

The Museum of Modern Art

West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 245-3200 Cable: Modernart

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PRESS PREVIEW:
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Twenty-seven witty and brilliantly colored drawings by Jim Dine for an anti-traditional interpretation of Shakespeare's play will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from August 8 through September 17. JIM DINE DESIGNS FOR "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM" presents the artist's costume and set designs created in collaboration with theatrical director John Hancock for the San Francisco Actor's Workshop production in 1966, repeated at the Pittsburgh Playhouse and, most recently, at New York's Theatre De Lys.

Jim Dine comes to the long-standing collaboration between the visual and performing arts through the "happening" movement, of which he was a pioneer. Environmental theater ideas were readily adapted to these designs, which emphasize the often ignored bawdy and anti-romantic aspects of Shakespeare's play.

A rainbow motif dominates the entire production design, from the patchwork crazy-quilt curtain to the proscenium arch painted in enamel and the Wurlitzer juke-box on stage which played Mahler and Mendelssohn. Costumes echo this rainbow theme: Oberon's "magic-making" right hand is painted in parallel bands of color, and Puck's body is horizontally striped in greasepaint.

The exhibition is directed by William S. Lieberman, Director, and Virginia Allen, Assistant to the Director, Department of Drawings and Prints. Miss Allen observes: "The drawings, spontaneous and amusing, are annotated in Dine's 'bill-boardese' to suggest that colors be 'brite,' that leotards fit 'rather skin tite,' and that certain textural effects be 'fairly repulsive.'" Swatches of color samples pasted to the tracing paper of the drawings indicate the exact colors to be used, and collage elements torn from magazines and advertisements suggest fabrics ranging from Naugahyde to army camouflage. "For all their brevity and wit, the drawings are intricately and appropriately detailed," and Dine's designs are carefully related to the nature and roles of the characters.

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Although some changes were made between the drawing board and the stage, Dine's conception remained and even influenced additional aspects of the production. Dine suggested the use of black plastic sheeting for the stage backdrop, which set off the vivid costume colors and emphasized the contrast of light and dark, the real world and the fairy kingdom. This motif was also reflected in some of the costumes, the main curtain and the special lighting effects. "Dine's irreverent, uninhibited sketches were exquisitely appropriate to the 'black comedy' that Midsummer became under John Hancock's direction," states Miss Allen.

An older and more familiar view of the play is suggested in the exhibition by a few film stills from Max Reinhardt's 1935 motion picture. "Its fairy-tale atmosphere of cellophane hair and saccharine smiles describes the more traditional interpretation of the play, and a comparison with the stage shots of the Dine/Hancock production is revealing as well as amusing. The impact of Dine's intense color and imaginative costumes erased decades of clichés and plummeted this new production into...the world of Baby Jane Holzer and Batman."

Twenty-five of Dine's designs were acquired by the Museum as gifts of Mrs. Donald B. Straus, a Museum Trustee, President of The International Council, and member of the Committee on Drawings and Prints. The artist and his wife have made available other designs included in the exhibition.

JIM DINE DESIGNS FOR "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM" will travel in the United States and Canada under the auspices of the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions after its New York showing. In November, the Museum will publish an illustrated catalogue to accompany the exhibition.*

*Jim Dine Designs for "A Midsummer Night's Dream" by Virginia Allen. 36 pages, 21 illustrations (4 in color and color end sheet). Paperbound, \$1.50.

 Photographs, checklist and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Patricia B. Kaplan, Associate, Press Services, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.

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JIM DINE DESIGNS FOR "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

August 8 - September 17, 1967

Wall Label

In March 1966 a new production of William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream opened at the San Francisco Actor's Workshop to the mingled delight and bewilderment of audience and critics alike. This production, including its subsequent performances at the Pittsburgh Playhouse and the Theatre De Lys in New York City, was strongly influenced by New York happenings of the late fifties and early sixties. Born as it was of a collaboration between theatrical director John Hancock and New York painter Jim Dine, an early instigator of happenings, this 1966 version of Shakespeare's comedy broke completely with tradition and invaded the contemporary world of Baby Jane Holzer and Batman.

After a brief consultation with the director of the Workshop early in 1966, Dine completed these sketches, which emphasize the often ignored bawdy and anti-romantic aspects of Shakespeare's play. Dine's rainbow motif dominates the scheme from the patchwork crazy-quilt curtain to the proscenium arch painted in enamel, and the Wurlitzer juke-box at stage right. Costumes echo the theme: Oberon's "magic-making" right hand painted in parallel bands of color, and Puck's body horizontally striped in greasepaint. The lovers' costumes are color-paired, rather like some mods of today or the Bobbsey twins of days past. The drawings, spontaneous and amusing, are annotated in Dine's "billboardese" to suggest that colors be "brite," that leotards fit "rather skin tite," and that certain textural effects be "fairly repulsive." Swatches of paper samples pasted to the tracing paper background indicate the exact colors to be used, and collage elements torn from magazines and advertisements suggest fabrics ranging from Naugahyde to army camouflage. For all their brevity and wit, the drawings are intricately and appropriately detailed--Hippolyta's multiple finger rings are compatible with her

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status as Theseus' prospective queen, while Robin Starveling's spools of thread, Peter Quince's hammers and saws, and Tom Snout's pots and pans advertise their respective trades.

Although some changes were made in the costume designs between drawing board and stage, the essence of Dine's conception remained and even influenced additional aspects of the production design. He suggested the use of black plastic sheeting as a backdrop for the stage, which served to make his colors even more intense. This contrast of black and color, light and dark, was expanded to include as well some of the costumes, the main curtain, and special lighting effects. Dine's irreverent, uninhibited sketches were exquisitely appropriate to the "black comedy" that Midsummer became under John Hancock's direction.

The exhibition also includes a few film stills from the 1935 Max Reinhardt motion picture version of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Its fairy-tale atmosphere of cellophane hair and saccharine smiles describes the more traditional interpretation of the play, and a comparison with stage shots of the Dine/Hancock production is revealing as well as amusing. The impact of Dine's intense color and imaginative costumes erased decades of clichés and plummeted this new production into the center of the twentieth century.

The Museum of Modern Art now owns thirty-two of Dine's designs for A Midsummer Night's Dream, twenty-five of them acquired as gifts of Mrs. Donald B. Straus, as Trustee of the Museum as well as a member of its Committee on Drawings and Prints, and President of the Museum's International Council. We are also grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Jim Dine for making available other designs included in this exhibition.

Virginia Allen

This exhibition has been prepared by the Department of Drawings and Prints for travel in the United States and Canada under the auspices of the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions.

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Gifts of Mrs. Donald B. Straus

Checklist

These 27 costume and stage designs for A Midsummer Night's Dream, play by William Shakespeare, were executed by Jim Dine (American, born 1935) during February 1966 in New York City. Directed by John Hancock, this production was first presented at the San Francisco Actor's Workshop (March 11 - April 11, 1966), then at the Pittsburgh Playhouse (November 25, 1966 - January 8, 1967), and most recently at the Theatre De Lys, New York City (June 29 - July 23, 1967). Incidental music was by Felix Mendelssohn and Gustav Mahler. In the catalog listing below, measurements are of sheet size, in inches, height preceding width. All works are signed and dated by the artist, and, unless otherwise noted, are on tracing paper. The designs were given to The Museum of Modern Art, New York, by Mrs. Donald B. Straus, with the exceptions of #23, #25, #26, and #27 gifts of the artist, #22 lent anonymously, and #24 lent by Mrs. Nancy Dine.

COSTUME DESIGNS

The Fairy Kingdom

1. Oberon. Collage, felt pen, pencil, pen and ink. 23 7/8 x 19". 420.66 (RP 2402).
2. Titania. Collage, crayon, glitter, felt pen, pencil, brush, pen and ink. 23 7/8 x 19". 410.66. (RP 2409).
3. Puck. Felt pen, pencil, pen and ink. 14 7/8 x 10". 402.66. (RP 2405).
4. Peaseblossom. Collage, felt pen, pencil, pen and ink. 19 x 12 1/8". 413.66. (RP 2404).
5. Cobweb. Collage, pencil, pen and ink. 23 7/8 x 19". 403.66. (RP 2411).
6. Moth. Collage, crayon, felt pen, pencil, pen and ink. 16 3/4 x 11 3/8". 406.66. (RP 2406).
7. Mustardseed. Collage, felt pen, pencil, pen and ink. 19 x 11 7/8". 414.66. (RP 2423).

The Athenian Court

8. Theseus. Collage, pencil, pen and ink. 23 7/8 x 19". 398.66. (RP 2408).
9. Egeus. Collage, felt pen, pencil, pen and ink. 19 x 12". 412.66. (RP 2421).
10. Lysander. Collage, felt pen, pencil, pen and ink. 17 3/8 x 9 1/2". 416.66. (RP 2415).

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The Athenian Court, cont'd.

- 11. Philostrate. Collage, glitter, felt pen, pencil, pen and ink. 19 x 12".
422.66. (RP 2417).
- 12. Hippolyta. Collage, felt pen, pencil, pen and ink. 23 7/8 x 19". 399.66.
(RP 2472).
- 13. Hermia. Collage, felt pen, pencil, pen and ink. 19 x 10 1/4". 421.66.
(RP 2414).
- 14. Helena. Collage, felt pen, pencil, brush, pen and ink. 19 x 13 3/4". 408.66.
(RP 2401).

The Merials

- 15. Peter Quince. Crayon, felt pen, pencil, brush, pen and ink. 13 x 12".
405.66. (RP 2419).
- 16. Snug. Collage, felt pen, pencil, brush, pen and ink. 19 x 12". 415.66.
(RP 2425).
- 17. Nick Bottom (I). Collage, crayon, felt pen, pencil, brush, pen and ink.
12 x 6 1/8". 404.66. (RP 2412).
- 18. Nick Bottom (II). Collage, pencil, pen and ink. 17 1/2 x 9 1/2". 401.66.
(RP 2416).
- 19. Francis Flute. Collage, pencil, pen and ink. 19 x 6 1/2". 407.66. (RP 2407).
- 20. Tom Snout. Collage, metallic paint, crayon, felt pen, pencil, brush, pen and
ink. 19 x 12". 400.66. (RP 2422).
- 21. Robin Starveling. Crayon, felt pen, pencil, brush, pen and ink. 12 3/4 x
11 7/8". 417.66. (RP 2413).

STAGE DESIGNS

- 22. Side Curtain. Felt pen and pencil. 19 x 23 7/8". E.L.66.1263. (RP 2403).
- 23. Main Curtain. Felt pen, pencil, brush and ink. 19 x 23 3/4". 478.66.
(RP 2424).
- 24. Proscenium Arch. Collage, felt pen and pencil on paper. 24 x 36 1/4".
E.L.67.685. (RP 2660).
- 25. Heart. (1966). Felt pen and pencil. 19 x 23 7/8". Gift of the artist. 477.66.
(RP 2657).
- 26. Moons. (1966). Felt pen and pencil. 19 x 11 15/16". Gift of the artist. 479.66.
(RP 2658).
- 27. Trees. (1966). Felt pen on paper. 24 x 36 1/4". Gift of the artist. 476.66.
(RP 2656).