shares international art at Downtown Market in Grand Rapids during ArtPrize](#)
3. <https://www.woodtv.com/video/downtown-market-exhibit-shares-artwork-by-olympians/11105188>
(1.30 minutes - 5.10minutes)
4. https://www.instagram.com/p/DPPEfeej7p/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
5. https://www.instagram.com/reel/DR0jZGbgv8A/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
6. <https://youtu.be/nFxXjQ7wXyl>
7. [Instagram1](#)
8. [Instagram2](#)
9. [Latest AOTO Mural Completed - An AI Oerter Foundation Initiative](#)
10. <https://www.instagram.com/aoto.artoftheolympians/reel/DTNpkTRDAY1/>
11. [Art Of The Olympians - An AI Oerter Foundation Initiative](#)
12. [The olympic picasso - An AI Oerter Foundation Initiative](#)
13. [This Olympian Is Bringing Art Back to the Olympic Games](#)