



***Lord Grosvenor's Arabian with a Groom***  
**George Stubbs, English, 1724-1806**  
**c. 1765, Oil on Canvas, 21 7/8 x 39 1/8 inches**  
**Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas**

### **About the Artist**

George Stubbs was the son of a man who made his living tanning hides. He worked at his father's trade until he was 15 or 16. He was a largely self-taught artist and painted mostly portraits until the 1750s when he began to study the anatomy of horses. Stubbs painted a variety of animals, but he is best known for his portraits of horses. He is now considered Britain's greatest sporting artist.

The first Lord Grosvenor was one of Stubbs's earliest patrons. He purchased works from Stubbs over a period of approximately 20 years, commissioning racing and stud-farm scenes showing the horses he enjoyed owning and racing. In 1779, however, Lord Grosvenor was so deeply in debt that he could no longer commission paintings of his horses.

### **About the Art**

This work is a portrait of a particular animal in a landscape. The artist has not only shown us a specific racehorse, he has also indicated to us its spirit and energy. While Stubbs paints a lifelike portrait of the horse, he also emphasizes the beauty and harmony of the curving lines of the figures' silhouettes. The landscape appears to be of a specific place, perhaps Lord Grosvenor's estate or farm.

## **Additional Information**

Lord Grosvenor was, for a while, one of the richest men in England, and his two favorite activities were racing horses and collecting paintings. The painting *Lord Grosvenor's Arabian with a Groom* shows a young horse of fine quality with small, pointed ears, large eyes, and distinctive markings. The horizon line in the painting is low, showing us a wide expanse of sky and a graceful oak with a curving branch that draws our eye to this fine animal's head. The groom holds the horse securely and looks directly into its eyes. The white spots we can see on the side of the horse are thought to be scald spots, areas of hair whitened by heat and perspiration that might accumulate under the harness or saddle leather during a hard ride. This type of marking would occur more often on racing horses than on horses ridden for pleasure.

## **About the Time and Place**

The mid-eighteenth century was a period of great change with the onset of the industrial era. Bach and Haydn were important composers. They wrote and performed some of their popular works for audiences during this period. Mozart, who was only eight, wrote his first symphony in 1764.

In the American colonies, citizens and leaders were so opposed to the Stamp Act passed by the British Parliament in 1765 that it was repealed in 1766, but the British government declared the right to tax the American colonies. By 1767, taxes were imposed on such goods as tea, glass, and paper. Protest meetings were held in Boston, and by 1768 the Massachusetts Assembly was dissolved for refusing to assist in collection of the taxes. The next several years in the colonies witnessed an increasing unrest which led to the American Revolution.

The Industrial Revolution began in Great Britain in the 1700s and made it the world's richest country. The Revolution started with the textile industry and quickly spread to other industries, including mining and transportation. Before the Industrial Revolution, people often worked in their homes, spinning cotton into yarn and weaving the yarn into cloth. By the late 1700s, steam engines powered by coal, provided the power to run large machines to weave the cloth.

Coal mining expanded to meet increased demands, and because better transportation was needed, roads and canal building increased. By the early part of the 1800s, steam railroads were in operation. The economic growth of the Industrial Revolution affected other areas of life as well. Small farms were joined into larger ones as agricultural practices improved. The agricultural and industrial improvements brought increased trade and the need for larger amounts of cash, which stimulated the growth of banks and stock companies.