

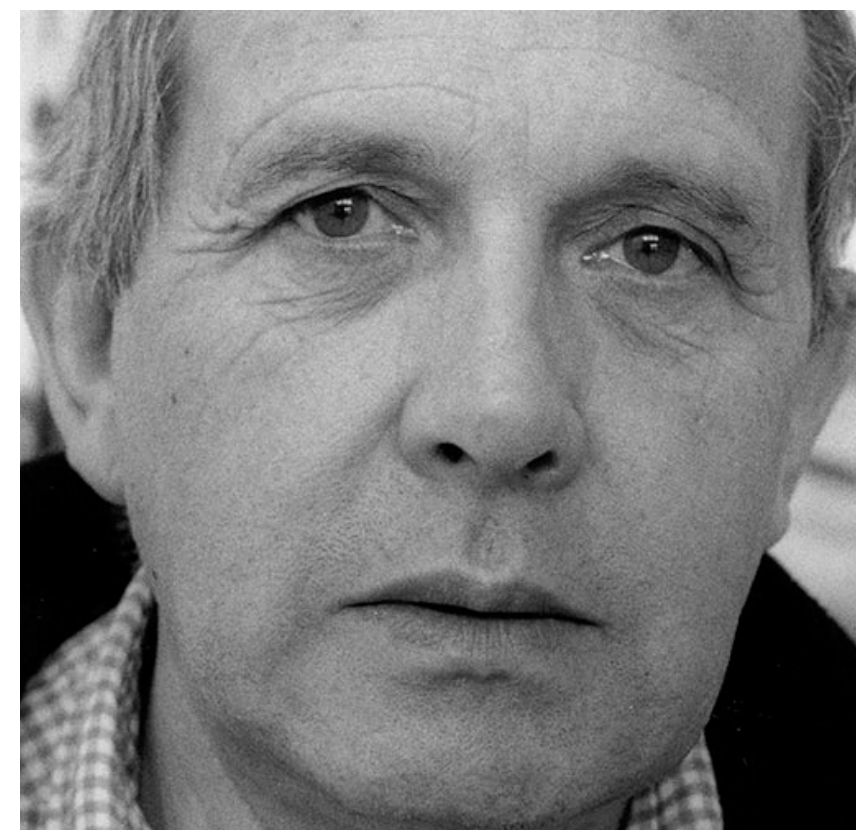
JOHN WALKER

Moseley Road Secondary Art School 1953 - 1955

Painter & Printmaker

"The School, I believe, was the most influential moment in my life. I remember with great fondness the teachers who shaped me as a very young child... All of these men were an inspiration and are still with me when I think of my formative years."

The School I feel, literally gave me the opportunity to pursue a life in the Arts that I would never have achieved if it hadn't existed."



Born 1939, John studied at the School, then Birmingham's Central School of Art and La Grande Chaumière in Paris. He was awarded a Harkness Fellowship to America in 1969 and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1981. He taught at the Royal College and was Artist in Residence at Leeds University and Oxford. John has spent much of his professional life teaching in New York, Yale and Boston Universities where he became Professor Emeritus of Art.

He is in the collection of The Tate, The National, Guggenheim, Museum of Modern Art and many others.

John made his name as an abstract painter in the 1960's

Some of his early work was inspired by the Abstract Expressionists. He pushed painting's physical limits using large shaped canvases. In 1972 he made a series of large 'Blackboard Pieces' first exhibited at the opening of the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, in the same year represented the UK at the Venice Biennale. He won the 1976 John Moores Painting Prize, and was nominated for the Turner Prize in 1985.

From the late 1970s, his imagery marked allusions to earlier artists, such as Goya, Manet and Matisse, either through quoting

a pictorial motif or the use of a particular technique. In a series of 27 etchings, 'Passing Bells'. John depicts tormented soldiers with heads as sheep skulls like lambs to the slaughter. These are comparable in emotional effect to Goya's 'Disaster of War' that abandon colour for the harsher reality of black and white etchings. His father had fought in the 1916 Battle of the Somme at the age of 19, was wounded and repatriated home. Eleven other family members died in the war. John comes to terms with his legacy via these images of anti-war.

In painting, John is credited with expanding Abstract Expressionism

His biggest departure from abstraction is his reliance on observation in his work. He spent 20 years painting the views from his studio in Maine. The work from this period has been described as "existential images", a subject analysed incessantly until "one knows more about it than anyone else."

"The idea of abstraction verses representation is not part of the dialogue anymore. The idea is to get the painting to a point of reality... The painting is only any good when its presence is more than I am."

