

Cultural Daily

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Los Angeles Olympics 1984

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, July 25th, 2018



LA Olympics-Coliseum 1984

Now that Los Angeles has been chosen for the third time as the site of the [Olympic Games in 2028](#), and while the [Coliseum](#), the stadium built for the first Los Angeles Olympics in 1932, is undergoing a major [renovation](#) to be completed in 2019, I find myself reminiscing about the 1984 Olympics.



Sculptor Robert Graham. LA Coliseum

I was child in Modena, Italy, when the Olympics were held in Rome in 1960, and I remember the excitement that swept my country. Similarly in 1983 I felt a joyful anticipation that this international sports event was coming to my adopted city. As a photo-journalist I was eager to cover it, and I did.



Peter Ueberroth, LA Olympics

I photographed preliminary sports competitions, like the balletic synchronized swimming at the newly built USC Swim Stadium, the elegant archery at El Dorado Park in Long Beach, the 10K Run at the Coliseum. I even traveled to Colorado Springs to photograph the Training Center of the US Olympic Team. I was particularly interested in documenting the pastel colored look designed by architect Jon Jerde, that graced the two Olympic Villages, at USC and UCLA, and all the sports venues. And I loved covering the arts. Robert Fitzpatrick, director of the Olympics Arts Festival, invited local artists and performers from all around the world to participate.



Painter Leroy Neiman

I photographed painter Leroy Neiman and his two Olympic paintings at the Playboy Mansion. I interviewed sculptor Robert Graham in his Venice studio, while he was working on the Olympic Gateway, male and female athletes bronze torsos, to be installed in front of the Coliseum. I met Peter Ueberroth, President of the Olympic Committee. The most fun was running into Olympic mascot Sam the Eagle at various events.



Sam the Eagle, Olympic mascot

My favorite subject was the Olympics Mural Project, a series of 10 murals painted along the walls of the freeway around downtown LA. I am still friends with its director, [Alonzo Davis](#), founder of the Brockman Gallery, and he continues to make art.



Alonzo Davis, Olympic mural Eye on LA

As my work was being published in Italian magazines, the staff photographer of the Italian sports magazine *Guerin Sportivo*, contacted me to ask if I would help him photograph the games, since he couldn't possibly cover all events. I was delighted because this assignment allowed me to receive official accreditation to photograph the games. I was given a numbered blue bib that granted me access to the infield of the Coliseum and all the athletic competitions. The opening ceremonies were spectacular, the closing night was magic, with fireworks and even a spaceship appearing in the darkened sky, like in a science-fiction movie. I covered sports, such as a water polo match at Pepperdine and an equestrian competition part of the Modern Pentathlon.

My photographs were published in Italy in a coffee table book: *Olimpiadi '84*. It was a truly memorable time in my life.



Robert Fitzpatrick-Olympic mural by Terry Schoonoven

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[LA Olympics, Preparation](#): Colorado Springs, Synchronized Swimming, The Venues, The Look, The People, Archery

LA Olympics, Arts: Sculptor Robert Graham, painter Leroy Neiman, fashion

LA Olympics, Murals: Alonzo Davis, Robert Fitzpatrick

LA Olympics, Games: Opening Ceremonies, Olympic Villages, Coliseum, Sports, Closing Night



City Hall, LA Olympics

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