First Exhibition to Explore the Lives and Impact of Three Royal Women on British History and Culture Opens February 2 at the Yale Center for British Art

Exhibition Features Nearly Three Hundred Objects from International Collections, Including Masterpieces by Thomas Gainsborough, Joshua Reynolds, George Stubbs, Johan Zoffany, and New Work by Yinka Shonibare MBE (RA)

NEW HAVEN, CT (January 31, 2017)—This February, the Yale Center for British Art will premiere the first exhibition to explore the instrumental roles of the Hanoverian princesses Caroline of Ansbach (1683–1737), Augusta of Saxe-Gotha (1719–1772), and Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1744–1818)—all of whom married into the British royal family—and how they shaped the nation’s society and culture during a time of significant political and social transformation. Organized by the Center in partnership with the UK’s Historic Royal Palaces, Enlightened Princesses: Caroline, Augusta, Charlotte, and the Shaping of the Modern World brings together nearly three hundred objects from public and private collections across Britain, Europe, and the United States. The exhibition will feature works by the artists Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543), Mary Delany (1700–1788), Allan Ramsay (1713–1784), Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), George Stubbs (1724–1806), and Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788); craftsmen and designers Anna Maria Garthwaite (1690–1763), Matthew Boulton (1728–1809), and Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1795); and architects William Kent (1685–1748) and William Chambers (1723–1796), among many others. Elaborate court costumes and jewels, musical manuscripts, botanical and anatomical illustrations, architectural drawings and garden designs, royal children’s artwork, and the princesses’ own scientific instruments will be showcased. These important works will serve to show how the princesses promoted the arts, sciences, trade, and industry, and underline their development of new models of philanthropy, especially to benefit the health of women and the welfare of children. These efforts spurred unprecedented intellectual exchange and social transformation which continues to have significance for us today. Enlightened Princesses will debut at the Center in New Haven from February 2 to April 30, 2017, and subsequently will travel to Kensington Palace in London, once home to Caroline and Charlotte, where it will be on view from June 22 to November 12, 2017.

“Caroline, Augusta, and Charlotte 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,” said Amy Meyers, Director of the Yale Center for British Art and organizing curator at the Center. “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.”

The lives of Caroline, Augusta, and Charlotte straddled the eighteenth century. Caroline, the wife of the future George II, arrived in London in 1714 when the first Hanoverian king, George I, was crowned. She became queen consort after her husband succeeded his father in 1727. Augusta was married to Caroline’s eldest son, Frederick Prince of Wales, but never became queen as her husband died young. However, as mother of the next king, George III, Augusta became crucial to shaping his reign. In 1761, George III married Charlotte, who died in 1818, two years before her husband.

“Until this point, the contributions of these three princesses 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. In their engagement and support of many important projects and initiatives, they provided a blueprint for the royal women who followed them – right up to the present. For this, it is our intention to bring to the princesses the attention they deserve,” said Joanna Marschner, Senior Curator at Historic Royal Palaces and lead curator of the exhibition.

In addition to masterpieces from the Yale Center for British Art and Historic Royal Palaces, Enlightened Princesses will present over eighty works from the Royal Collection, generously lent by Her Majesty The Queen. In total, nearly fifty esteemed collections will be represented, including works from Royal Society; Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond; British Museum; National Portrait Gallery, London; British Library; Victoria and Albert Museum; Science Museum, London; Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library; Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, University of Glasgow; Metropolitan Museum of Art; Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library; and Yale University. The display will also feature a new work created by the artist Yinka Shonibare MBE (RA) (b. 1962) specifically for this exhibition, which has been inspired by a meeting, in 1753, between Princess Augusta and Mrs. Eliza Lucas Pinckney, the owner of a slave plantation in South Carolina, which was then a British colony. A letter written by Mrs. Pinckney to
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a friend, detailing the encounter, will be included 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 the occasion, made of silk produced on her plantation, will also be on display, courtesy of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History.

EXHIBITION THEMES

*Enlightened Princesses* is organized according to five themes and will feature a rich variety of objects that offer a glimpse into the princesses’ private lives, courts, and legacies. Oil portraits of Caroline (ca. 1735), by Joseph Highmore (1692–1780); Augusta (1769), by Allan Ramsay (1713–1784); and Charlotte (1771), by Johan Joseph Zoffany (1733–1810) will set the stage for the exhibition.

THE COURT AS A STAGE

For Caroline, Augusta, and Charlotte, the royal court operated as a stage, not only for the performance of music, dance, and theater but also as a political and cultural arena. In their furnishing of these spaces, the princesses constructed a visual statement of the authority of the Hanoverian dynasty, under which the patronage of music and the arts would flourish. At the same time, they had to navigate the inherently political nature of public and private life at court during a period that witnessed an information revolution, initiated by the mass circulation of newspapers, journals, and magazines replete with commentary, debate, and critique. This section will include Hans Holbein the Younger’s *Lady Lister* (ca. 1532–43), one of the artist’s many portrait drawings of courtiers at the Tudor court, which were particularly prized by Caroline and hung at Kensington Palace in celebration of the distinguished pedigree of the Royal House. These drawings were displayed alongside images of the present generation of the royal family. The painting “The Music Party”: Frederick, Prince of Wales with his Three Eldest Sisters (1733), by Philippe Mercier (1689–1760), is one such example. It depicts Caroline’s eldest son playing the cello. He is accompanied by his three sisters—Princess Anne (1709–1759) at the harpsichord; Princess Amelia (1711–1786) reading a volume of John Milton’s poems; and Princess Caroline (1713–1757) playing the mandora.

CULTURES OF LEARNING: POWERFUL CONVERSATIONS

At the heart of their social circles, Caroline, Augusta, and Charlotte built relationships with the leading cultural and intellectual figures of their age, including politicians, clergymen, philosophers, gardeners, architects, authors, playwrights, and composers. The princesses’ interests often overlapped or had a common focus, such as in science, medicine, philanthropy, and especially maternity, as well as the commercial interests...
of the state in Britain and abroad. Their pursuits in this area are represented by such objects as an oil portrait by John Vanderbank (1694–1739) of Sir Isaac Newton (1726); Thomas Gainsborough’s portrait of his friend, the musician Carl Friedrich Abel, later acquired by Queen Charlotte for whom he provided music (1777); and Allan Ramsey’s remarkably nuanced portrait of Charlotte’s medical adviser, Dr. William Hunter (1760).

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 individual freedoms. The princesses were active contributors to the educational programs devised for their children, and sought to draw them into conversations beyond the palace walls. In their public roles as encouragers and protectors, the princesses were involved in 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 progressive interests, and it became an outlet to promote social change, through assistance it provided to disenfranchised and voiceless children in the greater society.

POLITICAL GARDENING
Caroline, Augusta, and Charlotte created and recast each other’s gardens, which were 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. Similarly, 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 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, fostering an unprecedented relationship between monarchy and subject. Mark Catesby’s (1683–1749) dynamic watercolor *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’ entanglement in Britain’s imperial ambition.
To promote and protect: the princesses and the wider world

To promote the arts and sciences, Caroline, Augusta, and Charlotte supported and championed national products, and allowed their interest to be used by enterprising industrialists. The development of advanced industrial technologies—including cloth weaving, porcelain production, and metal casting—enabled unprecedented mass-produced consumer goods. This ensured, for the first time, that the image of the British monarchy was widely disseminated in a way recognized as a “brand” to domestic and international audiences. Additionally, Britain’s increased colonial expansion following the American War of Independence resulted in heightened interest in the fruits of empire, which the princesses celebrated by furnishing their homes and developing their gardens with imports from the Caribbean, India, Africa, China, and Australasia. Masterpieces that have been gathered to reflect the princesses’ engagement with the wider world include a painting by William Verelst (1704–1752), *Audience Given by the Trustees of Georgia to a Delegation of Creek Indians* (1734–35), as well as one of the Center’s treasured works, a painting by George Stubbs of a zebra belonging to Queen Charlotte (1763).

**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, was assisted by Samantha Howard, Curatorial Assistant. The organizing curator at the Center, Amy Meyers, Director, was assisted by Lisa Ford, Assistant Director of Research; Glenn Adamson, Senior Research Scholar; and Tyler Griffith, Postdoctoral Research Associate. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully 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 features contributions by an international team of scholars.

**EXHIBITION OPENING PROGRAM, February 1, 5:30 pm**

“Skill’d in each art”: Royal Consorts, Culture, and Politics at the Eighteenth-Century Court

Joanna Marschner, Senior Curator at Historic Royal Places, London, and exhibition lead curator; actors Baize Buzan, Anna Crivelli, and Elizabeth Stahlmann, Yale School of Drama (YSD), ’17; Directed by Kevin Hourigan, YSD ’17; Yana Biryukova, video design, YSD ’17; Cole McCarty, costumes, YSD ’18; and Carolina Ortiz, lighting, YSD ’17.
ABOUT THE PRINCESSES

CAROLINE OF ANSBACH
Caroline of Ansbach was the daughter of Johann Friedrich, Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach (1668–1694), and his second wife, Eleanore of Saxe-Eisenach (1662–1696). Orphaned by the age of eleven, she was brought up by guardians, Friedrich III, Elector of Brandenburg, first King in Prussia from 1701, and his wife Sophie Charlotte of Hanover. In 1705, Caroline was married to George Augustus, Electoral Prince of Hanover, and when the British throne passed to Sophia’s son (George Louis, Elector of Hanover), George Augustus and Caroline, newly created Prince and Princess of Wales, followed George I to London. One of Caroline’s first contributions to the integration of the new regime was providing a strong female presence at court. Her position as wife to the heir to the throne was unambiguous, and she was the mother of several healthy children. In 1727, George II succeeded his father, but Caroline enjoyed only ten years as queen consort—she died in 1737 at the age of fifty-four. During her years in London, she worked strenuously to support her husband, celebrate and promote the Hanoverian dynasty, and bolster the confidence of her new compatriots in the regime.

AUGUSTA OF SAXE-GOTHKA
Augusta of Saxe-Gotha was the wife of Frederick, Prince of Wales, the eldest son of George II and Caroline. She was the thirteenth child of Friederich II, Duke of Saxe-Gotha, and his wife, Magdelena of Anhalt-Zerbst. Saxe-Gotha was a tiny principality, and Augusta’s marriage prospects seemed inauspicious; however, George was under pressure to find a bride for his rebellious son Frederick, who had arrived in London from Hanover in 1728, estranged from his parents after many years of separation. The estrangement endured, and the young couple would often bring their children as they visited manufactorys, attended the theater, and popular entertainments. This provided a homely, wholesome image for this next generation of the royal family. Augusta would never become a queen consort; Frederick Prince of Wales died unexpectedly in 1751. However, as mother of the future king, who had yet to reach his majority, there was still a role for her as long as her eldest son, heir to the throne, remained within her household. She made her case to George II, who declared her the “best of women,” and named her princess dowager, and regent, albeit with the support of a council, in the event of his death before her son had reached the age of eighteen. She died of cancer at the age of fifty-three in 1772.
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CHARLOTTE OF MECKLENBURG-STRELITZ

Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1744–1818) married George III in 1761, after the King succeeded his grandfather, George II, in 1760. She was born in Mirow, in the duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, the second daughter of Duke Charles Louis and his wife, Elizabeth of Saxe-Hildburghausen. She was chosen from a short list of candidates to be the bride of the King of England, and was fortunate in her marriage. Although an arranged match, Charlotte enjoyed a happy life with her husband, who loved her dearly, and they shared many interests: art, science, music, and theater, as well as a religious faith. Charlotte also was her husband’s confidante in affairs of state. In London, her support for the regime was managed subtly through the Drawing Room, over which she presided, and in the dispensing of court appointments in a society where most politicians were, or sought to be, courtiers, and knew there was advantage to be accrued from their wives’ success in this arena. In October 1788, George III had his first mental and physiological collapse. The episode was acutely distressing for Charlotte and brought her an unasked-for prominence in political affairs. She was accorded charge of the king’s person and his household, albeit assisted by a council. Charlotte died in 1818 and was buried at Windsor, where her husband continued to reside. He outlived her by two years.

ABOUT 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). For more information, visit hrp.org.uk.

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
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in British art and related fields are available in the Center’s Reference Library. In
May 2016, the Center reopened to the public following the completion of a multiyear
conservation project of its iconic Louis I. Kahn building.

Visit the Center online at britishart.yale.edu.

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