

14 November 2011

Dr Gordon Higgott (St Paul's Cathedral)

Edward Pearce Senior (fl.1630-d.1658): Decorative Artist, Landscape Painter and Collaborator of Inigo Jones

This paper was little less than a metaphorical bombshell dropped with some precision into the heart of Jonesian scholarship. Specialists have long known of Edward Pearce as one of the decorative painters employed in court circles during the reign of Charles I. But almost no works attributable to him have survived. His established *oeuvre* consists only of the coving of the ceiling of the Double Cube Room at Wilton and some engraved designs published in 1640 and 1647. Those however were sufficient for Higgott to construct an intricate chain of evidence in which a string of exciting new attributions were established on the basis of an ever-widening corpus of stylistic comparisons. Other works at Wilton helped confirm Pearce's hand in surviving painted decoration in the Queen's House at Greenwich, which, in turn, allowed Higgott to identify several architectural drawings by him. Those were then used as the basis on which to re-attribute some of the details in Inigo Jones's stage designs for some of the court masques. Finally, with Pearce's draughtsmanship firmly identified, it was argued that some of the worked-up designs for masque costumes by Jones were actually drawn by Pearce. The implication was that Jones was working very closely with Pearce, on whose superior abilities as a draughtsman he had come to rely. This new evidence does not displace Jones from his central position in the cultural output of the Caroline court, but it does show how he was able to utilise the skills of one very able collaborator. **AB**