

AUGUSTA OF HESSEN-KASSEL (PRINCESS AUGUSTA)

COPENHAGEN 1823 – COPENHAGEN 1889

Princess Augusta was of a princely German family but grew up in Copenhagen. Her mother, the landgravine¹ Louise Charlotte of Hessen-Kassel, was the sister of the Danish king, Christian VIII. Her father, the landgrave Wilhelm of Hessen-Kassel, was the commanding officer of the Copenhagen garrison. The family lived in one of the palaces at Amalienborg (formerly Brockdorff's), where the royal family now resides. Their home was a meeting place for Danish court circles, especially after Frederik VII's controversial marriage to the commoner Countess Danner.

Augusta was the youngest of three children. In 1842, her elder sister Louise, who also painted, married the later King Christian IX, founder of the present House of Glücksborg. In 1854, Princess Augusta married Baron Carl Frederik Blixen-Finecke (1822–1873), who owned estates both in Denmark and Sweden: Næsbyholm in Scania, Nydala in Småland, and Dallund in Funen. (There is a story to the effect that the later French emperor Napoleon III had paid court to her some time earlier.) Blixen-Finecke was the Danish foreign minister under Frederik VII from 1859 to 1860 during which period he tabled some extremely controversial proposals on the Scandinavian succession, then a major problem.

Princess Augusta was a lively person who loved to entertain on a large scale. She and her husband installed a French garden on one of their estates, and at her more modest widow's residence, the Villa Augusta outside Elsinore, flowers played an important part of her life. (The Villa Augusta was in a converted sugar refinery just south of the town and has since been demolished.)

Our knowledge of Princess Augusta's training and activities as a painter is extremely limited. Both she and her sister received tutelage in art from J. L. Jensen. The two sisters might have inherited a talent for painting from their mother, an able watercolor artist.

Princess Augusta exhibited Hydrangea in the Women Artists' Retrospective Exhibition at Charlottenborg in 1920.

M. T.

LITERATURE: "Princesse Augusta," *Illustreret Tidende*, July 27, 1889; Bo Bramsen: *Huset Glücksborg i 150 år*, I-II, Copenhagen 1975, vol.1, p. 103 passim.

¹A landgravine is the wife of (or a woman holding the rank or position of) a landgravin, a German count or noble ruler by hereditary right of a German castle or town and its adjacent lands.

portrait of Emilie, the professor's daughter. After this we encounter her name only once more, four years later, when between July 4 and September 22, 1848, she is said to be drawing after "the antique plaster head."⁶

On the basis of the information available today, it can be deduced that the Loeb collection's *Study of a Model, Young Girl Undressing* (*Modelstudie, En ung pige klæder sig af*) was painted by Joel Ballin. Ballin eventually carved out a splendid career abroad as a copperplate engraver with special skills. If he had continued as a painter, his reputation would scarcely have spread beyond the borders of Denmark, although he was talented, as this piece in the Loeb collection undeniably indicates.

On October 7, 1844, Professor Eckersberg showed the works by his three male pupils to the Academy Assembly, which inspected them "with particular interest."

S.L.

¹Suzanne Ludvigsen would like to thank Marianne Saabye, director of Den Hirschsprungske Samling, for her important help in identifying the version of *Study of a Model, Young Girl Undressing*.

²Current owner unknown, no photo available.

³Geskel Saloman (1821–1902) was of Jewish-Swedish extraction. After training in Copenhagen, he moved to Gothenburg in Sweden, where he became a very popular portraitist and established his own school of painting.

⁴A full-length mirror with a frame by which it may be moved or tilted.

⁵Cat. 64 in the catalogue *The Naked Golden Age*, p. 137: Pupil of Eckersberg. *En ung pige klæder sig af*. 1844, Lead pencil, gray hatching. 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (225 x 168 mm). Inscribed by unknown hand: *Eckersberg del 1844*, private collection. Preparatory study for Fig.C.

⁶Extracts from C. W. Eckersberg's diaries, index of Eckersberg's private pupils by Hanne Jönsson in *C. W. Eckersberg og hans elever*, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen 1983, p. 56.