



Olympics London 2012 – a very British firework

London is competing with five other cities (including Paris) at the 117th session of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which awards it the Games, on 6 July 2005 in Singapore. Sebastian Coe, born in London, one of the most successful athletes, a multi-medalist in the 800m, mile and 1500m, is the head of the nomination committee. His political career (deputy for the Tories between 1992 and 1997) and his go-between skills made the difference against the candidacy of Paris, the great rival. The two capitals have also been the only two European cities to have hosted three times the Olympic Games (1908, 1948 and 2012 for London). Modern sport was born and institutionalized in the UK.

The final budget of around €11 billion is double the amount provided for in the application. 26 sports disciplines are selected; the number will no longer be immutable but subject to the vote of the IOC for each Olympiad. The two major issues at this Olympiad were the urban development of East London and security. The Stratford area, with its disused factories, unsanitary housing and polluted marshes, will be replaced by the Sadler's Well Theatre, which will host a hip-hop academy of hip hop, BBC Music studios (2025 – 2026), and the University of the Arts in London, Faculty of Fashion campus (6,500 students and professors). The gentrification of London has therefore increased, the working classes are pushed ever further, as in all western capitals. The British armed forces are called upon to mobilize large numbers of military personnel to make up for the defection of the private security company G4S. The budget must be doubled, but no attack to deplore despite a major threat.

As often the British have innovated with a first in Olympic history. The logo does not highlight the city or country, but the year 2012. It is inspired by the world of media, communication and fashion. London is home to one of the best design schools- Central Saint Martins (University of the Arts London). The Steering Committee worked with Tate and the Plus Tate Group (made up of 19 art galleries in the UK) to select artists who will create the official posters. A list of 100 artists was selected, reduced to a short-list of 12 people, six of whom designed a poster, three of them including Rachel Whiteread, won the Turner Prize.

The London Olympics were above all a formidable tool of public relations and soft power mobilizing the most varied artistic skills that have made the reputation of the United Kingdom – the opening ceremony is directed by Danny Boyle (*Trainspotting*, 1996), and features footballer David Beckham, actors Kenneth Branagh and Daniel Craig (James Bond), singer Paul McCartney (Beatles) and writer J. K. Rowling (*Harry Potter*). The video features 007 agent coming to fetch Queen Elizabeth II; London mayor Boris Johnson offers a clownishness

The 2012 Games featured the most fantastic storytelling in Olympic history- the soundtrack (British pop stars), the clip (James Bond), the logo, the great achievement of the event showed that the United Kingdom was one of the nations in the front line for what is best at telling a great story. The worst was the fall in 2016 with Brexit. Much ado about nothing...

- (1) Documentaire de Mickaël Gamrasni « Olympiques ! La France des Jeux », France, diffusé le 16 juillet 2024 sur France 2
- (2) Site officiel du CIO- <https://olympics.com/fr/olympic-games/london-2012>
- (3) Emeline Vin « Douze ans après, quel bilan pour les Jeux olympiques de Londres? », RFI, 19/07/2024 -

© dr Bénédicte Halba, docteure en Economie du sport (Université de Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne- janvier 1996), Paris, 23 juillet 2024