

# Double Games: Red In Tooth And Claw

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“To compete is the highest form of humanity” - anonymous

In the mid-1800s, gymnastic apparatus was adapted from its historical military training application and re-employed in private educational institutions. At the turn of the 1900s, the apparatus was introduced into the physical education (PE) curriculum of state schools. This implementation reflected the evolutionary idea that improving the physical condition of students would enhance intelligence, class and race regeneration. PE's theoretical base married the scientific theory of evolution with the pseudo science of eugenics. Physical exercise was equated with adaptation, strength, survival, intelligence and class – all of which could be hereditarily transferred to the next generation. This was in keeping with the eugenic doctrine: the improvement of human stock and the war against the weak. Gymnasium apparatus was introduced into PE for its form, and function was fully compatible with this ideology: challenging the participant's inner competitive impulse as well as encouraging a competitive instinct within the collective. Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the International Olympic Committee, was deeply interested in education, particularly in PE and the role of sport in schooling. In 1883, he visited England for the first time and studied the PE programme instituted by Thomas Arnold at the Rugby School. Coubertin credited these methods with leading to the expansion of British power during the 1800s and advocated for their use in French institutions. The inclusion of PE in the curriculum of French schools would become one of his ongoing pursuits and passions.

*Double Games: Red In Tooth And Claw* employs 300,000 Sheffield steel stanley blades, which have been integrated into vintage school gymnasium apparatus: a climbing rope, fixed wall bars, a gym bench, a vaulting horse, a vaulting board and a medicine ball. The sculptures enhance the competitive attributes embedded in the design of the apparatus, elevating them into a wider reflection about the struggle between winners and losers. *Double Games* was conceived, produced and exhibited in Hackney Wick, in the context of the arrival of the Olympics to London and in appreciation of the parallels with some of the city's traits: ruthless competitiveness, hierarchal objectives and statistics-driven targets.

