

Through artists' eyes

Read the text and choose a sentence from A-F to complete the gaps.

We could identify 1766 as the year in which a legitimate art form called sporting art emerged. It was primarily through the work of the British painter George Stubbs whose portfolio *Anatomy of a Horse* was published in that year. His work is generally considered to have defined a new direction for artists. While Stubbs gave new shape to sporting art, he was by no means the first artist to have focused on sports.1

Wall paintings and reliefs of men wrestling and lifting weights have been discovered in Egypt and dated to the second millennium BC. In later Cretian and Greek cultures there were engravings and frescos that suggested the presence of an athletic spirit: depictions of combative activities or bull-leaping indicate an interest in dangerous competition.2

Sculptures were characteristic of Greek art and, in this form, there is a pantheon of heroes, the most celebrated of which is Myron's *Discus Thrower* in bronze from the 5th century BC. For Greeks, sport, education, and culture were all involved in the cultivation of the whole being; the mental and the physical were not dualities but part of the same unity.3

By contrast the Romans were indifferent to sports and to art as well. The only sporting activities encouraged were those that contributed to the preparation for war. The Roman fascination with fights manifested itself in gladiator conflicts and chariot racing. Without doubt the most memorable reconstruction of such a chariot race is in William Wyler's 1959 epic *Ben Hur*.4

The fall of the Roman empire in the 5th century introduced a period of 1,000 years that became known as the Middle Ages. Artistic evidence of *les tournoiments* was preserved in the form of great medieval tapestries that told stories of chivalry. Contemporary visualisations of tournaments are common thanks to the popularity of films, such as Jerry Zucker's *First Knight* (1994), starring Richard Gere, Sean Connery and Julia Ormond.

In the 18th century it became clear that the natural world was governed by laws and so sports too underwent a revision.5

We find the scientific tendency to analyze, quantify and record in the art of the period, art which became known as "sporting art". As we have noted, George Stubbs's *Anatomy of a Horse* was published in 1766: it was not only work of great aesthetic beauty but of scientific precision.

In the 20th century photography became popular and artists of sport were adventurous in their use of the medium to portray sports in entirely new ways. The photo-collages of John Heartfield introduced satire. For example, his *A Specter is Haunting Europe* features a runner made up of industrial parts, the head a stopwatch, pistons for limbs and a clock card in place of a chest.6

- A) Races took place over prescribed distances, times were measured, results were recorded.
- B) Apart from combat sports, which seem to have existed through several different cultures and epochs, racing of some sort is found in the decoration of ceramics.
- C) The work satirizes the effect of industrial production on sports.
- D) So, sport, as we understand it, did not exist: it was not a separate sphere of activities away from other parts of life.
- E) Indeed, artistic impressions of sporting events and competitors are as ancient as athletic competitions themselves.
- F) It is probably one of the most exciting pieces of dramatized sport ever.

(Adapted from Cashmore, E. *Making Sense of Sports*. London: Routledge, 2000)