

The Yale Center for British Art and Historic Royal Palaces Present an Exhibition Exploring the Lives of Three Royal Women Who Influenced the Course of History

ENLIGHTENED PRINCESSES: CAROLINE, AUGUSTA, CHARLOTTE, AND
THE SHAPING OF THE MODERN WORLD

Yale Center for British Art: February 2–April 30, 2017
Kensington Palace: June 22–November 12, 2017

LONDON (November 2, 2016) – This exhibition will be the first to explore the instrumental roles played by Caroline of Ansbach (1683–1737), Augusta of Saxe-Gotha (1719–1772), and Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1744–1818) in the promotion of the arts, sciences, medicine, education, charity, trade, and industry in Britain over the course of the long eighteenth century. “The princesses had sweeping intellectual, social, cultural, and political interests, which helped to shape the courts in which they lived, and encouraged the era’s greatest philosophers, scientists, artists, and architects to develop important ideas that would guide ensuing generations. The palaces and royal gardens they inhabited served as incubators for enlightened conversation and experimentation, and functioned as platforms to project the latest cultural developments to an international audience. Their innovative contributions across disciplines held great significance centuries ago and continue to inform our lives,” said Amy Meyers, Director of the Yale Center for British Art, and organizing curator at the Center.

These three German princesses, who all married into the British royal family, played an important part in the shaping of their nation’s culture during a time of change that in its complexity and dynamism would presage our own age. “Until this point, their contributions have been little understood and it is the aim of this exhibition to demonstrate how they influenced the interests of their era in the most vibrant of ways and left a legacy that resonates in the world today,” said Joanna Marschner, Senior Curator at Historic Royal Palaces, and lead curator of this exhibition. Caroline and Charlotte became queens consort to George II and George III respectively, while Princess Augusta never achieved this distinction but held the titles of Princess of Wales and Princess Dowager, and was mother to King George III.

Nearly three hundred magnificent objects have been drawn together from numerous public and private collections from across Britain, Europe, and the United States, including the Royal Collection Trust; Royal Society; British Museum; National Portrait



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Gallery, London; and Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., as well as Historic Royal Palaces and the Yale Center for British Art. The exhibition will feature works by the most influential artists of the period, such as Hans Holbein the Younger, Allan Ramsay, Mary Delany, George Stubbs, Thomas Gainsborough, Joshua Reynolds, and Johan Joseph Zoffany, as well as craftsmen such as Josiah Wedgwood and Matthew Boulton, and architects such as William Kent and William Chambers.

A rich variety of objects will offer a glimpse into the princesses' private lives, their courts, and their legacy. The exhibition will bring together state portraits of the royal women, musical manuscripts, elaborate court costume, botanical and anatomical renderings, the Princesses' own scientific instruments, architectural drawings and garden designs, royal children's artwork, rare books and manuscripts, and much more. The display also will include a work created by the artist Yinka Shonibare MBE (RA), for this exhibition. It is inspired by the meeting, in 1753, between Princess Augusta and Mrs. Eliza Lucas Pinckney, the owner of a profitable slave plantation in South Carolina in the British colonies of North America. A letter written by Mrs. Pinckney to a friend, detailing the encounter, will be featured in the exhibition as a special loan from the collection of The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in the State of South Carolina. The dress worn by Mrs. Pinckney on this occasion, made of silk produced on her plantation, will be lent to the Yale Center for British Art from the Smithsonian Institution.

EXHIBITION THEMES

The exhibition will be organized according to five basic themes. Grand oil portraits by Joseph Highmore of Queen Caroline of Ansbach (ca. 1735), Allan Ramsay of Augusta, Dowager Princess of Wales (1769), and Johan Joseph Zoffany of Queen Charlotte (1771) will set the stage for the exhibition.

THE COURT AS A STAGE

In the world of the palaces, the royal court operated as a stage, not only in the literal sense for the performance of music, dance, and theater but also as a political and cultural arena in which the intricate power plays between and among monarch, consort, and courtier took place. In their furnishing of the spaces, Caroline, Augusta, and Charlotte constructed a visual statement of the authority of the Hanoverian dynasty—past, present, and future—under which the patronage of music and the arts would flourish. Yet at the same time they had to navigate the inherently political nature of public and private life (even family life) at court during a period that saw an information revolution, initiated by the mass circulation of newspapers, journals, and magazines providing commentary, debate, and critique. Art illustrative of this theme includes works by Hans Holbein the Younger, such



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as *Lady Lister* (ca. 1532–43), drawn together in celebration of the distinguished pedigree of royal ancestry, and displayed alongside images of the royal children, the future hope of the dynasty, represented by such works as a lively genre scene by Phillippe Mercier, “*The Music Party*”: *Frederick, Prince of Wales with his Three Eldest Sisters* (1733).

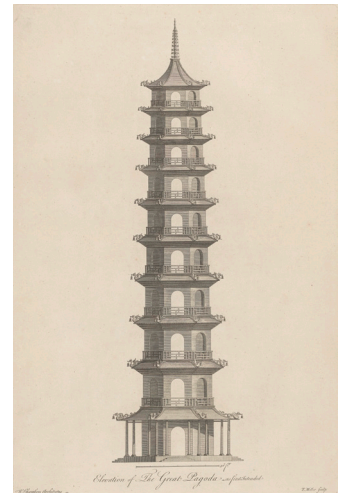
CULTURES OF LEARNING: POWERFUL CONVERSATIONS

At the heart of their social circles, Caroline, Augusta, and Charlotte built relationships with leading cultural and intellectual figures of their age, including politicians, clergymen, natural philosophers, gardeners, architects, authors, playwrights, and composers. While each princess developed these connections in different ways and with different priorities, their interests often overlapped or had a common focus, such as in science, medicine, philanthropy, and especially maternity, the care of infants, and the commercial interests of the state in Britain and abroad. Their pursuits in this area are reflected in objects on display including an oil portrait by John Vanderbank of Sir Isaac Newton (1726); Thomas Gainsborough’s splendid grand manner portrait of his friend, the musician Carl Abel, later acquired by Queen Charlotte for whom he provided music; and Allan Ramsey’s beautifully nuanced portrait of Charlotte’s medical adviser, Dr. William Hunter.



ROYAL WOMEN: EDUCATION, CHARITY, AND HEALTH

Attitudes regarding royal child-rearing changed rapidly over the lifetimes of Caroline, Augusta, and Charlotte. There were shifts in methodology and focus in response to the evolving contemporary philosophies about childhood, sentimentality, and the freedom of the individual. The princesses were active contributors to the educational programs devised for their children, the future promise for the dynasty, and sought to draw them into worlds outside the palace walls. In their public roles as encouragers and protectors, the princesses sought involvement with ambitious and wide-reaching public philanthropic projects, organizations, and societies, especially those connected with health and social welfare. A precious silk satin baby robe (1762) belonging to George, Prince of Wales (later George IV), the eldest child of George III and Queen Charlotte, compares poignantly with tokens left by unmarried and impoverished mothers as they consigned their children to the Foundling Hospital. The hospital was a charity supported by all three of the princesses, which reflected their concern for progressive social change.



POLITICAL GARDENING

Caroline, Augusta, and Charlotte created and recast each other’s gardens, which were by turns political and social spaces, as well as private retreats. They drew in the products of empire; plants and animals were collected from many continents, not only for their beauty and rarity but also their economic value. Likewise, the development of



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the collections of animals and birds brought back from the exploration of these “new” worlds were an important feature in the royal gardens. In the design of their gardens, the princesses explored contemporary garden philosophies and exercised their architectural ambitions. Many of their landscapes, which they invested with message, were made to be shared, not just with the community of gardeners, philosophers, and scientists the princesses drew into their circle, but with a wider community of the middling sort, which allowed a new relationship between monarchy and subject to be brokered. The gardens served each princess well but each manifestation was different, reacting to a volatile commercial environment as well as a changing perception of the bonds between and among the dynasty, nationhood, and empire.



Over the course of the long eighteenth century these three royal women seized the opportunities of a dynamic age, and their determined and imaginative promotion of the arts, sciences, medicine, education, charity, trade, and industry, shaped not only society and politics of their own time but were the forbearers of much of the beliefs and policies that continue in modern British culture. A brilliant watercolor by Mark Catesby, *The Painted Finch and the Loblolly Bay* (ca. 1722–26), and an intricate cut-paper collage by Mary Delany, *Cactus Grandiflorus, melon thistle* (1778), serve as evidence of the princesses’ interest in Britain’s widespread imperial range.



TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT: THE PRINCESSES AND THE WIDER WORLD

In working to promote and encourage the arts and science, Caroline, Augusta, and Charlotte supported and championed national products and allowed their interest to be used by enterprising industrialists, which helped win hearts and minds for the new regime. The development of new industrial technologies enabled mass-produced consumer goods, ensuring for the first time the dissemination of the image of the British monarchy, in a way that today is recognized as a “brand,” for a domestic and international audience. In the furnishing of their homes and the development of their gardens, the princesses celebrated the fruits of empire. The first British incursions into the Americas began in the sixteenth century, burgeoned in the seventeenth century, and matured over the first half of the eighteenth century. Following the War of Independence, these efforts would be succeeded by increased colonial expansion (Caribbean, India, Africa, China, and Australasia). Masterpieces that reflect the imperatives of empire which helped to brand the character of the British monarchy internationally will include one of the Center’s treasured works, a painting by William Verelst, *Audience Given by the Trustees of Georgia to a Delegation of Creek Indians* (1734–35), and a painting by George Stubbs of a zebra belonging to Queen Charlotte (1763).



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CREDITS AND PUBLICATION

Enlightened Princesses: Caroline, Augusta, Charlotte, and the Shaping of the Modern World is a collaboration between Historic Royal Palaces and the Yale Center for British Art. Lead curator Joanna Marschner, Senior Curator at Historic Royal Palaces, is assisted by Samantha Howard, Curatorial Assistant. The organizing curator at the Center, Amy Meyers, Director, is assisted by Lisa Ford, Assistant Director of Research; Glenn Adamson, Senior Research Associate; and Tyler Griffith, Postdoctoral Research Associate. The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication of the same title, a beautifully illustrated catalogue of works edited by Joanna Marschner, with the assistance of David Bindman and Lisa Ford. Co-published with Historic Royal Palaces in association with Yale University Press, this book will feature contributions by an international team of scholars.



ABOUT THE YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

The Yale Center for British Art houses the largest collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. Presented to the university by Paul Mellon (Yale College, Class of 1929), the collection reflects the development of British art and culture from the Elizabethan period onward. The Center's collections include more than 2,000 paintings, 250 sculptures, 20,000 drawings and watercolors, 40,000 prints, and 35,000 rare books and manuscripts. More than 40,000 volumes supporting research in British art and related fields are available in the Center's Reference Library.



Visit the Center online at britishart.yale.edu.

HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES

Historic Royal Palaces is the independent charity that looks after the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, the Banqueting House, Kensington Palace, Kew Palace, and Hillsborough Castle in Northern Ireland. The charity helps everyone explore the story of how monarchs and people have shaped society, in some of the greatest palaces ever built. Historic Royal Palaces raises all of its own funds and depends on the support of its visitors, members, donors, sponsors, and volunteers. With the exception of Hillsborough Castle, these palaces are owned by the Queen on behalf of the nation, and the charity manages them for the Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport (registered charity number 1068852).



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HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES

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