

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STUBBS: AN EXHIBITION IN HONOR OF PAUL MELLON
OPENS AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D.C. April 17, 1985. Thirty works by the British artist George Stubbs (1724-1806) -- one of the major artists of the eighteenth century -- go on view at the National Gallery of Art from May 4 through June 2, 1985. Stubbs: An Exhibition in Honor of Paul Mellon can be seen in galleries 60, 60A, 60B, and 64 of the West Building.

The exhibition is supported by a grant from United Technologies Corporation.

With this exhibition, the National Gallery of Art honors Paul Mellon for his preeminent role in this country in the collecting of British art, in the support of its study, and for his inspiring and enduring relationship with the National Gallery. The exhibition pays tribute, as well, to Mr. Mellon as one of the first to appreciate and collect the work of George Stubbs.

For many years, George Stubbs was known as "Mr. Stubbs the Horse Painter." His numerous paintings of horses -- actually portraits -- depict some of the finest race horses of the day as well as the favorite mounts of the English gentry. Stubbs' horses are portrayed in exceptional detail, based on his extensive study of the anatomy of the horse. Stubbs spent many months dissecting horses and other animals to understand the muscular and skeletal structure beneath the skin.

It is only recently, however, that George Stubbs has earned his place as one of the great painters of the eighteenth century and is now recognized for his exacting and perceptive studies of human beings, landscapes, and the whole animal kingdom.

(MORE)

Between 1935 and World War II, Paul Mellon collected racing, hunting, and other sporting paintings. A recent monographic exhibition appearing at the Tate Gallery, London, and the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven -- a museum which was established by Mr. Mellon and which houses many works from his pioneering collection of British art -- has helped bring the quality and significance of Stubbs' work to a wider audience. All the works in this show were included in one or the other of these exhibitions, with the exception of Pumpkin with a Stable-Lad, which will be on view only in Washington. This picture, which by virtue of its fragility on panel was withheld from the previous shows, is the first painting by George Stubbs acquired by Mr. Mellon, who purchased it fifty years ago in 1936. It has thus always occupied a very special place in Mr. Mellon's collections, and the Gallery is particularly grateful to him for parting with it for this celebrational occasion.

George Stubbs was equally sensitive in portraying the aristocrats of his day and the jockeys and stable-lads who attended them. In Lord Torrington's Hunt Servants Setting Out from Southill, Bedfordshire, Stubbs paints with precision and perception the grooms, the horses, the dogs, and the landscape in which they are seen. Stubbs had an affinity for the real people of his time; he painted largely from his own observations rather than in the style of earlier masters.

Another popular Stubbs theme was the lion and the horse. Over a period of thirty years, Stubbs painted a number of works, such as Horse Attacked by a Lion, showing horses and other animals being frightened, attacked, and devoured by lions. This theme may have been inspired by Stubbs' viewing of an antique Italian sculpture on the same subject.

Stubbs depicted other exotic animals, many of which had been brought to England from foreign lands and which were privately owned. Cheetah and Stag with Two Indians shows the first cheetah ever seen in England with its two Indian handlers. The cheetah was a gift to George III from Sir George Pigot, the

Governor-General of Madras. On view also are Zebra, Portrait of a Monkey, and Sleeping Leopard. The last work is executed on Wedgwood biscuit earthenware and is one of four enamel pieces in the exhibition.

In Two Gentlemen Going A-Shooting, with a View of Creswell Crag: Taken on the Spot, Stubbs focuses on a little-known area on the Nottinghamshire-Derbyshire border. The two limestone cliffs of Creswell Crag, facing each other and overhung with trees and plants, form the landscape in many of Stubbs' paintings.

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National Gallery of Art

Washington, D.C. 20565
Telephone: (202) 737-4215
Cable Address: NATGAL

April 17, 1985

TWO FILMS BEING SHOWN IN CONJUNCTION WITH
STUBBS: AN EXHIBITION IN HONOR OF PAUL MELLON

During the month of May, two films relating to the exhibition Stubbs: An Exhibition in Honor of Paul Mellon (May 4 - June 2, 1985) are being shown in the East Building Auditorium of the National Gallery.

George Stubbs, Painter (40 minutes) explores the artist's work from two points of view -- that of critic and collector, Bryan Robertson, and that of sports commentator, Brough Scott. The film will be shown on Sundays at 6:00 p.m. from May 5 through May 26.

Something to Brighten the Morning (60 minutes) is the story of Paul Mellon's race horse, Mill Reef, described in the film as "one of the greatest horses in history." Produced in 1973 and narrated by Albert Finney, the film chronicles the racing career of this special horse and the stable-lads and trainers who worked with Mill Reef. The film was shot in England and at Mr. Mellon's stables in Virginia. Several works of art from Mr. and Mrs. Mellon's collection are seen in the film, including the George Stubbs enamel on Wedgwood, Reapers, now in the collection of the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, and on loan to the National Gallery of Art for this exhibition.

Something to Brighten the Morning is being shown on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11:00 a.m. from May 7 through May 23, and in tandem with George Stubbs, Painter on Sundays at 6:00 p.m. from May 5 through May 26.