

# Review Article:

## Inigo Jones

by

JOHN BOLD

Hart, Vaughan, *Inigo Jones: The Architect of Kings*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (2011), 308 pp., 284 pls, £35. ISBN 978-0-300-14149-8.

Van der Merwe, Pieter, *The Queen's House Greenwich*, London: Scala, in association with the National Maritime Museum (2012), 128 pp., 111 pls, £12.95. ISBN 978-1-85759-753-0.

These are heady times for students of Inigo Jones. Vaughan Hart returns to the Stuart period over fifteen years since his first foray, *Art and Magic in the Court of the Stuarts* (1994), in which some of the concerns of the present volume were adumbrated; and following his invaluable excursions into editions of *Sebastiano Serlio on Architecture* and *Palladio's Rome*,<sup>1</sup> as well as his delving lavishly into the Baroque with *Nicholas Hawksmoor* (2002) and *Sir John Vanbrugh* (2008). Here he follows recent works by Christy Anderson (*Inigo Jones and the Classical Tradition*, 2007) and Giles Worsley (*Inigo Jones and the European Classicist Tradition*, 2007) which, while seeking to place Jones in his broader cultural context (British, North European and non-Palladian Italian), represented a shift away from the Palladian and neo-Palladian focus of the earlier generation of scholars led by Rudolf Wittkower and Sir John Summerson (*Inigo Jones*, 1966).

Although this is a substantial and excellently produced volume, it is not intended to be the definitive critical analysis of Jones's works which surprisingly, after years of scholarly endeavour by among others John Harris, John Newman, John Peacock, Edward Chaney, Gordon Higgott, Ann Robey and Jones's biographer Michael Leapman, as well as Anderson and Worsley, is still required, not least in order better to understand his relationships with his collaborators and his pupil, John Webb. Hart is at pains to point out that this is not a general study; rather, his concern is to show how Jones attempted to reconcile the Orders to English tastes, focusing on the 'symbolic and eloquent matter of decoration' and examining 'Jones's conception and application of the antique column as the principal and most consistent element in his vocabulary of architectural forms'. So this book should be seen as a significant contribution to an expanding field of study, in which aspects of Jones's architecture and thought are considered in, if not always entirely new, then at least less-explored contexts. So we have 'Protestant Ancient Britain

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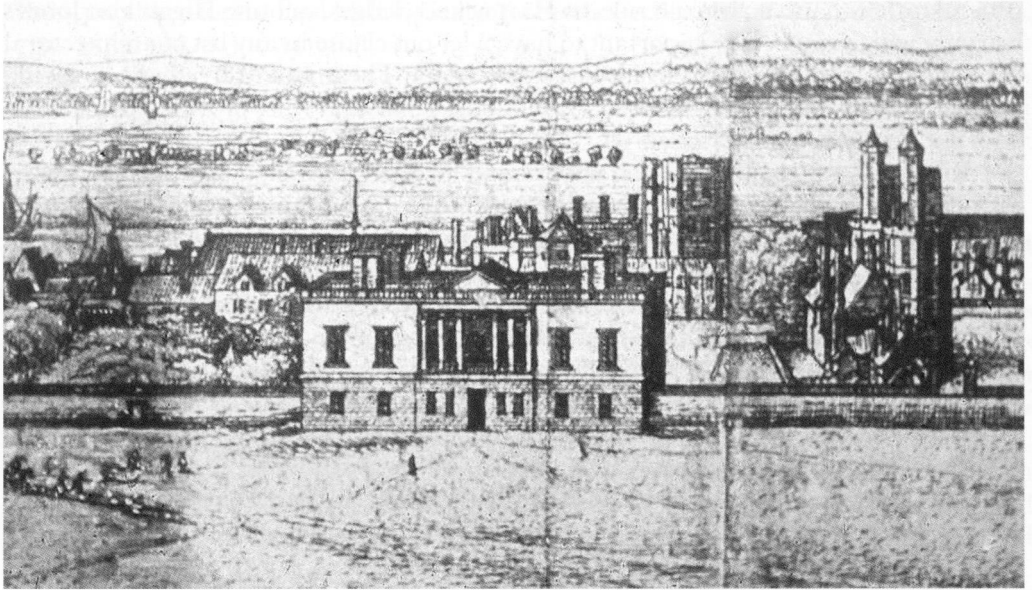
John Bold is Reader in Architecture at the University of Westminster

and Jones's 'Tuscan Stonehenge', 'Jones's Architectural Orders as Emblems of Royal Triumph', 'Jones and the Orders of Chivalry and Architecture', 'The Body of Jones's Columns and the Legal Body of the Stuart King', and so on, culminating in discussions of 'Ethics and Decorum at the Banqueting House' and 'Religious and Ornamental Harmony at St Paul's Cathedral'. This is not a flowing narrative account, although key themes emerge, not least the regular recourse, not just here but in all books on Jones, to the well-known remark which writers on Jones believe to be his most revealing: 'So in architecture ye outward ornaments oft to be sollid, proporsionable according to the rullles. masculine and unaffected' (E. Chaney, *Inigo Jones's 'Roman Sketchbook'*, 2006). This is a general rather than an absolute rule, as Hart acknowledges, quoting Higgott on Jones's 'varying with reason'. It is important to have a let-out clause in any list of architectural prescriptions: as Serlio noted in his discussion of the Theatre of Marcellus, 'we should uphold the doctrines of Vitruvius as an infallible guide and rule, provided that reason does not persuade us otherwise'.

Reason seems to have had the upper hand for Jones as well, aided and abetted by his interpreters. The present 'masculine and unaffected' appearance of the Queen's House is due in large part to the proto-modernist efforts of George Chettle when he was in charge of restoring the house in the mid-1930s after the depredations consequent upon its use as a school. How far it fulfilled Jones's maxim beforehand remains unclear. Hart looks again at the well-known (now lost) drawing for the north front of the Queen's House which appears to have shown *trompe l'oeil* decoration; Hart attributes this drawing to Nicholas Stone but does not say why. Was the facade initially too plain for Henrietta Maria's perception of her 'House of Delight'? Following Anne of Denmark, who began it, she was the prime mover in its completion. Although the 'Architect of Kings' was surveyor of the king's works, he also received £20 a year as the queen's surveyor. Works at Greenwich, St James's and Somerset House were all carried out for the distaff side.

The Banqueting House too, as Hart shows, had 'capricious' ornament on the facade. Here also, later refacing by Chambers and Soane has removed the original polychromy, underlining one of the principal points made by Hart (and also by Worsley), that an over-reliance on the Palladian interpretation of Jones begun by Colen Campbell in *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715), has downplayed other influences and has been a major factor in the critical reception, interpretation and restoration of his work ever since. For Hart, the Banqueting House as a display of wealth and status, glorifying sovereign and state, may be recognised as a manifestation of the Aristotelian notion of appropriate magnificence, avoiding private ostentation (an interpretation of magnificence which was later to be employed by Hawksmoor at Greenwich Hospital), here understood by Jones and continued in Rubens's ceiling paintings depicting the themes of religious, social and moral harmony achieved during the reign of James I. Such messages of course presuppose a well-informed audience if they are to have resonance. But how far people understood the messages of the architecture, and how far, if they understood, they actually cared, is not entirely clear here. Nowadays Daniel Libeskind is at great pains, often straining credulity, to explain the various meanings embodied within his fractured geometries in a world avid for interpretation. Who was explaining Jones? Hart suggests that his court buildings were prime targets for Puritan hostility during the Civil War and Commonwealth, the Prince's

Lodging at Newmarket being demolished and the obvious targets, the Catholic chapels at St James's and Somerset House, subject to iconoclastic attacks, but, as he acknowledges, the Banqueting House survived unscathed, 'maybe because it harboured anti-Catholic references and Protestant themes'. Who knew that? It is far more likely that destruction of such a building would have offended the traditionally pragmatic approach of the citizenry, or indeed its inertia: what would have been the point? The Queen's House also, although reserved for the use of the state and used as a resting place for the bodies of dead officers, suffered some losses during the Commonwealth and had some unauthorised lodgers, but it was not subject to anti-Royalist attack.



The Queen's House, detail of Wenceslaus Hollar's panorama of Greenwich from the south, 1637.

Hart's absorbing approach is demanding upon the reader. The chapters are self-contained so aspects of the buildings and their decoration appear in different contexts. This is not therefore the place to look for a coherent account of an architectural development. The approach is scholarly and detailed but also speculative, since although Jones's studies have now been shown to be broad and detailed, the actual impact of his work on the audience of the day is less clearly identifiable. Hart's shifting of attention away from the usual sources is well done and welcome but it does not always convince since particular cases are not necessarily subject to single either-or interpretations, as John Evelyn acknowledged in 1680: 'we have had of late severall Comets, which though I believe appeare from natural Causes, & of themselves operate not, yet I cannot despise them; They may be warnings from God'.

The attachment of British virtues to the Orders surely does not in itself mean that they were 'cleansed of their foreign provenance'. Rooting the Stuart dynasty and its expression of legitimacy through the British Orders does not overturn the long-established view of Inigo Jones as a pre-eminent student of the art and architecture of the Italian Renaissance,

recorded in later years by John Webb as sharing Lord Arundel's melancholic view that 'Italy was no more Italy' as they sadly contemplated contemporary decline. There is a strong hint of special pleading in Hart's determined strategy to shift the focus. He is right to say that we must look beyond Palladio but the approach has its lacunae and risks the pitfalls of misplaced optimism: 'Before *attempting to interpret* the ornamentation at the Banqueting House *as it might have expressed* these Stuart themes of peace and union, it is therefore first necessary to examine Jones's study of Aristotle's ideas on magnificence ...' (my italics).

The jacket of *Inigo Jones - The Architect of Kings* is mischievous in showing the Queen's House and so inviting cheap shots from the literal reviewer (see above). The point is however that 'Kings' has a force rather more generic than gendered. In one of the strongest and most absorbing passages in the book, Hart discusses the linkage of well-established legal concepts with *all'antica* architecture, focusing on the legal and religious notion of the king's 'two bodies', one human and subject to decay, the other divine or mystical, the embodiment of sovereignty and prerogative and so immortal: 'the Stuart kings saw their sovereignty as sanctified by the God-given right to make law by statute'. The argument, or juxtaposition of ideas, which follows, requires close attention and suspension of modern disbelief as we go from the idealisation of the king's body and the monarch's role as Christian prince empowered by God, to Christ the archetypal prince and the embodiment of divine proportion, and so to Vitruvian man represented as a crucified figure. So, 'it would therefore have been perfectly natural for Jones and indeed his royal patron to have identified the harmonious properties of the king's 'ideal' or legal body, as cultivated elsewhere in Stuart art [cf. Van Dyck's portraits of Charles I, with crown, in front of column], with the Vitruvian form; and then to have sought to reflect these royal virtues through the symmetry and proportions of his court architecture'. So we are encouraged to interpret Jones's architecture as 'a persuasive attempt to proclaim in stone the Stuart monarch's legal legitimacy and law-making powers', a strategy mirrored in less permanent and more private form in the court masques. Through these feats of prestidigitation we are beginning to see the reasons why these monarchical and Jonesian convolutions and justifications were all going to end (if only temporarily) in tears.

Vaughan Hart's book represents a considerable contribution to the literature on Inigo Jones in opening out or developing important new areas for speculation and interpretation, but the student would be advised to read it in conjunction with other more factual accounts of the works. Hart speculates, for example, that Jones's search for the origins of Stonehenge and his enthusiasm for Arthurian legends led to his seeing the West Country as his spiritual home, a view supported by John Aubrey's report that Jones 'bought the Mannour of Butley neer Glastonbury'. But he did not. Helped by his wife's inheritance of money from Inigo Jones, John Webb bought Butleigh Court in 1653, one year after Jones's death. Staying in the West Country, the evidence for Jones's post-fire involvement at Wilton in 1648-51 is less clear-cut than Hart suggests. Following Gordon Higgott's analysis of the handwriting on the drawings by Webb for ceilings and doors, they appear to fall into two post-fire groups, one group with Jones's superscriptions, datable to 1647-8; the second group, dated 1649, is by Webb alone, stylistically different and without notations by Jones who by this time had withdrawn from public life after the execution of Charles I in January of that year.

Hart considers it likely that the Banqueting House was intended to connect to a larger complex, possibly a new palace of Whitehall. But although the absence of a grand staircase may suggest an intention for later continuation, there is no evidence for this, and when the Jones scheme for a new palace was drawn up by Webb in the later 1630s, there was no sign of the Banqueting House on the plan. Efforts by Webb to include it in his later schemes served only to demonstrate difficulties in disposition, scale and alignment, problems comparable with those which faced Webb, Wren and Hawksmoor in their respective attempts to incorporate the Queen's House in proposals for first the palace and then the hospital at Greenwich.

Hart is at his most authoritative on Jones's rebuilding of St Paul's Cathedral, although the arguments and the architectural history would be easier to follow if they were not spread throughout the chapters of the book, as well as in a very useful Appendix in which he has analysed John Webb's building accounts over nine years as 'clerk engrosser' to provide for the first time a detailed account of the building process and the progress of the works and, incidentally, confirming the accuracy of Dugdale's later lament that this had been 'one of the principall ornaments of the Realm'. The ornament included obelisks which Hart discusses at length as signifiers of the king's 'solar' triumph: here, following the Rome of Pope Sixtus V, London was to be a new radiant city. However, this surely does not represent the whole or sole story since obelisks were a recurrent conceit in Elizabethan and Jacobean funerary architecture, and indeed Jones included them in his design for his own tomb, as Hart illustrates. The imperial and solar connotations of the obelisk, as Edward Chaney has recently discussed,<sup>2</sup> encouraged Jones's patron Lord Arundel, inspired by Sixtus V's re-erected obelisks, to attempt to import one to England. Failing to do so, he encouraged Jones to design modern obelisks to flank the Watergate at Henrietta Maria's Somerset House. This attempt to express the historical continuum from ancient Egypt to modern London also failed and the gate at the top of the steps to the river was hung more prosaically from ornamented piers.

Somerset House, as Hart illustrates in a computerised reconstruction, was one of the group of Jones buildings forming the backdrop to the ceremonial route from palace to temple: from Whitehall to St Paul's Cathedral, past the New Exchange and Somerset House, with a view between the two towards the new Covent Garden (here shown in surreal computerised reconstruction crying out for the animating intervention of Paul Delvaux). This was not just a royal route but also one taken by the Lord Mayor, the monarch's representative in the City, during his annual pageant. Hart describes his procession from St Paul's to the Guildhall, but earlier in the day he would travel to Westminster by barge, accompanied by the livery companies in their barges, to swear an oath of allegiance before returning to St Paul's.<sup>3</sup>

At the end of his wide-ranging and impressively researched study, Hart returns to the subject of the 'masculine and unaffected', seeing the architect's negotiation between such exteriors and 'capricious' interiors as emblematic of the political and religious dilemmas of the day which were 'underlined by the opposing aesthetic preferences and related moral positions held by the two sides in the English Civil War'. He is surely right to note that the later Palladian simplification has 'impaired the ability to understand the complexity of his work', but identifying evolving architectural styles with mutable



political and moral positions is an exercise fraught with the danger of prescriptive over-interpretation. Jones may well have developed a 'classicism tempered by circumstance', but it was for an elite audience and it is surely a step too far to suggest that his understanding was sensitive not only to the views on appropriateness of his royal patrons but 'also of the Stuart populace as a whole'. But although at times in this book Hart departs too readily from the orthodoxy of Italianate inspiration, he has given us a more complex figure and has situated him in his times. Great artists are too often abstracted from the circumstances of their production into an ideal realm beyond the needs for compromise and it is good to see Inigo Jones placed firmly within the context of a court and a period characterised by the extraordinary illusions, startlingly recognisable once more in this Jubilee Year, which he did so much to realise.



The Queen's House, Greenwich, the north front and terrace.

*Photograph, J. Bold*

Hart's *Inigo Jones* rightly is cited as a key source in Pieter van der Merwe's welcome new guide to the Queen's House, the centrepiece of the National Maritime Museum (NMM) since its opening in 1937. This is the latest in a list of guidebooks which began with the account by Sir Geoffrey Callender, the first Director of the Museum, published in the year of opening, informed by George Chettle's major monograph of the same year. Callender's 'Short History' was followed in 1976 by a more detailed description by John Charlton, a former Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments, who added a tour of the house, with several plans, to the introductory history. Following the major refurbishment

in the 1980s of this 'Royal Palace by the Thames', an ambitious project which pleased (and increased the numbers of) the visiting public at a cost of considerable, frequently unfair critical opprobrium, a new (anonymous) guide was published in 1990 which, as van der Merwe notes in the new book, included the best pictorial coverage of the rooms following the recent works. Now, after another refurbishment, completed in 2001, and subsequent re-hangs of the major collection of royal and maritime paintings, we have this new, authoritative guide in which the author takes a very different approach from his predecessors. Rather than dividing History and Tour he combines the two and tells the story through the pictures, using them rather televisually as prompts for the narrative. So although at first glance, this looks like a catalogue, sequential reading is required. This is a good story, well and engagingly told, but I wonder how visitors will fare if they do not know at least the outlines of the history: a longer introductory summary perhaps would have helped. Maybe, like the best catalogues, this is a guidebook to read at home. Plans are included, but neither as usefully nor as prominently as the annotated plans provided by Callender and Charlton.

Pieter van der Merwe has been involved as historian, curator and presenter of the National Maritime Museum and its collections since 1974. He is now the Museum's General Editor. No one knows the subject better, or indeed is more generous with insights and information, and coming from the inside he is able to comment on questions of display as well as matters of history, all aspects, including the building's pre-museum life as a school, being fully illustrated here. Potentially difficult areas of policy are not ducked but the author maintains a degree of discretion, most obviously deployed in the description of the Gentileschi ceiling painting in the Great Hall. This was removed in 1708 and has been in Marlborough House ever since. It was replaced by a 'Scanochrome' copy in 1989. This was not greeted with universal delight and in the more recent refurbishment it disappeared. As van der Merwe points out here, it is in fact still there, covered by a removable surface. He does not tell us why. It is a pity that the Museum did not hang onto Louis Cheron's *Triumph of Peace*, illustrated here, which occupied the centre of the ceiling from 1969 until the 1980s. Also welcome is the account (and illustration) of the contemplated purchase of Jacob Jordaens's *Psyche consoled by Pan*, the only known survivor of his ambitious decorative scheme for the Queen's Cabinet or Withdrawing Room on the first floor: condition and cost precluded acquisition in the 1990s.

The majority of paintings illustrated are in the NMM collection but no history of the Queen's House would be complete without the Royal Collection's *View of Greenwich* by Adriaen van Stalbemt and Jan van Belcamp. This shows Charles I and Henrietta Maria with courtiers in Greenwich Park in about 1632 with the half-built Queen's House and the royal palace behind. As van der Merwe notes judiciously, one of the figures to the left is sometimes said to be Inigo Jones, but wearing the ribbon of the Order of the Garter rules him out. In fact, as Edward Chaney has shown (Queen's House conference, NMM, 2012), this is the 'Collector Earl' Lord Arundel, connoisseur and Jones's patron, sporting the George and carrying a sword, standing next to Endymion Porter, the king's negotiator in the acquisition of the Gonzaga collection.

The Queen's House conference, on 'Inigo Jones, the Queen's House and languages of Stuart culture', demonstrated the vitality and range of approaches to the subject, clearly

demonstrated also in the recent books by Anderson, Worsley and Hart. A discussion at the end of the proceedings turned to the current display strategies for the Queen's House. As one of the few properly iconic buildings in England, emblematic of architect, court and times, it represents a rewarding but difficult inheritance for the National Maritime Museum: how to balance the presentation of the house in times of changing attitudes to conservation, reconstruction, presentation and display, while welcoming the public. Van der Merwe notes briefly in his guide the fulfilment of new corporate, commercial requirements incumbent upon national museums (although it should be noted that such requirements may inconvenience ordinary visitors). Both the Hall and the Orangery are well suited to hire uses: wedding receptions, cultural events and filming – it was the Great Hall which lent distinction to the re-pledging of wedding vows by Tanya and Jason in the ITV soap, *Footballers' Wives* (2003). Jason then fell to his death from the roof, though here Aristotelian dramatic unity was not maintained: it was not the roof of the Queen's House.

So, what next? As Van der Merwe observes, as the 400th anniversary of the Queen's House in 2016 approaches (2017 would be better since work began on site in 1617), 'it is time to reconsider both its past and its future once again'. The extraordinary esteem in which we hold the architecture of Inigo Jones; the fascination which persists with a doomed court and its remarkable delusions, culminating in the execution of the king, will continue alternately to constrain and inspire those responsible for the Queen's House and its display. Given his long-standing involvement, a full account from Pieter van der Merwe of the recent history of the house, chronicling and commenting on the successes and failures of the various museological, conservation and reconstruction strategies, would be the most welcome of next steps in studies of the Queen's House and indeed would inform wider debates on the presentation of historic houses and works of art in an increasingly commercially competitive environment. It may be that we shall have to wait for this until after his retirement, when discretion will no longer be a requirement of the brief.

## NOTES

- 1 V. Hart and P. Hicks, *Sebastiano Serlio on Architecture* (translation of 'Tutte L'Opere d'Architettura et Prospetiva', with an introduction and commentary), Vol.1 (1996), Vol.2 (2001), Yale University Press, New Haven and London.
- 2 E. Chaney, 'Roma Britannica and the Cultural Memory of Egypt: Lord Arundel and the Obelisk of Domitian', in D. Marshall, S. Russell and K. Wolfe, eds, *Roma Britannica*, The British School at Rome (London 2011).
- 3 Described by Ian Archer, 'The City of London and River Pageantry, 1400-1856', in S. Doran, ed., *Royal River*, Scala Publishers, in association with the National Maritime Museum (London 2012).