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## When sport becomes art

# Sport collages created by Jens Ullrich

Ramon Balius i Juli

The German artist Jens Ullrich, born in Tukuju (Tanzania) in 1968, studied at the Academy of Arts in Düsseldorf. Lives and works in Düsseldorf and Berlin linked to Van Horn gallery, in Düsseldorf, and Reception gallery in Berlin. Since 2006 he is professor at the UDK Berlin. He has presented his work in numerous exhibitions, most notably held at the Kunstverein Hannover, the Tate Modern in London, the Sztuki Museum of Lodz, the Glucksman Gallery in Cork and the Abtei museum in Mönchengladbach.

Jens Ullrich in 2011, probably inspired and influenced by the Olympic Games that were held in London in 2012, created a series of collages that superimposed fragments of photographic images of neoclassical sculptures of athletes, over colored photographs of contemporary athletes in action. The alignment of the stone elements and the human form in motion is carefully made and disguised. The result is collages that generate an incredibly real effect between past and present. The resulting figures are almost always arms and legs in the air, in extreme positions that have the look of a light and weightless classic monument. This false impression is enhanced because the face of the modern

athlete systematically concealed, not the classic athlete's. The images are presented on a large scale (1 × 1,5 m approximately). We had the pleasure to see about thirty of these collages in the extensive published literature; it is remarkable that there is parity in the representation of women and men.

To make collages, Ullrich combines photographs of great sporting moments obtained from newspapers and magazines with images of sculptures from the Olympic Stadium and various locations in the city of Berlin where the Olympic Games were held in 1936. These statues wanted to look like classical Greek and Roman sculptures, although some athletes represent super-human dimensions. Jens Ullrich and most observers emphasize the German fascist spirit of these works, making it impossible to arouse any human emotion. However, nobody has been able to destroy this "temple" that extends all across Berlin. After the war a great debate was developed, which continues after more than sixty years, whether these statues should stay in place or if it is necessary to destroy them. Some people think that, after all, are not different from the Greek and Roman classics, and are visited by tourists from around the world.

Experts say they represent a time in history that people have the right to study. It seems that everything remains the same. Jens Ullrich writes

as an excuse for using in his collages these discussed works: "I prefer figurative sculpture and, with the collages, I pretend symbolic reparation. The

collages seek a new action in violation of authorship, so that the free spirit, who is said to fly like a dove, may possess them at the end".



**Figure 1.** Sculpture of athletes (420 x 600 cm) built for the Olympics Games 1936 in Berlin.



**Figure 2.** Sculpture of athletes (420 x 600 cm) built for the Olympics Games 1936 in Berlin.



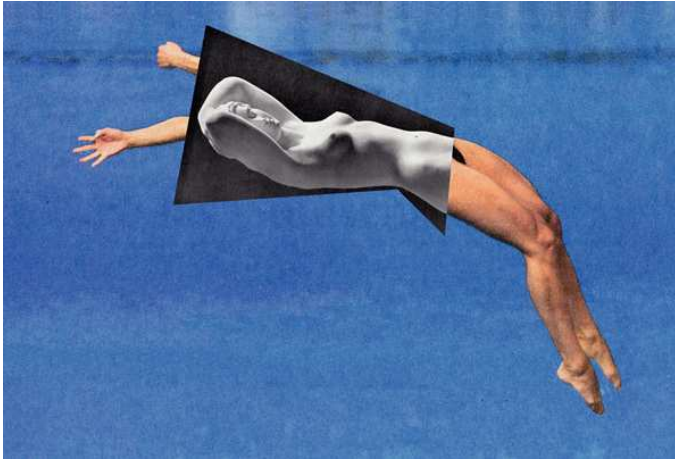
**Figure 3.** Jens Ullrich, n° 06, 113 x 127,8 cm.  
Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION,  
Berlin.



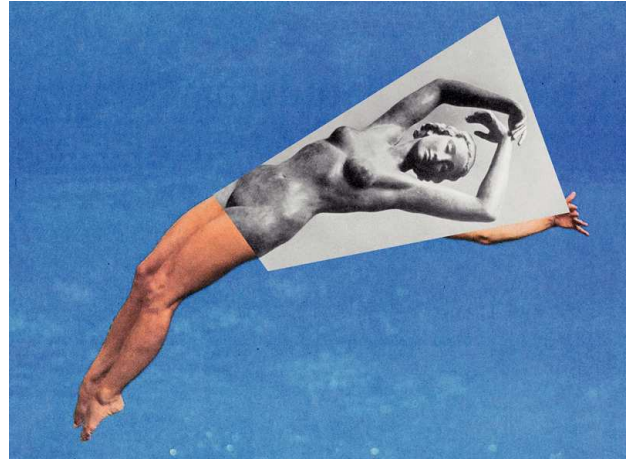
**Figure 4.** Jens Ullrich, n° 77, 113 x 167 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN,  
Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



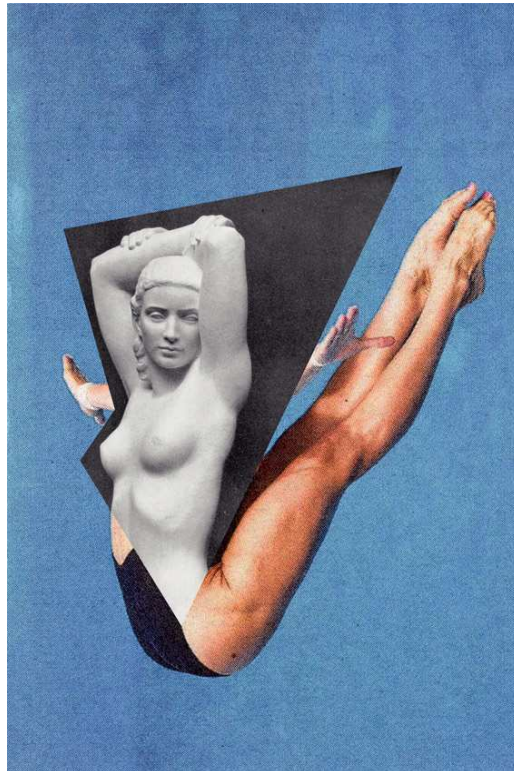
**Figure 5.** Jens Ullrich, n° 53, 113 x 183 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN,  
Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



**Figure 6.** Jens Ullrich, n° 37, 113 x 147 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



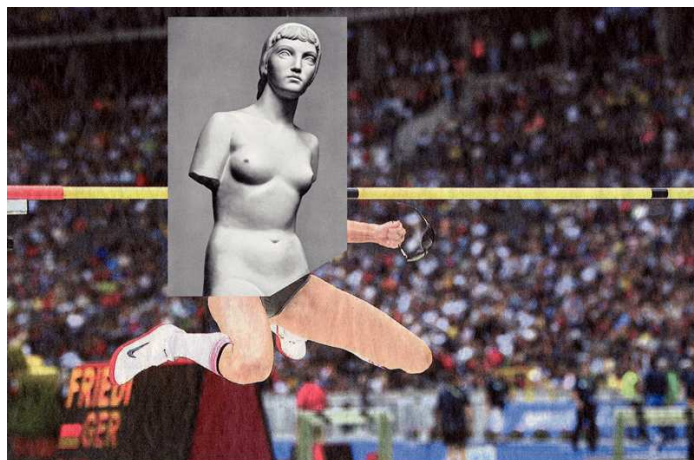
**Figure 7.** Jens Ullrich, n° 56, 113 x 147 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



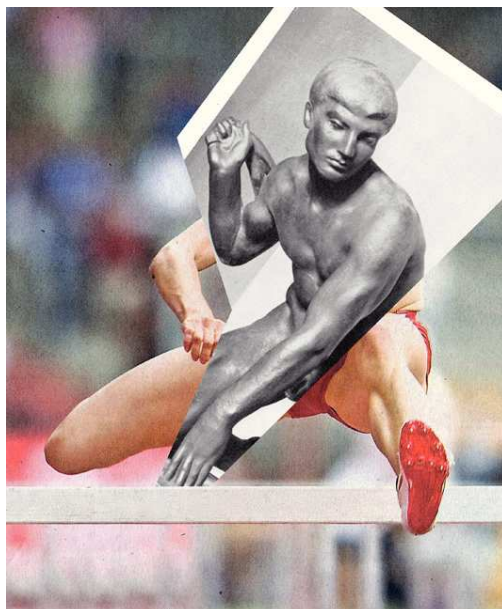
**Figure 8.** Jens Ullrich, n° 42, 113 x 166 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



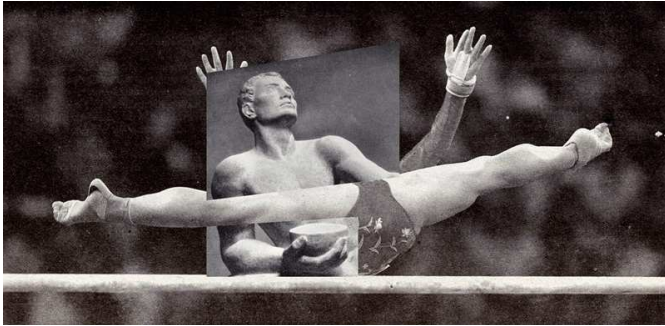
**Figure 9.** Jens Ullrich, n° 04, 113 x 145 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



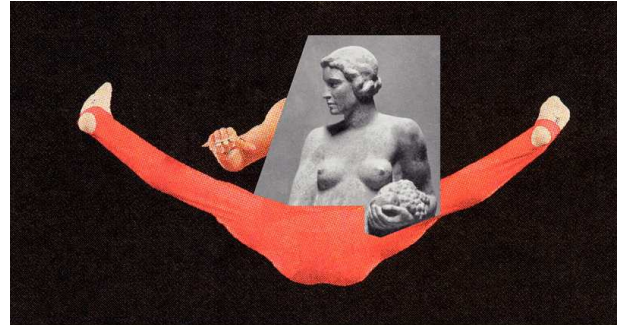
**Figure 10.** Jens Ullrich, n° 05, 113 x 168 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



**Figure 11.** Jens Ullrich, n° 51, 113 x 92 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



**Figure 12.** Jens Ullrich, n° 61, 113 x 222 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



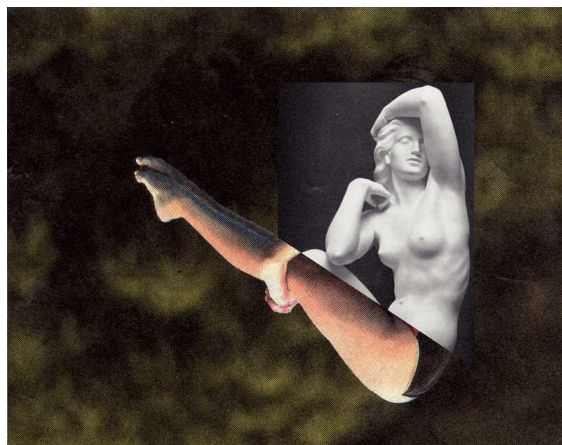
**Figure 13.** Jens Ullrich, n° 60, 113 x 202 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



**Figure 14.** Jens Ullrich, n° 27, 113 x 162 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



**Figure 15.** Jens Ullrich, n° 18, 113 x 177 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



**Figure 16.** Jens Ullrich, n° 41, 113 x 142 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



**Figure 17.** Jens Ullrich, n° 02, 113 x 147 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



**Figure 18.** Jens Ullrich, n° 63, 113 x 235 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



**Figure 19.** Jens Ullrich, n° 16, 113 x 149 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.



**Figure 20.** Jens Ullrich, n° 32, 113 x 227 cm. Courtesy of VAN HORN, Düsseldorf & RECEPTION, Berlin.