

# EXPERIENCE: THE SIXTH SENSE OF ARCHITECTURE

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores how Olympic stadia and their symbolism consolidate to construct an experience of the Olympic Games, investigating how the senses are shaped by architecture and atmosphere. It approaches the Olympic Games as a spatial-temporal package propelled by mobility—one that is simultaneously idiosyncratic and common, personal and international, mythical and modern, and ephemeral and eternal. Fluid in both space and time, the Games perform a local and global tour, generating ephemeral stimuli but eternal legacies and impacts on their host countries.

## METHODOLOGY

The analysis of the Olympic Games as a mobile model of experience is conducted through a comparative examination of three Olympic cycles: Athens 2004, Tokyo 2020/2021, and Los Angeles 2024/2028. Despite Athens being a rather recent cycle within the chronology of the modern Games, applying it as an event against which to juxtapose nearing cycles is telling of the current accelerated and pivotal period of mega-event development. In just the past two decades, the Games have adapted to advancements in technology and evolving scales of spectatorship, metamorphosing at the following three levels: planning, players and performance.

## QUESTIONS

How is the stadium a stencil that schedules sport, spectator and stimulus into one sense of spectacle?

Where do vision and television diverge, and where do they hybridize experience?

In which forms is the Olympic message broadcast, branded and sold?

What is the difference between vision and *television*?

The Olympic Games have a pompous and ceremonious start and finish, but what happens when the spectacle ends? What is to be done, structurally and symbolically, with the stadium that stands after the camera stops recording?

## LITERATURE

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*; Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* and “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility”; *Candidature File: Los Angeles Candidate City Olympic Games 2024; IOC Feasibility Assessment - Olympic Games (Brisbane)*; International Olympic Committee, *Olympic Legacy*; Geraint John and Dave Parker, *Olympic Stadia: Theatres of Dreams*; Martin Müller, “What Makes an Event a Mega-event? Definitions and Sizes”; Noel B. Salazar, *Mega-Event Mobilities: A Critical Analysis*; Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life”; Rodanthe Tzanelli, *Mega-Events as Economies of the Imagination: Creating Atmospheres for Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020*  
[note: not all sources have been listed]

## CONCLUSIONS

The experience of architecture is a holistic, full-body, participatory event, dependent upon the extent to which the spectator’s senses are engaged in the event’s stimuli. The physical stadium offers something that its technological translation, regardless of how much the virtual has become our reality, cannot evoke. Architecture is *lived* and *sensed*, thus experience is shaped by and contingent on spectators’ physical presence within the stadium and interaction with its surrounding atmosphere. It is a matter of *sensing* versus *watching*, and it is only the former which not only wholly incorporates the five senses, but also introduces the sixth: experience.