

THE PRINCESS OF WALES



Jeremiah Davison. (1695-1745) Oil on canvas. 254 X 152cms.

Princess Augusta of Saxe-Gotha (1719-1772) was married to Frederick Prince of Wales (1707-1751) in 1736 at the age of 16 and proceeded to have 9 children. Bringing them up was difficult in a court where The King and Queen loathed their son, her husband. Augusta, despite being instructed by Frederick to ignore and insult her in-laws, managed to forge a relationship with them and when Frederick died suddenly, aged 44, the King named Augusta as potential Regent rather than his next son in line.

Augusta's son George was destined to become King George III and she continued, for the rest of her life, to have considerable influence over him and his wife, Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. Her interventions were resented by court and Parliament alike.

She was a resilient, adept and powerful woman and this portrait of her was borrowed for an exhibition, 'Enlightened Princesses', in 2017 at the Yale Centre for British Art in Connecticut.

This portrait and its companion of her husband, hang in the Guildhall Banqueting Room and were presented to the city by the Prince of Wales around the time of their marriage. The frames are amongst the grandest of the period, are surmounted by the Prince of Wales feathers and may have been carved by the gifted Paul Petit who was much patronised by the Prince.

Frederick was very friendly with Beau Nash who no doubt fuelled his passions for gambling and dissipation, which diminished after the Prince's marriage to Augusta. Nash's cultivation of the Royal connection with Bath also resulted in the Prince's gift to the city of a magnificent silver gilt cup, attributed to the Royal silversmith Paul de Lamerie.

Jeremiah Davison was a very accomplished artist who had a large practice in Scotland and around the English court. There are 26 of his lovely portraits and allegories in public collections. This picture was conserved with the help of the Friends of the Victoria Art Gallery.