

# *Let the Games Begin*

*Has the summer heat got you too hot to trot? Step inside where you can flex your mind and walk lively in pursuit of works of art that celebrate the sporting life. Although just like fashion, specific sports fall in and out of favor, the basic urge to win, place, or show is timeless.*



**GALLERY 225**

## *Races at Longchamp* (1866) by Édouard Manet

Heard in Paris in 1866: “Darling, are you making an appearance at the newly finished racecourse at Longchamps? The races are one of the most fashionable outdoor spectator sports, non?” The dust-raising horses of Édouard Manet’s *The Races at Longchamps* demonstrate the ways in which the artist used energetic brushwork and loose application of paint to create a palpable sense of movement. Manet exaggerated this effect by placing the viewer right in the path of the charging horses rather than in the security of the sidelines.



**GALLERY 125**

## *Ceremonial Ballgame Yoke*, c. A.D. 700–1000.

**Mexico, Northern Veracruz state**

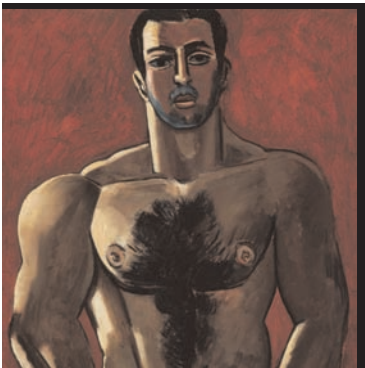
Talk about pressure. Played throughout Mesoamerica, the ceremonial ballgame was a sport as well as a ritual in which sacrifice was often the final outcome. Players were required to skillfully manipulate a heavy rubber ball with their hips, thighs, and shoulders. A “yoke,” usually made of padded leather or wood, was worn at mid-body to protect the torso and to control and direct the ball. This carved yoke was intended as a ceremonial trophy and was not used in actual play.



GALLERY 171

*Croquet Scene* (1866) by Winslow Homer

The genteel pastime of croquet gained increasing popularity among the American upper classes in the mid-19th century, and in 1866 toy manufacturer Milton Bradley began mass-producing the croquet set in the United States for the first time. In this painting, Homer demonstrated his familiarity with the rules of the sport and its social nuances. Croquet allowed women to compete with men as long as they conducted themselves with elegance. In this scene, the man kneels to adjust the ball so that the woman can maintain her dignified pose. In the process, though, he gazes at her ankle, hinting at the immorality that opponents of the game believed was inherent in an activity in which men and women intermingled.



GALLERY 265

*Madawaska-Acadian Light-Heavy* (1940) by Marsden Hartley

Late in his career, Marsden Hartley produced a series of studies of athletes for a gymnasium mural. This painting is one of several featuring this model, a French-Canadian light-heavyweight boxer, whom the artist particularly favored. Hartley delighted in the athlete's strong physique, exaggerating his anatomy and painting the background deep red, heightening his vitality. The painter's late figural works enjoyed great success. Critics in the early 1940s praised them for their depiction of strong masculinity, willfully ignoring their controversial homoerotic undertones.



GALLERY 155

*Silver Coin of Phillip II of Macedon Celebrating his Victory in an Equestrian Event at the Olympic Games in 356 B.C., (Tetradrachm), c. 350 B.C. Macedonia, minted in Pella*

Although he probably had someone else ride for him, Phillip II of Macedon surely couldn't have been prouder of his victorious steed. He struck this silver tetradrachm in Pella, his birthplace and the city in which his son, who would become Alexander the Great, was born that year. The jockey holds a palm branch, signifying victory; beneath his mount is Zeus's thunderbolt. On the opposite side of the coin is a head of Zeus, from whom Phillip claimed descent. Other coins on display show Nike, Greek goddess of victory, crowning a triumphant charioteer, and the victor in a mule race.



GALLERY 140 (CASE 8)

*Jousting Helm, (1485/1500), Southern Germany or Austria*

The Middle Ages have us beat when it comes to extreme sports. Imagine holding a lance, balancing yourself clad in more than 50 pounds of armor on a galloping two-ton horse, as you try to unseat your opponent who is coming at you also at breakneck speed. In a sport that could inflict life-threatening injuries, 15th-century knights shielded themselves by themselves from head to toe in armor. This German or Austrian jousting helmet, or stechhelm, provides just enough of an opening for the wearer to see his target while being narrow enough to deflect anything from entering.

*Participation, Inclusion, Personal Best*

Don't miss the seventh quadrennial Gay Games Sports and Cultural Festival, to be held throughout Chicago July 15–22. More than 12,000 participants from more than 70 countries will come together to compete in 30 sports. The event also features a weeklong arts festival and musical performances and medal ceremonies in Millennium Park. For more details, please visit [www.gaygames.com](http://www.gaygames.com).