



NATIONAL SPORTING LIBRARY & MUSEUM

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PAUL MELLON BRITISH SPORTING ART COLLECTION AT NSLM

April 13 – July 22, 2018

MIDDLEBURG, Virginia – February 16, 2018 – In 1983, philanthropist, art collector, and sportsman Paul Mellon and wife Rachel “Bunny” Mellon donated their important collection of approximately 200 sporting paintings, works on paper, and bronzes to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) in Richmond, VA. When the VMFA’s new West Wing galleries were dedicated in 1985, Mr. Mellon noted, “I hope viewers will feel in tune with the life portrayed in the landscapes and sporting scenes and with the people in the portraits. I hope they will feel they are in the scenes momentarily and they will carry away with them a sense of freshness and vitality.” Mr. Mellon is remembered for his passion for sporting art and his commitment to building public collections such as VMFA’s to foster awareness and appreciation for the genre.

The traveling exhibition of 84 British masterworks organized by VMFA is aptly titled, *A Sporting Vision: From the Paul Mellon Collection of British Art from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts* (VMFA). Opening on April 13, the National Sporting Library & Museum (NSLM) in Middleburg, VA, will be the first venue for this major exhibition which will be housed in three-quarters of the NSLM’s galleries.

A Sporting Vision, curated by Dr. Mitchell Merling, VMFA’s Paul Mellon Curator and Head of the Department of European Art, reconceives VMFA’s Paul Mellon Collection of British art. The works are organized thematically beginning with six iconic paintings by George Stubbs who is acknowledged as “the greatest practitioner of British sporting art.” Sections of the exhibition include “In Pursuit,” featuring hunting, shooting, and angling subjects; “In Motion,” presenting flat racing, steeplechasing and coaching with the horse as a central figure; “Animal, Man, Country,” introducing landscapes and paintings of domesticated and wild animals; and “The World Upside Down,” highlighting humorous works. All oils, the paintings range from the eighteenth to the twentieth- centuries and include works by recognized artists such as Henry Thomas Alken, Charles Henderson Cooper, John Ferneley, Sr., Sir Francis Grant, John Frederick Herring, Benjamin Marshall, George Morland, Sir Alfred Munnings, Philip Reinagle, James Ross, Dean Wolstenholme, and John Wootton.

The viewer is left with these words by Mr. Mellon about sporting art: “Let’s take it seriously, let’s reevaluate it, let’s look at it, let’s enjoy it.” It is fitting that this traveling exhibition of the esteemed collection that once resided in Upperville,

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V.A., should start its journey where Mr. Mellon's sporting vision had its roots in a community of like-minded sporting art enthusiasts invested in elevating the subject, and at the NSLM where this vision is realized.

An accompanying hard-cover exhibition catalog written by Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Curatorial Research Specialist and Curatorial Assistant for the Mellon Collections Dr. Colleen Yarger will be available for purchase for \$25 at the NSLM's Museum front desk.

Related NSLM Programming

Join Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Curatorial Research Specialist and Curatorial Assistant for the Mellon Collections Dr. Colleen Yarger on Saturday, April 14, 2018, from 10:00-11:30 a.m. for *Coffee with the Curator*. NSLM Members Free | Non-members \$5. RSVP with Anne Marie Barnes at ABarnes@NationalSporting.org or 540-687-6542 ext. 25.

The National Sporting Library & Museum (NSLM) is located in Middleburg, V.A., the heart of beautiful hunt country. Founded in 1954, the renowned research Library, and fine art Museum highlight the rich heritage and tradition of country pursuits. Angling, horsemanship, shooting, steeplechasing, foxhunting, flat racing, polo, coaching, and wildlife are among the subjects one can explore in the organization's general stacks, rare book holdings, archives, and art collection. The NSLM offers a wide variety of educational programs, exhibitions, and family activities throughout the year, and is open to researchers and the general public. While there is no admission fee to the Library, the Museum charges \$10 for adults, \$8 for youths (age 13-18), and \$8 for seniors. NSLM members and children age 12 and under are free. Library & Museum hours are Wednesday - Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



Description and credit line must appear with image:

George Stubbs (English, 1724–1806)

Hyaena at Newmarket with One of Jenison Shafto's Stablelads, ca. 1765–7

oil on canvas, 40 1/8 x 50 1/8 inches

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Paul Mellon Collection, photo Katherine Wetzel © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

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