

Olympian Artist/Instructor Provides Students With a Genre for Expression

Connection in movement of the athlete and the artist can be found in the work of Roald Bradstock.
-Editor's note

Ed Stransenback
Guest Author



2025 24-panel acrylic painting titled "Together" (80" x 144") created as part of the first ever educational program embracing the Olympism Art Genre. Celebrating the first 100 years of the Winter Olympic & Paralympic Games.

There are certain similarities between becoming an athlete and an artist—among them being solitude, the ability to find one's inner self expression, and the humbling struggle of achieving one's goals.

An exclusive club of individuals in the world connect these two disciplines. Roald Bradstock, Art of the Olympians executive director, is one of them. This once inquisitive boy from Hertfordshire, England defied odds and went on to break into the elite athlete pool, becoming one of the world's best javelin throwers while also launching an art career that has now gained international recognition.

Life for Bradstock was not without its physical challenges. But his perseverance and focus led him to overcome a most-often debilitating health issue. Perhaps he was driven to prove wrong his doctor's claim that he may never walk again.

Whatever the reason, it gave him the focus, the drive to be the best he could be as an athlete and now as an artist.

Founding a New Genre of Art

As the years have passed, Bradstock became a two-time Olympian achieving athletic prowess before shifting his abilities and full attention towards a career in art that he so enjoys. Even during his colorful athletic career, artist expression was not absent.

He created decorative meaningful uniforms symbolic of his artistic exploration. At the 2008 U.S. Track and Field Championships, his contemporary artist wear (one different for each of his first four throws) portrayed his vision of art within sport.



A close-up of one of the 24 panels from the "Together" mural.

And while his athletic career waned, he continued to push the boundaries of artist expression—always dabbling into an art form yet named, nor recognized. His artistic skills garnered him the name, the Olympic Picasso, from a British journalist. It is a moniker that lives on today.

Bradstock's "tinkering" of art forms soon achieved that for which he had been searching—the founding of an art form that captures the Olympic values and ideals in a visual format now recognized as a new emerging Art Genre called Olympism. Years earlier, he had joined a new organization led by four-time Olympian gold medalist Al Oerter, called Art of the Olympians.

Oerter's unexpected death in 2007 led to a series of leadership changes, until 2015, when Bradstock took on the role as executive director and head of the organization's educational programming—a program featuring world famous Olympian and Paralympian artists as instructors.

Although, Bradstock is not an accredited teacher, his career is dotted with examples of successfully inspiring instructional programs reaching tens of thousands of young people. His first dip into teaching occurred in England where he embarked, at the request of the government ministry, on an on-site teaching art with sport curriculum reaching students in more than 100 schools. The experience gave him new focus and purpose.

His role with Art of the Olympians is equally as inspiring as that initial program in Great Britain, for it delivers the exact life lessons involving art and sport for which he feels compelled to advance.

Depicting Art Through Repeated Movements

"As an Olympian, I learned that every great athletic performance is built on thousands of repeated movements,"

he explains. "As an artist, I explore the same idea visually." Influenced by Eadweard Muybridge's groundbreaking studies of movement and Bridget Riley's Op Art, Bradstock creates artworks and teaches an art curriculum that invites the viewer's eye to travel across a surface, transforming motion from a physical action into a visual experience.

"In the Olympism Art Genre," he notes, "the movement is not only depicted—it is experienced by both the artist and the viewer." Simply put, he is delivering a unique "body in motion", visual art form, while using a myriad of art mediums to present his imagery.

Through it, he believes the disciplines of art and sport form a bond. "For more than 20 years, my goal," Bradstock recalls, "has been to reconnect sport and art in ways that Pierre de Coubertin (founder of the modern Olympics) could only have imagined—not simply by creating Olympic-inspired artwork, but by inviting people to become part of it."

Today, the former Southern Methodist University art graduate and elite athlete, uses his learned life-lessons to promote and teach this new art form. He does so through a unique art-in-sports educational discipline offered through Art of the Olympians.

Currently, the program presents a flexible web-based, dedicated platform providing a balance of standard-aligned content available at a teacher's time and date of choosing. Lesson modules explore such life lessons as philosophy, values, symbolism, and the human spirit through visual art. Student confidence appears to flourish and creative expression heightens.

Helping Students Express Themselves Is the Goal

"One of the goals is to help students," he explains, "and viewers understand that movement can be expressed in many ways. I use repetition, rhythm, and visual pathways to keep the eye moving across the artwork."





2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games: 15-Panel Acrylic painting (measuring 120" x 150"). 112 Olympians contributed to during the 2018 Winter Olympics

Nearly 10 years ago, Bradstock embarked on what would be the first of many cooperative artwork programs while at the 2018 Winter Olympic games in PyeongChang, South Korea. He promoted the participation of members of the Olympian community in a massive 15-panel acrylic painting that eight-years later because a center piece at The Olympic Club in Milan, Italy during the recent 2026 Milan/Cortina Winter Olympics.

Since then, Bradstock has created a series of themed murals. Among his most ambitious was an 8 by 12 foot, 24-panel mural titled, "Together." The multi-paneled painting features 184,240 individual one-eighth inch squares projecting a multi-layered sports theme.

Created with 7,900 feet of penciled lines and taking four painful (two very sore shoulders) months to complete, Bradstock then challenged art students in Northern New York schools to color and write in the names of past and present Northern New York Olympians and Paralympians. "It is a learning tool that I hope served as an educational life's lesson on collaboration and cooperation," he adds.

Participatory Mural Available at NYSATA Conference

Earlier this year, Bradstock unveiled a monumental 21-panel mural called, "Faster, Higher, Stronger—Together." Created on inexpensive recycled paper normally used as disposable floor covering, Bradstock transformed the temporary material into a "body-in-motion" art mural depicting four short track speed skaters maneuvering in full speed.

The drawing measures 10 feet by 16.33 feet and serves as a tribute to the Milan games and the Olympic motto. It is composed of 5,880 individual two-inch squares, inspired by the modular structure of ancient Roman and Venetian mosaics. The repeated squares become a defining visual characteristic of the merging Olympism Art Genre while



"Faster, Higher, Stronger - Together" - A 21 panel drawing measuring 120" x 196". Students from schools that were in both the 2026 Lake Placid and Brooklyn Olympism Art Genre programs have added their marks in one of the thousands of 2" squares.



symbolizing the countless repetitions required to master both sport and art.

Earlier this year, hundreds of students from Brooklyn and Northern New York contributed individual markings in a selected square cut out of the "Faster, Higher, StrongerTogether" mural that were then put back into the original drawing.

The mural will continue its collaborative journey this November to the NYSATA conference.

There, a reduced replica of the mural—and several original mural panels will be on display along with pieces cut from



A closeup of some of the student's contributions using the 2" grid.

the original artwork for teachers at the event to create marks or imagery of their choosing within the mural's two-inch squares.

Four thousand miles to the east of the NYSATA conference, artists, educators, and visitors to the world famous 61st Venice Biennale (Italy) art show (where Bradstock art is on exhibit) will also be encouraged to make their own unique contribution with colored pens and pencils.

As new marks are added simultaneously on two continents, the work becomes a living performance shared by time and movement. Most significantly, says Bradstock, the dual aspect of the work demonstrates that timing—where, when, why, and how an artwork is created—can become an essential element of the work itself.

"The performance," says Bradstock, "transforms participation itself. Together those marks become a powerful expression of Olympism and our shared humanity."

You might even call it symbolic of body in motion. Bradstock is hopeful and that his Art-in-Sport Olympism philosophy can inspire creativity, confidence, and unity in the youth that participate in his educational programs.

(The Al Oerter Foundation (AOF) and its program organization – Art of the Olympians (AOTO) – is a chartered not-for-profit foundation created in 2006 by four-time gold medalist Al Oerter. Through Olympian and Paralympian artists, AOF/AOTO uniquely couples art exhibitions with education by providing programs of art, education, sport, and cultural outreach—both nationally and internationally—to inspire individuals and communities to uphold the virtues of the Olympic ideals.)



Ed Stransenback, a member of the Board of the Al Oerter Foundation/Art of the Olympians, is a public relations specialist and international media specialist, an award-winning journalist with Dow Jones/Ottaway Newspapers and with Reuters, Ltd. He was the first director of the New York State Commission on Winter Sports and Olympics and also served in senior management positions at several Olympics and multiple international sporting events.

Book Review

Rising Out of Hatred—the awakening of a former white nationalist

by Eli Saslow

As my youngest child prepared to begin college this fall, one of the assigned summer readings for his freshman seminar class was *Rising Out of Hatred* by Eli Saslow. Wanting to experience the book alongside him, I read it in advance and found it to be a timely, thoughtful account that feels especially relevant in today's world. I further enjoyed the conversations with my 18-year-old son about the topics discussed in the book, and I am pleased that the college we are investing in values the material for all incoming students.

Saslow tells the true story of Derek Black, who grew up at the center of the white nationalist movement, and the relationships, conversations, and personal reflection that ultimately led him to reject the beliefs in which he had been raised. Rather than sensationalizing extremism, the book explores the power of education, empathy, critical thinking, and authentic human connection to challenge deeply held beliefs.

For those of us in education—and especially in the arts—the book serves as a meaningful reminder of why exposure to diverse perspectives matters. Visual art classrooms are often places where students encounter unfamiliar ideas, cultures, and stories, learning not only creative skills but also empathy, curiosity, and respect for others. *Rising Out of Hatred* reinforces the importance of creating spaces where thoughtful dialogue and openness can lead to genuine personal growth.

I highly recommend this book to anyone looking for a compelling true story that highlights the transformative potential of learning, community, and education.

- Reviewed by Anne Manzella

