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Exceptional Painting by George Stubbs To Be Offered for Sale at Sotheby's London in December

--Offered for Sale for the First Time since it was Painted in 1767--

--The Noblest of the Artist's Iconic *Mares and Foals* Series--

--Arguably the Finest Painting by the British Master ever To Come
to the Market--

--Estimated at £10-15 Million--



George Stubbs, *Brood Mares and Foals*, Oil on canvas, Estimate: £10-15 million*, 100cm by 187cm

"Of all Stubbs' groups of Mares and Foals, this is the noblest composition, its grandeur owing much to the towering rocky formation which seems to lend an air of hardiness to the animals, as well as acting as counterweight to the most spectacular figure in the group, the grey Arabian mare with her flowing tail."

(Judy Egerton, *George Stubbs: Painter*, Catalogue Raisonné on George Stubbs, 2007)

MONDAY, 4 OCTOBER, 2010 – On Wednesday, December 8, 2010, Sotheby's London will present for sale arguably the finest painting by the British master George Stubbs (1724-1806) ever to come to the market: *Brood Mares*

and Foals, estimated at £10-15 million. Painted in 1767, at the height of the artist's career, the mares and foals scene is a superlative example of Stubbs' talents as both a horse and landscape painter. Never before offered for sale, the painting has remained in a distinguished family collection for all of its life to date and its appearance at auction therefore represents an exceptionally rare opportunity for both equestrian and British art collectors alike.

The painting was probably commissioned by Colonel George Lane Parker, the second son of George Parker -- the second Earl of Macclesfield of Shirburn Castle, Oxfordshire -- and an important owner of Stubbs' work. It then passed to Thomas Parker, the third Earl of Macclesfield, whose descendant now offers it for sale. Stubbs produced the distinctive group of compositions of mares and foals exclusively for his most important patrons during the early part of the 1760s; they all admired the exquisite accuracy and attention to detail of his work. These leading aristocratic patrons included Frederick St John, 2nd Viscount Bolingbroke; Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2nd Marquess of Rockingham; Augustus Henry Fitzroy, 3rd Duke of Grafton; George Brodrick, 3rd Viscount Midleton MP; Lord Grosvenor and the Duke of Cumberland.

A relatively unknown and unseen painting, *Brood Mares and Foals* has only been exhibited once since the 18th century. It was first shown at the Society of Artists in the Spring of 1768 and then again in the autumn of that year in a special exhibition to honour a visit by the King of Denmark. The painting was then carefully and privately preserved in the Earl of Macclefield's family collection for the next 237 years, until it was part of the celebrated *Stubbs and the Horse* exhibition at the National Gallery in London in 2005, which also travelled to the Kimbell Museum in Texas.

Talking about the sale of the painting, Emmeline Hallmark, Director and Head of British Pictures at Sotheby's, commented: "*George Stubbs is, in my opinion, the greatest horse painter of all time and it is an immense pleasure to be offering in our December sale this exceptionally fine work by him, which is instantly recognisable as one of his most beautiful and iconic compositions. It has been more than 30 years since a Mares and Foals scene has appeared at auction* and this outstanding example painted when Stubbs was at the height of his powers and popularity is not only in superb condition but also has the most impeccable provenance, having never appeared at auction before. It is quite simply perfection; who could ask for more?*"

The horse has enjoyed a special position in art as a creature of beauty. For Liverpool-born Stubbs and his contemporaries it was becoming increasingly appreciated that they were not only brave and courageous animals but also creatures of sensitivity and nobility. Horses had played an important role alongside man since ancient Greece and Rome but their status ascended to even greater and more glorious heights in 18th century Britain with the advent of the thoroughbred and the rise of the horse as an animal for pleasure and not just for practicality. Between 1680 and 1750 the athletic prowess and breeding consistency of British horses were dramatically improved, to an almost 'miraculous degree' by the infusion of pure Arabian blood. It was then that three "Barbary" (or Arab) horses - namely Byerley Turk, Godolphin Arabian and Darley Arabian - were imported from the Middle East and North Africa. These three stallions

were specifically cross bred with indigenous British horses to create the fastest possible horse - the thoroughbred, the line of which continues today. This gave unparalleled impetus to the sport of horseracing.

Stubbs' distinguished *Mares and Foals* series paid tribute to the peaceful realm of the stud farm - behind the competition, breeding, excitement and gambling of the racecourse. They commemorate the extraordinary achievement of British breeders in creating the thoroughbred racehorse, while paying homage to British breeding in general. Such portraits of horses were an expression of pride in ownership, a celebration of racing success, and an advertisement of the animals pedigree and the services of the stud. With an unparalleled passion for anatomical analysis from a young age, Stubbs was one of the first artists to specifically study the anatomy of the horse and he developed a highly scientific approach to this in his art. Insisting on observation from nature as opposed to imitation of the art of the past, he would - in the interests of scientific accuracy - skin and dissect these creatures of beauty in order to understand more closely their anatomy. In 1766 he published his ground-breaking book entitled *The Anatomy of the Horse*. Stubbs combined his unique understanding of the horses form with an immaculate attention to detail and exquisite descriptive touch, which was - and is still today - widely admired.

* Pre-sale estimates do not include buyer's premium

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Stubbs prices:

The current auction record for George Stubbs was set by his *Portrait of The Royal Tiger*, which sold for £3,191,500 (\$5,079,579) in June 1995.

The last great *Mares and Foals* scene to appear on the market was The Duke of Grafton's *Mares and Foals in a Hilly Landscape*, which was sold for £170,000 (\$306,000) at Sotheby's in April 1976.

The painting was from the collection of Mr and Mrs Jack R. Dick

Strong British prices at Sotheby's since 2007:

J.M.W Turner's *Modern Rome – Campo Vaccino* sold for £29.7 million in July 2010
- the world auction record for the artist

Sir Anthony van Dyck's *Self Portrait* sold for £8.3 million in December 2009
- the world auction record for the artist

Sir Edwin Henry Landseer's Highland scene *Return from the Stag Hunt* sold for £937,250 in December 2009
- the second highest price for a work by the artist

George Stubbs' *Portrait of Baron de Robeck Riding a Bay Hunter* sold for £2 million in July 2009

Sir Anthony van Dyck's *Portrait of Endymion Porter* sold for £2.1 million in July 2009

Thomas Gainsborough's *A Pug* sold for £993,250 in July 2009

J.M.W. Turner's *The Temple of Jupiter Panellenius* sold for \$12.9 million in January 2009

J.M.W. Turner's *Pope's Villa at Twickenham* sold for £5.4 million in July 2008

Steven van der Meulen's *Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I* sold for £2.6 million in November 2007
- the world auction record for the artist

EXHIBITION DATES:

The painting will be on view at:

Sotheby's New York: October 29 to November 2

Sotheby's London: December 3 to December 8

--The painting will also be available for private view by appointment--

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