

## ***Olympia* (1938)**

### **Abstract**

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Unlike her earlier film, *Triumph of the Will* (1935), director Leni Riefenstahl's documentary of the 1936 Olympics has been hailed as a masterful film that is relatively free of propagandistic overtones. While it celebrates the hale white statuesque bodies in the early sequences, it also draws attention to American Olympian Jesse Owens's incredible physical feats. This juxtaposition appeared in a setting where black bodies were generally portrayed as less "pure" than whites', indicating the German public's still fluid relationship to blackness. As with the prior film, Riefenstahl used pioneering camera techniques to capture close up shots and a variety of angles. The film was a huge commercial success in many countries. While it was and still is well-regarded, it would be naïve to think that the director's ambitions were totally immune from the work of Goebbels, whose propaganda ministry financed the film, and likely saw in it a chance to highlight the greatness of the new National Socialist state. While the film is not overtly political, Siegfried Kracauer wrote in 1947 that "all Nazi films were more or less propaganda films—even the mere entertainment pictures which seem to be remote from politics."

### **Source**

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/100 meter sprint finals. The world's six fastest runners are starting: Borchmeyer, Wykoff, Owens, Strandberg, Osendarp, and Metcalfe.

/Ready, set, go!

/Owens is already in the lead, Strandberg is closely behind him. Osendarp closes in. Metcalfe ...finish line!

/Winner in the 100 meter sprint: Jesse Owens!

Source: *Olympia*, 1937. Documentary, b/w, dir. Leni Riefenstahl. Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv 274874-1.

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