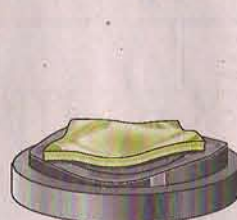
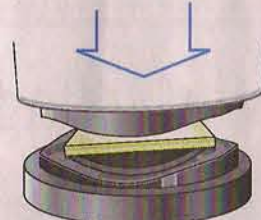


VANCOUVER 2010
OLYMPIC MEDALS » CANADIAN ICONOGRAPHY



AN OVERVIEW OF THE 30-STEP, 2,800-HOUR PROCESS

Like snowflakes, no two medals are the same. The medal images are parts of artworks created by Corrine Hunt.

1 Each medal image is "cut" with computer software from the original artworks, to be laser-printed onto the medal surface.

2 Metal is rolled and cut to create blanks of a precise width and thickness.

3 Warm metal blanks are 'struck' three times to form the medal into its complex undulating shape.

4 Edges are smoothed and ribbon hanger attached.

5 Individual design and text are laser-etched onto the medal, which is then sealed with a protective coating.

TONIA COWAN/THE GLOBE AND MAIL. SOURCE: VANCOUVER2010.COM, ROYAL CANADIAN MINT

CRITIQUING THE DESIGNS

Native designer proves her medal

BY SARAH MILROY

As far as cultural sensitivity goes, you have to say the new Olympic and Paralympic medal design is a step in the right direction.

Having dropped the ball (or boulder) in the selection of the *inukshuk* for the Winter Olympics logo – an icon emblematic of the Inuit, who inhabit territories thousands of kilometres from the rain forests of B.C. – VANOC has stuck closer to home for its medal design. It has deployed the talent of litigant/Komoyue artist Corrine Hunt to create traditional Northwest Coast killer whale and raven designs.

Her images have been stamped onto undulating surfaces of bronze, silver and gold, conceived by Vancouver industrial designer Omer Arbel. No two medals will be the same, with each medal bearing a different segment of Ms. Hunt's overall images, and having its own contours.

Ms. Hunt is related to the carvers Richard, Henry and Tony Hunt, coming from a long line of Northwest Coast artists. As is the custom in Northwest Coast art, she draws on myth for her expressive iconography. For the 615 Olympic medals, the orca embodies sleek power and agility.

For the 399 Paralympic medals, Ms. Hunt has used a Raven motif. In Northwest Coast myth, as in many other world cultures, the bird is associated with transformation and healing, as well as playfulness. The commission to design the Paralympic medal is particularly close to Ms. Hunt's heart, she said, because her uncle is paraplegic.

While the iconography is resonant, the design of the medal is somewhat less so. Given the refinement of Mr. Arbel's design work in general, this is a puzzle. Could this be a case of design-by-committee-itis?

The undulating surface of the medals is great in theory, reflecting the water, mountains and sky of the British Columbia landscape – as opposed to, say, premature spring runoff – and they were reportedly a challenge to manufacture. The result, however, looks gimmicky.



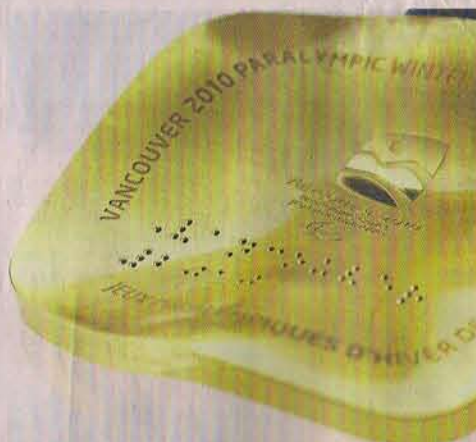
The Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games medals are circular in shape and based on a large master artwork of a killer whale and raven by Corrine Hunt. The medals were unveiled yesterday.



The Paralympic Winter Games medals, also designed by Corrine Hunt, are a superellipse, or squared circle.



Killer whale and raven images have been stamped onto undulating surfaces conceived by Vancouver industrial designer Omer Arbel.



The undulating and Braille features of the Paralympic medals appear above.

ABORIGINAL ARTIST

Animal icons that speak to the world

BY MARK HUME VANCOUVER

For Corrine Hunt, scion of one of the great families of aboriginal artists on the West Coast, there wasn't much doubt that a killer whale and raven would somehow be a part of the Olympic medal design.

Growing up in the Vancouver Island community of Alert Bay, Ms. Hunt used to watch her uncle, the internationally renowned artist Henry Hunt, as he worked on his art.

"I loved watching him draw," she recalled yesterday. Ms. Hunt's design – which features a killer whale set in four panels as if to adorn a traditional bentwood box, and a raven in three parts, in the style of a totem pole – were adapted by her collaborator, Omer Arbel, to be cut by laser onto the undulating surface of the medals.

Mr. Arbel, a Vancouver designer, said his role was "in conceptualizing how that artwork is applied to a metal surface, and also the shape of the medal itself."

Ms. Hunt's task was to come up with a design that reflects native heritage but somehow speaks to the whole world.

The raven and killer whale seemed like the only choices.

"They are always in my mind," she said of the animals that are iconic in native art and culture.

"The orca is such a very beautiful, strong creature that's very athletic in itself but it very much travels together with their generations and their pod and they couldn't live by themselves," she said.

"The idea is that these Olympic athletes, although they may train sometimes by themselves, there's a team. And the team can be many things. It can be their friends, it can be their family, it can be their country," she said.

"The raven is a creature that is all things. The Paralympic athletes have that in them. They are sometimes given challenges and they rise above those challenges. The raven does the same," she said.

MEDALS OF HONOUR

Vancouver's unusual Olympic medals carry on a recent trend of designs that reflect the character of the host country.

"This medal is going to stand out as one of the most impressive ones," said Jim Greensfelder, a collector who wrote a reference guide to Olympic medals.

Mr. Greensfelder, who lives in Venice, Fla., predicted that some people won't like the Vancouver medals because of their undulating design. "But I think their uniqueness, in fact, will be a big positive as people receive them," he said, noting that athletes commonly compete in multiple Games and enjoy winning distinctive medals.

Medals for the Winter Olympics have historically been far more varied than those for Summer Games, which were based on the same design between 1928 and 1968. In addition, although host cities could customize the backs of Summer medals starting in 1972, the fronts stayed essentially the same until 2000.

In recent years, medals have featured a variety of materials, including glass and stone, in addition to conventional metals. Gold medals are traditionally made of sterling silver plated with about six grams of gold; the others are exactly what they seem, silver and bronze.



TORINO 2006 (WINTER)
These have been likened to CDs or doughnuts, with their shape intended to represent the Italian piazza. Despite their initial poor reception, Mr. Greensfelder said they have grown on people.



NAGANO 1998 (WINTER)
These medals are mostly made of lacquer and are decorated with embossed gilding, cloisonné techniques and precision metal work. They are highly admired by collectors and other enthusiasts.



LILLEHAMMER 1994 (WINTER)
The base material is sparagmite, a Norwegian stone from the site that became the Olympic ski jump. The designer, Ingjerd Hanevold, has called them "Norwegian through and through."



ALBERTVILLE 1992 (WINTER)
These medals were the first to feature glass set in gold, silver and bronze. Each of the handmade medals required the work of 35 employees at Lalique, the French crystal company.



MUNICH 1972 (SUMMER)
While the front of these medals is unremarkable, the reverse depicts two naked men standing arm-in-arm. Mr. Greensfelder called them "really ugly" and said athletes did not like them.



LONDON 1908 (SUMMER)
At just 33 millimetres in diameter, these medals are the smallest, the same size as those for the 1912 Games. The first Olympics, held in 1896 in Athens, had only silver and bronze medals.

HEAVY METALS

Weighing more than a pound each, the Vancouver medals will be among the heaviest in Olympic history, and because of strong commodity prices, among the most valuable ever handed out. The price of gold traded yesterday at about \$1,050 an ounce, close to an all time high. Here's the approximate value of the medals based on yesterday's spot metal prices.

GOLD MEDAL
Weight: 556 grams
Composition: 550 grams of sterling silver and six grams of gold plating.
Value: \$487.44 (U.S.) \$503.91 (Canadian)

SILVER MEDAL
Weight: 550 grams
Composition: 100 per cent sterling silver, which is 92.5 per cent silver and 7.5 per cent copper.
Value: \$285.29 (U.S.) \$294.93 (Canadian)

BRONZE MEDAL
Weight: 500 grams
Composition: Bronze, which is primarily copper.
Value: \$3 (U.S.) \$3.10 (Canadian)

MEDAL COUNT
Quantity of metals supplied by Vancouver mining company Teck Resources Ltd. for the medals
Gold: 65.78 troy ounces
Value: \$65,924.28 (U.S.) \$68,130.35 (Canadian)
Silver: 1,950 kilograms
Value: \$74,388.60 (U.S.) \$76,903.88 (Canadian)
Copper: 903 kilograms
Value: \$5,602.21 (U.S.) \$5,791.58 (Canadian)

» Andy Hoffman