

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**October 12, 2023**

**Equine Art by Sir Alfred Munnings will be Explored in Talk by Katherine Field, Curator of British Sporting Art at the British Sporting Art Trust**

The Annual Paul Mellon Lecture, held at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, will also be Livestreamed



*Linnin' 'em Up, Newmarket, ca. 1940–53*, Sir Alfred James Munnings (English, 1878–1959), oil on panel. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Paul Mellon Collection

**Richmond, Virginia** — Equine sporting art by Sir Alfred Munnings (English, 1878–1959) will be explored in this year’s Paul Mellon Lecture in the Leslie Cheek Theater at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) and livestreamed November 1, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. Katherine Field, Curator of British Sporting Art at the British Sporting Art Trust in Newmarket, Suffolk, U.K., and Senior Editor of the Philip de László Catalogue Raisonné, will be the distinguished speaker. Admission to the lecture at VMFA is free, though [tickets](#) are required. Those who cannot attend the in-person program can visit the museum’s website, [www.VMFA.museum](http://www.VMFA.museum), to see the livestream at the scheduled time.

“We are delighted to welcome Katherine Field, a highly regarded expert in sporting art, to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts to speak about Sir Alfred Munnings,” said Alex Nyerges, VMFA’s Director and CEO. “This is an exciting opportunity to learn about the renowned artist’s contributions to the world of art and equestrian culture.”

Sir Alfred Munnings was born in Mendham, Suffolk, in 1878. He completed his early artistic training in Norwich, developing a career as a painter of landscapes and scenes of country life before moving to Paris to study at the acclaimed Académie Julian. After returning to England, Munnings settled first in East Anglia and then in Cornwall, all

the while building his reputation by exhibiting at a variety of institutions in London. In 1919, shortly after the end of World War I, the Royal Academy of Arts displayed 45 of his paintings depicting the Canadian Cavalry Brigade that had been stationed on the Western Front. Following the success of this exhibition, the artist suddenly found his talents as an equine portraitist in high demand among prestigious patrons.

Field's talk will provide fascinating insights and discoveries, drawn from her research as the curator for the recent exhibition, *Sir Alfred Munnings: A Life of his Own*, showcased at the National Horseracing Museum in Newmarket in 2022. She will also incorporate VMFA's own holdings of Munnings' works into her lecture.

The Mellon Collection at VMFA includes [five magnificent paintings by Munnings](#), including two from his mature period. In *Linin' 'em Up, Newmarket* (ca. 1940–53), the artist chose to closely frame the powerful anatomy of a horse in the front row constrained by the jockey's bridle to capture the tension of the moment just before the start of the race. *After the Race, Cheltenham Saddling Paddock*, illustrates the range of activities involved in facilitating both horse and jockey during the process of unsaddling. The painter invariably depicted horse and rider in stark profile, sharing this quintessential compositional convention with a long tradition of sporting art.

Established in memory of Paul Mellon — the museum's longest serving trustee and one of its most generous benefactors — the Paul Mellon Lecture is presented annually by a distinguished scholar to foster the study and appreciation of the arts and is supported by the Paul Mellon Endowment. Mellon, an avid collector of sporting art, once remarked, "The enjoyment of British sporting art... has always been inseparable from the enjoyment of racing, chasing and hunting."

For more information about the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, visit [www.VMFA.museum](http://www.VMFA.museum).

### **About Katherine Field**

Katherine Field, a native of Canada, moved to England to complete a master's degree in fine and decorative art at Sotheby's Institute of Art. Since then, she has worked at Tate Britain, the Foundling Museum, The British Art Journal and The National Horse Racing Museum. Katherine joined the Philip de László Catalogue Raisonné of Works team in 2011 and now leads the project, tracing and cataloguing his work and making the artist's extensive archives available to the public. She is also curator for the British Sporting Art Trust and has produced two exhibitions in recent years: *Lionel Edwards: Seen from the Saddle* and *Sir Alfred Munnings: A Life of his Own*. This year she has re-displayed the Trust's collections in Palace House at the National Horse Racing Museum, which features new galleries dedicated to Sir Alfred Munnings and his contemporaries.



Katherine Field, Curator of British Sporting Art at the British Sporting Art Trust and Senior Editor of the Philip de László Catalogue Raisonné

### **About Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon**

Paul Mellon (1907–1999) was the son of Andrew W. Mellon, American financier, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury and a noted collector of Old Master paintings who founded the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Rather than following his father in business, Paul Mellon devoted his life to collecting art and philanthropy. Educated at Choate Rosemary Hall school, Yale University and Cambridge University, his appreciation for English culture and thoroughbred horses is reflected in his collection of British and sporting art. Paul Mellon, who lived in Upperville, Virginia, served VMFA as a trustee for 44 years. His second wife, Rachel Lambert Mellon (1910–2014), was also a longtime VMFA supporter and a patron of the arts and sciences. She contributed substantially to the museum through her donation of bespoke jewelry and decorative objects by French-born jeweler and designer Jean Schlumberger. Paul Mellon credited Rachel Lambert Mellon with inspiring his interest in French Impressionism, and together they donated important works from their collections to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Admission to the Mellon Galleries at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is free.

### **About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts**

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, is one of the largest comprehensive art museums in the United States. VMFA, which opened in 1936, is a state agency and privately endowed educational institution. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, exhibit and interpret art, and to encourage the study of the arts. Through the Office of Statewide Partnerships program, the museum offers curated exhibitions, arts-related audiovisual programs, symposia, lectures, conferences, and workshops by visual and performing artists. In addition to presenting a wide array of special exhibitions, the museum provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a global collection of art that spans more than 6,000 years. VMFA's permanent holdings encompass nearly 50,000 artworks, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside of Russia, the finest collection of Art Nouveau outside of Paris and one of the nation's finest collections of American art. VMFA is also home to important collections of Chinese art, English silver, and French Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British sporting and modern and contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan and African art. In May 2010, VMFA opened the James W. and Frances G. McGlothlin Wing I after a transformative expansion, previously the largest in its history. A new expansion, the McGlothlin Wing II, is planned to open in 2028. Comprising more than 170,000 square feet, it will be the largest expansion in the museum's history and will make VMFA the fifth largest art museum in the United States.

**The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission. For additional information, telephone 804.340.1400 or visit [www.VMFA.museum](http://www.VMFA.museum).**

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