

OLYMPIC COOL

Along with the Olympics comes a whole host of proudly British design: here is a quick round-up of some of the best

text **GERALDINE FENN** photography © **SUPPLIED**

IT'S official: the hottest spot in the universe this year is London, host of this year's summer Olympic and Paralympic games. Aside from hosting the world's greatest sporting event, Britons are also celebrating Queen Elizabeth II's 60th year on the throne, so if you're lucky enough to visit London this year, you can expect to see the city decked out in Union Jacks and shop windows brimming with crowns, bulldogs and festive red, white and blue bunting.



All in all, London's Olympic organising committee has done a sterling job in calling on the country's best designers to contribute to the look of the games: whatever happens over the next month of fierce sporting competition, Britain's national pride is the clear winner.

1. THE TORCH

The torch emblem of the games, an icon having the important job of carrying the flame from Mount Olympus in Greece to the Olympic stadium in London where, at the

opening ceremony on July 27, it will be used to ignite the cauldron that will remain burning for the duration of the games.

Luckily this year's torch has been designed by talented Brit duo Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby: recently awarded the design of the year title by London's Design Museum, it's a sleek, lightweight, minimal affair, manufactured in perforated aluminium with 8 000 holes to represent all those taking part in the relay.

2. THE MEDALS

Let's face it, this is what those thousands of athletes are there for — a chance to return home with some heavy metal around their necks. And heavy it certainly will be, as the 2012 medals, designed by eminent contemporary jeweller David Watkins, are the biggest and heaviest in the history of the modern games.

Weighing in at a hefty 400g, the gold medal is definitely worth striving for, although it's not solid gold as many people believe: it is actually sterling silver covered in a layer of pure gold weighing about 6g.

Featuring the classical design of Nike, winged goddess of victory in Greek mythology, on one side and a series of lines around the London 2012 logo on the other,

any of these medals will be a most welcome addition to an athlete's trophy cabinet.

3. THE TWISTED TOWER

It seems impossible to organise a large-scale sporting event without generating a certain amount of controversy, and this year the Olympic landmark that has divided opinion the most is the ArcelorMittal Orbit — a 115m-high observation tower designed by Turner-prize-winning sculptor Anish Kapoor and architect Cecil Balmond.

It is the highest piece of public art in Britain and a feat of engineering: it was assembled by just four workers using 1 400 tons of recycled steel. Intended as a platform from which you can look out over the Olympic park and beyond, the structure has had mixed reviews. It is, however, set to become this year's most recognisable icon.



4. THE STAMPS

King of suits and quirky detailing, uber-designer Paul Smith has created a series of postage stamps commemorating the games.

A lifelong cycling enthusiast, Smith said he was honoured to be asked to produce the collection of seven stamps, featuring different Olympic sports, for the Isle of Man Post Office.

The colourful, graphic illustrations get our vote for the finest Olympic design.

And the best part is you can actually own these little pieces of sporting and design history.

Find them at www.paulsmith.co.uk

