It's Only a Paper World: Architecture: A Paper World
By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE
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WASHINGTON.

OF the delightful company of Englishmen with improbable names who did so much to set standards of English style and taste, Inigo Jones, designer of buildings and festivals for the Stuarts, holds a very honored place. That same kind of felicitous British combination of talent and nomenclature also produced Capability Brown, who later shaped the English landscape, but in spite of certain godlike implications of his art, his achievement was considerably less.

Inigo Jones was a giant; a Renaissance man in every traditional sense of the word. Official architect, creator of court entertainments and arbiter of the arts to 17th-century England, he literally brought the Renaissance to that country in the classical Italian buildings that he introduced into the Jacobean world. He set English stylistic directions for the next three centuries.

He also drew like an angel, and a selection of drawings that is a ravishment of the senses is currently on exhibition at the National Gallery in Washington.

"Festival Designs by Inigo Jones" is the cream of his non-architectural work: 119 delicate and eloquent fancies in ink, wash and occasional color from the Chatsworth Collection of the Duke of Devonshire. There is an excel-

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lent catalogue prepared by Roy Strong, Deputy Keeper of the National Portrait Gallery in London. The display will run through April 23, combining beautifully with the ravishments of Washington's spring.

The show will then move through this country and Canada, with the exception of New York City, under the auspices of the International Exhibitions Foundation, until late next year. Laggard New Yorkers can catch the exhibition again at Yale in November, 1968.

It is a show worth catching. It offers the fascination of rare documentation of the early theatre arts as developed by Jones in that curious royal entertainment so lavishly subsidized by the Stuarts, the Masque, as well as the unadulterated delights of drawings that stand on their own as among some of the most appealing in the Renaissance tradition. Dating from about 1604 to 1640, they include settings, costumes, and small baroque gems of assured, easy elegance, such as "Masquers on a Floating Island," illustrated here, to be coveted furiously by anyone to whom the art of drawing has a special appeal.

A drawing is a kind of miraculous time machine. The pen line or wash stroke is always fresh from the artist's hand; it is the most direct and personal communication between hand, eye and heart. Even after 350 years, that communication is intimate and instantaneous.

"Masquers on a Floating Island" from "Festival Designs by Inigo Jones"
To be coveted furiously by connoisseurs of drawing

Illusion

We follow Jones's hand in spirited suggestions of queens as goddesses emerging from clouds and chariots; in the easy evocation of wildly romantic landscapes and classical settings.

All, of course, was false; destined for the world of canvas and cardboard flats, arranged in the then-startling vanishing point perspective, to be removed successively to reveal the dazzling masquers, who advanced to dance before the king. (Another touch of immediacy: the spots of paint on the drawings that were probably careless splashings as they were copied for the full-size sets.)

This was the magic of the brand-new proscenium arch theatre and the illusionistically painted backdrop; in each case an exquisite magic that cost about as much for a single performance as the construction of a small palace. The magic has worn so thin in succeeding centuries that it is dismissed summarily by modern theatrical theoreticians in favor of the difficulties and ambiguities of the open stage. But the wonder is still in the drawings.

There was a "Masque of Blacknesse" and a "Masque of Queens," in 1605 and 1609. Scenery and stage machinery became increasingly elaborate, until in "Chloridia" and "Salmacida Spolia," 35 years later, they triumphed over literary content.

Costumes were layered, bare-bosomed extravaganzas of puffed, embroidered and spangled silks and gauzes (this was the first topless era and the esthetics were infinitely more subtle than today's imitation leopard-skin bikinis.)

Drawings of settings include an unforgettable Oberon's Castle of 1611, a kind of Moorish-Mannerist, domed, turreted and balustraded fantasy with a putto-crowned pediment over a rusticated basement, surrounded by grottoes and soaring rocks. Sheer inventive fancy is matched by sheer graphic skill, for double enchantment.

Architecture

Later sets, with heavy emphasis on Roman antiquities, were delineated with the advancing abilities of an experienced architectural draughtsman, which Jones had become in the intervening years. In this time, he executed the key buildings that were to change the face of England and make her architecture a most sophisticated art.

Of these great buildings, of which 45 are known, only seven remain. You may now stand in Covent Garden and savor the pungent odor of rotting vegetables and the severe Tuscan simplicity of St. Paul's Church, a building that anticipated classicist and neoclassicist tastes in England for the next three centuries, in one of London's first great squares.

The Banqueting House at Whitehall, built to replace the one destroyed by fire in which Jones's Masques were set, has lost few of its Palladian virtues in spite of the fact that the exterior stonework dates from a skilful 19th-century refacing. The Queen's House at Greenwich now has the inescapable institutionality of a Maritime Museum, which it is.

A handful of other splendid 17th-century structures completes the record. In the festival sketches, the masquers dance and the show goes on, but the glory of the Stuarts is reduced to the glory of the drawings. Certainly there is no lovelier experience of art and history in any American gallery today.