The Sports Pictograms of the Olympic Winter Games from Grenoble 1968 to Beijing 2022

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Introduction 5
Grenoble 1968 7
Sapporo 1972 9
Innsbruck 1976 11
Lake Placid 1980 13
Sarajevo 1984 15
Calgary 1988 17
Albertville 1992 19
Lillehammer 1994 21
Nagano 1998 23
Salt Lake City 2002 25
Turin 2006 27
Vancouver 2010 29
Sochi 2014 31
PyeongChang 2018 33
Beijing 2022 35
Credits 37
INTRODUCTION

A pictogram is a stylised and schematic graphic representation which expresses a message, an activity, an action or a service. Pictograms do not belong to a particular language or form of writing, and therefore function as a universal language.

Already in prehistoric times, some types of rock drawings were similar to pictograms. Egyptian hieroglyphs also recall pictograms due to their use of figurative signs to convey information. Throughout the 20th century, the increase in international exchange and the need to have symbols that are understandable across cultures favoured the multiplication and development of pictograms. Today, they have now become indispensable in many areas such as transport, tourism, IT and meteorology.1

Because of their international and multicultural scope, the Olympic Games are not immune. To improve organisation and communication, the Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs) also resort to using pictograms. Used not only to indicate the many services provided to spectators, pictograms are also created specifically to represent the sports on the programme.2

For some editions of the Games until the 1960s, designs illustrating the sports featured, for example, in official publications or on the entry tickets. These illustrations are more figurative than schematic, and there are sometimes several types for the same edition of the Games. For example, in the official general rules of the sports publication for the Olympic Games Paris 1924, illustrations exist for each of the sports.3 For the Olympic Games London 1948, a set of 17 sports symbols were created and featured on entry tickets and in official publications.4 For the 1952 Winter and Summer Games, in Oslo and Helsinki respectively, as well as for the Summer Games in Melbourne in 1956 and Rome 1960, illustrations featuring the sports can be found on some official documents or the tickets.

It is from the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo that a transition occurred with the creation of a set of pictograms that were more schematic and uncluttered in their shape and followed graphic standards. They were also part of a more general visual identity programme. Since then, pictograms have been created for every Games edition.5

For the occasion of the Olympic Winter Games Grenoble 1968, a set of pictograms inspired by op art, an art movement born in the 1960s, was created to present the sports and disciplines on the programme. The search for graphic solutions capable of translating the characteristics of the sliding and speed belonging to the winter disciplines is an aspect that inspired, generally speaking, the designers of the pictograms for various editions of the Winter Games.

The Summer Games edition in Mexico City in 1968 was marked by the strengthening of the visual identity programme, which had a significant impact on the pictograms. For the creation of those of the Games in Munich in 1972, a system of graphic norms was established. Highly standardised and rationalised, these pictograms became a model which influenced those of later Games editions. In 1992, the pictograms for the Games of Albertville as well as Barcelona started a new trend with the style of silhouettes becoming more artistic and more abstract.

As communications needs expanded, the pictograms became available in several variations (black/white, colour, etc.). They currently appear in various mediums, such as in competition programmes, venue maps, TV broadcasts and giant-size on building walls. The pictograms are designed by the OCOGs and approved by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as well as the International Sports Federations.

Retrace the history of the pictograms starting from Grenoble 1968 through this document. Note that only the pictograms of the sports, disciplines and events on the official programme are included. The pictograms of services or demonstration sports are not presented here.
GRENOBLE 1968

Alpine Skiing  Alpine Skiing  Biathlon  Bobsleigh

Cross-Country Skiing  Figure Skating  Ice Hockey  Luge

Ski Jumping  Speed Skating
DESCRIPTION

Graphic designer: Roger Excoffon

Creation context: The moving athlete appears through curves of varying thicknesses. This system of graphic frames gives an impression of speed and sliding, two characteristic elements of winter sports. The style of these pictograms is like that of op art, an art movement that developed in the 1960s, where optical illusions are created through the specific arrangement of lines, shapes and spaces. For the first time, the pictograms also appeared on the medals given to the winners at this edition of the Games. Roger Excoffon also designed the emblem of the Games in Grenoble, as well as the competition and commemorative diplomas.

SOURCES

SAPPORO 1972

- Alpine Skiing
- Alpine Skiing
- Alpine Skiing
- Biathlon
- Bobsleigh
- Cross-Country Skiing
- Figure Skating
- Ice Hockey
- Luge
- Nordic Combined
- Ski Jumping
- Speed Skating
DESCRIPTION

Graphic designer: Yoshiro Yamashita

Creation context: Based on those of the Olympic Summer Games Tokyo 1964, the pictograms for Sapporo were adapted to the characteristics of winter sports. Like those of Tokyo, they present simple and schematized forms composed of a small number of graphic elements. The pictogram for the Nordic combined was composed of both the ski jumping and cross-country skiing pictograms. It was not part of the first published set but was instead created after a subsequent review of the first set of pictograms.

SOURCES

INNSBRUCK 1976

Alpine Skiing

Alpine Skiing

Alpine Skiing

Biathlon

Bobsleigh

Bobsleigh

Cross-Country Skiing

Figure Skating

Figure Skating

Ice Hockey

Luge

Luge

Ski Jumping

Speed Skating
DESCRIPTION

Graphic designer: Alfred Kunzenmann

Creation context:
The style of these pictograms is simple and devoid of any superfluous details which was in line with that of the Olympic sports pictograms of the time. The pictograms for the four-man bob, the luge doubles and the pairs figure skating were created by repeating certain graphic elements.

SOURCES

> LAKE PLACID 1980

- Alpine Skiing
- Alpine Skiing
- Alpine Skiing
- Biathlon
- Bobsleigh
- Bobsleigh
- Cross-Country Skiing
- Figure Skating
- Figure Skating
- Ice Hockey
- Luge
- Luge
- Ski Jumping
- Speed Skating
DESCRIPTION

Graphic designer: Alfred Kunzenmann

Creation context: The pictograms for this edition were the same as those created for the Olympic Winter Games Innsbruck 1976.

SOURCES

SARAJEVO 1984

- Alpine Skiing
- Alpine Skiing
- Alpine Skiing
- Biathlon
- Bobsleigh
- Bobsleigh
- Cross-Country Skiing
- Figure Skating
- Figure Skating
- Ice Hockey
- Luge
- Luge
- Ski Jumping
- Speed Skating
**DESCRIPTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graphic designer:</th>
<th>Radomir Vukovic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creation context:</td>
<td>Through the use of 45° and 90° angles as well as silhouettes with limbs of the same thickness and rounded ends, the graphic line of these pictograms recalls that used for the Olympic Summer Games Munich 1972. The fine and straight lines behind the silhouettes in action convey a movement of speed and sliding. In the official publications, the Nordic combined was represented by the pictograms for ski jumping and cross-country skiing put side by side.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE**

> CALGARY 1988

Alpine Skiing  Alpine Skiing  Biathlon  Bobsleigh

Cross-Country Skiing  Figure Skating  Ice Hockey  Luge

Nordic Combined  Ski Jumping  Speed Skating
DESCRIPTION

Graphic designer: Otl Aicher (dir.)

Creation context: The Organising Committee for the Olympic Winter Games in Calgary decided to use the winter sports pictograms which are part of a set of sports pictograms developed based on the pictograms for the Olympic Summer Games Munich 1972.

SOURCES

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> ALBERTVILLE 1992

Alpine Skiing

Alpine Skiing

Alpine Skiing

Biathlon

Bobsleigh

Cross-Country Skiing

Figure Skating

Figure Skating

Figure Skating

Freestyle Skiing

Ice Hockey

Luge

Nordic Combined

Short Track Speed Skating

Ski Jumping

Speed Skating
DESCRIPTION

Graphic designer: Desgrippes & Associés

Creation context: The graphic line of the Albertville 1992 pictograms broke away from the more formal one created by Otl Aichler that was evident in the pictograms of the previous editions of the Winter Games. With an emphasis on movement, they were similar in style to Magique, the star mascot, and fit into the general concept of the visual identity of these Games. In addition to creating the pictograms, the Desgrippes & Associés company, which was involved in the development of the Games’ visual identity programme, produced the final version of the emblem and the official poster.

SOURCES

LILLEHAMMER 1994

Alpine Skiing  Alpine Skiing  Alpine Skiing  Alpine Skiing  
Biathlon  Bobsleigh  Cross-Country Skiing  Figure Skating  
Freestyle Skiing  Ice Hockey  Luge  Nordic Combined  
Short Track Speed Skating  Ski Jumping  Speed Skating
DESCRIPTION

Graphic designer: DesignGruppen '94 / Art division of the Organising Committee for the Games in Lillehammer

Creation context: The designers of the Lillehammer pictograms were inspired by the rock carvings typical of Norwegian culture. Thousands of years old, they can be found in various locations around the country. Amongst these carvings, the representation of a person on skis found on the island of Rødøy in northern Norway is regarded as the oldest illustration of a skier in the world. These pictograms underline the Norwegians’ attachment to nature and to their roots, two of the themes of the visual identity of this edition of the Games.

SOURCES

– Arild Vollan, “Capturing the Norwegian character”, Olympic Message, 1992, no. 34, p. 28.
NAGANO 1998

Alpine Skiing  Alpine Skiing  Alpine Skiing  Biathlon

Bobsleigh  Cross-Country Skiing  Curling  Figure Skating

Freestyle Skiing  Ice Hockey  Luge  Nordic Combined

Short Track Speed Skating  Ski Jumping  Snowboard  Speed Skating
DESCRIPTION

Graphic designer: Landor Associates International, Ltd

Creation context: The pictograms were designed based on the emblem of the Games, which was itself composed of a flower, whose petals represented the silhouettes of winter sports athletes. The style of the pictograms aimed to be energetic and dynamic. Landor Associates International, Ltd was chosen through a competition held by the Organising Committee to create the elements of the visual identity of these Games. The company produced, in particular, the emblem and the mascots.

SOURCES

– “Pictograms of the Nagano Olympic Winter Games”, website of The Shinano Mainichi Shimbun.
SALT LAKE CITY 2002

Alpine Skiing
Alpine Skiing
Alpine Skiing
Biathlon
Bobsleigh

Cross-Country Skiing
Curling
Figure Skating
Figure Skating
Freestyle Skiing

Freestyle Skiing
Ice Hockey
Luge
Nordic Combined
Short Track Speed Skating

Skeleton
Ski Jumping
Snowboard
Speed Skating
DESCRIPTION

Graphic designer: SLOC Creative Group

Creation context: The pictograms, which make reference to Western American culture, are based on the designs of the irons used for branding cattle in this region of the United States. The use of 30° angles as well as the thickness of the lines of the silhouettes make reference to the graphic style of the emblem of this edition of the Games. Tints chosen as the colour variants of the pictograms reflect certain aspects of the Olympic Games and the local landscapes. For example, the “amber torch” tint for the silhouettes (presented above) represents the Olympic flame and is also a symbolic reference to the courage of the athletes.

SOURCES

> **TURIN 2006**

- Alpine Skiing
- Biathlon
- Bobsleigh
- Cross-Country Skiing
- Curling
- Figure Skating
- Freestyle Skiing
- Ice Hockey
- Luge
- Nordic Combined
- Short Track Speed Skating
- Skeleton
- Ski Jumping
- Snowboard
- Speed Skating
- Speed Skating
  
  Solid version
DESCRIPTION

Graphic designer: Iconologic

Creation context: The pictograms are composed of several transparent layers, which generate an impression of depth to recreate the dynamic movement of the athletes. Perspective, transparency and contrast were three central notions of the visual identity of this edition of the Games. A “solid” version without the transparent effect (one example shown here), was specifically created for reproductions of the pictograms less than one centimetre in size that were used, for example, for programmes and timetables.

SOURCES

> VANCOUVER 2010

Alpine Skiing  Biathlon  Bobsleigh  Cross-Country Skiing  Curling

Figure Skating  Freestyle Skiing  Freestyle Skiing  Freestyle Skiing  Ice Hockey

Luge  Nordic Combined  Short Track Speed Skating  Skeleton  Ski Jumping

Snowboard  Snowboard  Snowboard  Speed Skating
DESCRIPTION

Graphic designer: VANOC / JAC Design

Creation context: The pictograms aimed to reflect the human and heroic qualities of the athletes. To graphically translate their energy and give dynamism to the image, certain parts of the silhouettes and the equipment are accentuated. In parallel with the pictograms, a separate set of highly detailed sports illustrations was created as part of the visual identity of the Games. The illustrations were used in particular for merchandising and large format applications.

SOURCES

- “I’m JAC Design – Brand & Identity”, website I’m JAC Design.
- “Vancouver 2010 Pictograms and Sport Illustrations” section, website of Vancouver 2010.
SOCHI 2014

Alpine Skiing  Biathlon  Bobsleigh  Cross-Country Skiing  Curling

Figure Skating  Freestyle Skiing  Freestyle Skiing  Freestyle Skiing  Freestyle Skiing

Freestyle Skiing  Ice Hockey  Luge  Nordic Combined  Short Track Speed Skating

Skeleton  Ski Jumping  Snowboard  Snowboard  Snowboard

Snowboard  Speed Skating
DESCRIPTION

Graphic designer: Sochi 2014 / External agency

Creation context: The pictograms were inspired by the style of those produced for the Olympic Summer Games Moscow 1980, thus establishing a link with the past. The combination of smooth and straight lines, the absence of clear angles and the visual sobriety aim at giving them dynamism and sense of purpose. A 14x14-square grid as well as a system of lines built from angles of 15° were used for their realisation. The emblem of this edition of the Games also served as inspiration. The relationship between both thicknesses of lines used for the pictograms and the emblem is the same.

SOURCES

PYEONGCHANG 2018
### DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graphic designer</th>
<th>Younghoon Haam and the Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Creation context:** The Korean alphabet Hangeul – which was also used in the Games emblem design – provides the inspiration for these pictograms. The use of this alphabet, which is unique to the Korean peninsula, is an invitation to discover and better understand the culture of the country. Three vowels and four consonants specific to Hangeul were selected to form the basis of the pictograms’ design. The use of slanted and curved lines brings out the dynamism of the pictograms and the movements of the joints and limbs, giving an overall minimalistic, flowing effect. The fluidness and vitality of the pictograms reflect the Olympic spirit, the passion, the sense of challenge and the limitless potential shown by the athletes.

### SOURCE

BEIJING 2022

Alpine Skiing  Biathlon  Bobsleigh  Cross-Country Skiing  Curling  Figure Skating

Freestyle Skiing Aerials  Freestyle Skiing Freeski Big Air  Freestyle Skiing Freeski Halfpipe  Freestyle Skiing Freeski Slopestyle  Freestyle Skiing Moguls  Freestyle Skiing Ski Cross

Ice Hockey  Luge  Nordic Combined  Short Track Speed Skating  Skeleton  Ski Jumping

Snowboard Big Air  Snowboard Cross  Snowboard Halfpipe  Snowboard Parallel Giant Slalom  Snowboard Slopestyle  Speed Skating
DESCRIPTION

Graphic designer: Lin Cunzhen (dir.)

Creation context: A group led by Lin Cunzhen, an associate professor at the China Central Academy of Fine Arts, designed the Beijing 2022 pictograms. It took the team about six months to complete the project. Input from experts or International Sports Federations contributed to the design refinement. The style of the pictograms recalls the graphics culture of the country and interprets, in a modern form, the traditional Chinese art of seal engraving of the Qin and Han dynasties where a knife was used to create the design. The contrast between the red and the white adds a festive touch and highlights the dynamism of the various sport disciplines. In line with the style of the Beijing 2022 emblem, these pictograms also pay tribute to those of the Olympic Summer Games in Beijing in 2008.

SOURCE

CREDITS

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IMAGES
