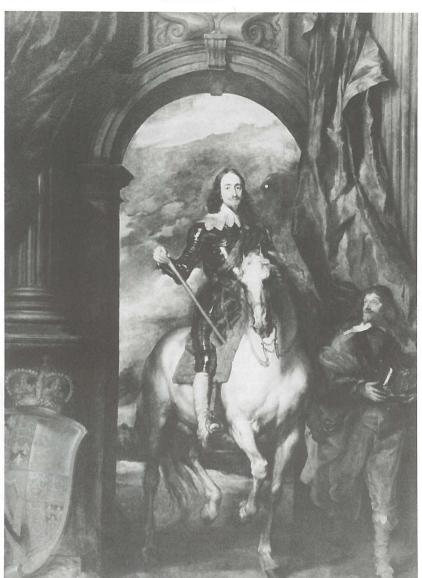


One thing is certain; that whatever has happened to the British Empire or the Empire Leicester Square or the Plaza Regent Street or the guard at Buckingham Palace during the past forty years, there has been no changing of the light inside the palace. Leaving aside the crystal chandeliers there is a lot of concealed lighting behind the cornices. This is typical of the twenties and thirties super-cinemas. From Verity's Shepherds Bush Pavilion of 1923 on, line upon line of low-wattage lamps at close centres were shoved behind



Picture 5.

every architectural promontory which slighest afforded the chance concealment. Another favourite was the laylight; a glass-panelled ceiling with lamps mounted behind in such a way as to look like daylight. Sometimes a further skylight above allowed the real thing to be admitted also. Such a ceiling way up aloft runs the entire length of the picture gallery where we three were now drinking and nibbling with all the others to celebrate the centenary of our Art Workers Guild, while gazing sporadically at the superb paintings hanging along the walls. Due to the great height of the gallery relative to its width the lighting of them presents a problem. This has been solved by the time-honoured linolite fittings bracketed from the top of each frame - with two exceptions. And what exceptions; the Van Dykes of Charles I on horseback and the one with his children.

I was quite unprepared for the size of these. No wonder no one had bothered to bracket any fitting from the top of their tall frames. Some experiment had been made however and it would appear quite recently. There on the top of the great doorway through which we had all entered was a piece of unpainted white wood and screwed thereto — one old Patt.23! Aimed at King

Charles, it was not alight and if it had been the specular reflection at that angle would have been most disturbing. As it was, it was not until after a couple of whiskys that I noticed it up there. To meet that dear old friend from my past shoved up there on a bit of wood among all the treasures in the heart of that gilt and crystal palace, was spot on as the crowning touch to the evening. One niggle remains: how *should* one light those two paintings!

*Sightline Vol.14 No.2

⁺Modern Theatres and Cinemas (published by Batsford 1930)

++The Buildings of England, London (Penguin 1973)

Key to Illustrations:

- The staircase of the Los Angeles Theatre by S. Charles Lee (from The Best Remaining Seats by Ben Hall, pub. Bramhall House 1961)
- Auditorium of Titania Palast Berlin (from Modern Theatres and Cinemas by P. Morton Shand, pub. Batsford 1930)
- 3. Auditorium of New Victoria London in 1930s
- 4. The staircase of the Troxy, Commercial Rd. Stepney. (The Builder 22/9/1933)
- 5. This impressive portrait in The Queens collection measures more than 12ft in height.