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THE FRICK PITTSBURGH PRESENTS
A SPORTING
VISION

*The Paul Mellon Collection of British Sporting Art
from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts*

ON VIEW JUNE 15 – SEPTEMBER 8, 2019 AT THE FRICK ART MUSEUM

PITTSBURGH, PA, June 6, 2019 — This summer The Frick Pittsburgh follows last year's presentation of *Van Gogh, Monet, Degas* with another important facet of the Mellon collection. *A Sporting Vision: The Paul Mellon Collection of British Sporting Art from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts* includes more than 80 paintings that collectively transport the viewer to the English countryside, and give an in-depth immersion in the country pursuits that Pittsburgh-born Paul Mellon (1907–1999) loved. The exhibition features a special section devoted to the incomparable work of famed horse and animal painter George Stubbs (1724–1806), who studied the anatomy of the horse with the same care and curiosity that drove Renaissance artists to study human anatomy.

A fascinating exploration of the activities and rituals surrounding traditional English country pastimes, *A Sporting Vision* also touches on larger themes related to Enlightenment-era scientific

inquiry, class structure, industrialization, and the development of roadways and transportation. Beginning around 1700 and spanning more than 200 years, the enduring appeal and beauty of rural life is reflected in these paintings, which often feature specific portraits of beloved horses, dogs and their owners who commissioned the works.

Stubbs, one of Paul Mellon's favorite artists, is represented by six paintings that span 40 years of his career. Other sections of the exhibition examine hunting, shooting, fishing, horseracing, coaching, and farm animals, as well as rural life in general. A comic section of the show is devoted to portrayals of falls and mishaps while riding, and includes the amusingly absurd 1805 painting by Philip Reinagle, *Portrait of an Extraordinary Musical Dog*—a reminder that Paul Mellon believed art should give pleasure.

ABOUT PAUL MELLON

Celebrated collector and philanthropist Paul Mellon (1907–1999) was the son of Henry Clay Frick's (1849–1919) friend and colleague Andrew Mellon (1855–1937). Both Frick and Andrew Mellon are known for their legacies as art collectors, the roots of which were formed when they traveled to Europe together in 1880. Paul Mellon grew up in this world of collecting and philanthropy and became an enthusiastic collector himself. An avid horseman, Mellon's first painting purchase was a depiction of a horse and a stable boy by the most noted of 18th-century painters of "animal pictures," George Stubbs. That purchase sparked in Paul Mellon an ongoing love affair with British art, and a particular affection for sporting art.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Organized into thematic sections, *A Sporting Vision* begins with six works by George Stubbs, renowned as the master of horse painting. Stubbs spent nearly 10 years studying horse cadavers, making drawings, and learning the physiognomy of the horse to publish his masterwork, *The Anatomy of the Horse* in 1766. His ability to accurately create portraits of horses took the young genre of sporting pictures to a new level, and put Stubbs unrivaled skills in demand to capture for perpetuity the majestic horses that were the pride of their owners.

Stubbs' intense, scientific study of the horse is characteristic of the Enlightenment period (approximately 1685–1815), a time when the accomplishments of science were eagerly followed by an increasingly literate population. Similarly, the interest in breeding horses, dogs and other livestock for speed or performance demonstrated an increased awareness of inherited

characteristics, reflected in the Thoroughbred horses featured in these paintings, a new breed created through the introduction of Arabian bloodlines from the Middle East.

Exhibition themes include: *In Pursuit*; *In Motion*; *Animal, Man, Country*; and *The World Upside Down*. *In Pursuit* features paintings depicting hunting, shooting, and fishing, with fox hunting and its many traditions receiving special attention. The canvases depicting the hunt over more than 100 years illustrate changes in the topography of the countryside, as enclosure acts bring about fences, and fashions in clothing and horsemanship change. A rising middle-class turned the traditional hunt from an exclusively aristocratic activity to an aspirational act to aid in rising through the social ranks.

In Motion focuses on images of horse racing and coaching and features works by Stubbs' predecessors, John Wootton (1682–1765) and Peter Tillemans (1684–1734, particularly significant to us at the Frick as the teacher of Arthur Devis), among others, who sought to express both the beauty of the new Thoroughbred horses and their speed and agility.

Animal, Man, Country includes images of country life, families in the landscape, and a variety of other livestock and wildlife. The final section of the exhibition, *The World Upside Down*, features a number of works depicting falls and comic mishaps while riding. This section also includes the novelty painting by Phillip Reinagle (1749–1833) *Portrait of an Extraordinary Musical Dog*.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

A Sporting Vision is organized by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

Major exhibition program support is provided by the Richard King Mellon Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Allegheny Foundation.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

A beautifully illustrated, hardcover exhibition catalogue published by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is available for purchase at the Frick Museum Store. *Price: \$27 members; \$30 non-members.*

ADMISSION

Adult non-members \$15; Senior/Student/*Military \$13; Youth 6–16 \$8; Youth 5 and under free. Members of The Frick Pittsburgh receive free admission. *As a participant in the national *Blue*

Star Museums program, the Frick will offer free admission for exhibitions and Clayton tours to the nation's active duty military personnel—including National Guard and Reserve—and their families from Saturday, May 18 through Monday, September 2, 2019.

MEMBER PREVIEW DAY

On Friday, June 14 from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Frick members will have the opportunity to be the first to experience *A Sporting Vision* during a daylong, members-only preview at The Frick Art Museum. Special talks will be given every hour from 10:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Members may make reservations by calling 412-371-0600 or by visiting TheFrickPittsburgh.org. *Free admission for members.*

ABOUT THE FRICK PITTSBURGH

Located on the Pittsburgh estate of late-19th-century industrialist Henry Clay Frick, The Frick Pittsburgh is the steward of collections left as a legacy to the people of Pittsburgh by Frick's daughter, Helen Clay Frick. The permanent collections include fine and decorative arts, cars, carriages, historic objects, and buildings. The Frick experience includes The Frick Art Museum, the Car and Carriage Museum, Clayton, the Frick family Gilded Age mansion, and six acres of beautifully landscaped lawns and gardens. Also included are an Education Center, the Frick children's playhouse (designed by renowned architects Alden & Harlow), a large working greenhouse (also designed by Alden & Harlow), The Café at the Frick, and the Grable Visitor Center, which houses the Frick Museum Store.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Frick Pittsburgh is located at 7227 Reynolds Street in Pittsburgh's Point Breeze neighborhood. Free parking is available in the Frick's off-street lot or along adjacent streets.

The Frick is open 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Tuesday–Sunday; 10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m. Friday; and is closed Mondays and major holidays. The public should call 412-371-0600 for information, or visit the Frick online at TheFrickPittsburgh.org.

**For additional information or images, please contact Greg Langel,
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