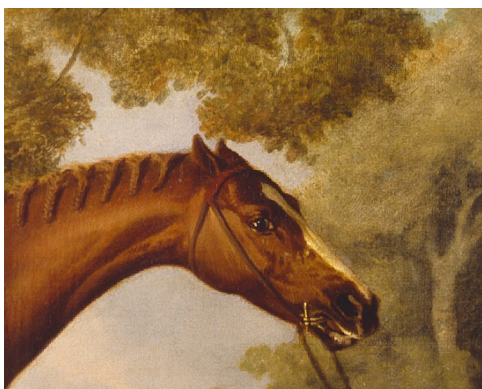


MAY 2013

## A Racehorse Named “Eclipse”

George Stubbs

*Eclipse with Mr. Wildman and His Sons*



### VISIT THE BMA

and look for  
*Eclipse with Mr.  
Wildman and His  
Sons* in the William  
Woodward Gallery of  
English Sporting Art  
near the Antioch  
Mosaic Court.

George Stubbs (English, 1724-1806).  
Detail, *Eclipse with Mr. Wildman and His Sons*.  
1769-71. Oil on canvas. 40 x 50 inches.  
The Baltimore Museum of Art: The William  
Woodward Collection, BMA 1956.282

About 250 years ago, when all of England was crazy about thoroughbred\* horseracing, and everyone from aristocrats to commoners felt the thrill of placing bets on the fastest horses, a prosperous cattle salesman named William Wildman became the proud owner of a young horse named Eclipse. And what a horse he was! In 18 races, no horse was ever able to overtake him.

They say that the chestnut-colored foal\*\* with the streak of white on his face was born in the royal stables of a duke during a rare eclipse of the sun on April 1, 1764. After the duke's death, the colt was sold at auction to Mr. Wildman, who arranged to have George Stubbs paint a portrait of his splendid horse. Seated in front of a dark oak tree, Mr. Wildman looks as small as his young sons, while his horse stands tall and strong against a bright sky. The white marking or “stocking” on Eclipse's right hind leg makes him look like part of the family.

Eclipse was an unruly temperamental horse who galloped with his nose so close to the ground that he was almost impossible to ride. Nevertheless, his extraordinary speed, strength, and stamina aroused the betting instincts of an Irish adventurer and gambler named Dennis O'Kelly, who realized that Eclipse could make him a lot of money. Soon after purchasing Eclipse from Mr. Wildman, O'Kelly placed his bets on a four-mile race, boldly predicting “Eclipse first, the rest nowhere.” Sure enough, Eclipse won that race, leaving all of his challengers more than 240 yards behind, a distance officially called “nowhere.” Today nearly 95% of all thoroughbred racehorses are direct descendents of Eclipse.

\* Thoroughbred: a breed of racehorses developed in 17th-18th-century England when English mares were crossbred with Arabian stallions.

\*\* Foal: a very young horse

### CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

Make a double portrait of yourself and an animal that you would like to have as part of your family. Make a connection between the appearance of the animal and the color, texture, or pattern of the clothes you are wearing.

Compare and contrast Stubbs' portrait of Eclipse with Sybil Andrews' *Racing* in the May 2008 issue of Art-To-Go.

[artbma.org/educators/atg/pdf/ATG\\_5-08.pdf](http://artbma.org/educators/atg/pdf/ATG_5-08.pdf)



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