

WALTERS, EVAN JOHN (1893 - 1951), artist

Name: Evan John Walters
Date of birth: 1893
Date of death: 1951
Spouse: Marjorie Walters (née Davies)
Parent: Elizabeth Walters (née Thomas)
Parent: Thomas Walters
Gender: Male
Occupation: artist
Area of activity: Art and Architecture
Author: Donald Moore

Born 6 January 1893 in the Welcome Inn, Mynydd-bach, Llangyfelach, near Swansea, Glamorganshire, son of Welsh -speaking parents, Thomas Walters and his wife Elizabeth (née Thomas). After attending the village school at Llangyfelach, he became an apprentice painter-decorator at Morriston, Swansea. In 1910 he entered the Swansea School of Art, then under Grant Murray. He went on to Regent Street Polytechnic and the Royal Academy in London. Fearing that the World War would interrupt his work, he emigrated to America in 1916, but there he was called upon when America entered the war. Rejected for military service, he became a camouflage painter. After the war he returned to Swansea to resume his artistic career. He worked in oils, watercolour, pastel, crayon and pencil. At first his subjects were mainly portraits, but he also painted local landscapes and scenes, still-life and figures, and he designed schemes for interior decoration.

In 1920 he held a one-man show in the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea, where his work was noticed by a local philanthropist, **Mrs Winifred Coombe Tennant**, Neath; this lady encouraged him with patronage and introductions. His work was in demand locally at a time when it was unusual to buy original art. At the Swansea national eisteddfod of 1926 he won a prize for a painting of Pennard castle, receiving high praise from his adjudicator, **Augustus John**. His portraits often showed coal miners and local people, but he also had prominent figures sitting for him, such as **David Lloyd George**, Ramsay MacDonald, Lord Balfour, **Rear Admiral Walker Heneage** (later Walker-Heneage-Vivian) and **Archbishop David Lewis Prosser**, he also made numerous self-portraits. He had skill in capturing the likeness and personality of the sitter. His work was shown in Wales, London and Brighton.

He could have continued as a successful portrait painter but for his restless desire to experiment. His picture of the Annunciation in modern dress displeased the critics. He then became obsessed with the theory of 'double vision': he claimed that an object appeared 'solid' to the viewer only when his eyes were focussed on it, and consequently other objects should be shown in double image. He followed the Impressionists in seeking to break down colours into their basic components. His 'blurred' pictures proved less popular, and his reputation waned. His last exhibition was held in the Alpine Club Gallery, London, in 1950. His last portrait was of **Mrs Coombe Tennant**, but she insisted that it should not be in 'double vision'. **David Bell** in his assessment of Walters declared that he had great talent, but never succeeded, in spite of conscious effort, in using his considerable powers to create an art acceptable to any large section of his contemporaries.

A shy country-boy at first, Evan Walters later affected a Bohemian image, with flowing hair and goatee beard. His marriage in 1935 to a student friend, Marjorie Davies, lasted but a few months. He was much attached to his parents and nursed them both in their last years. He died in London on 14 March 1951 and was buried at Llangyfelach. A number of his remaining works were left to the National Museum of Wales and to the Glynn Vivian Gallery. There are other examples in the National Library of Wales, Carmarthen Museum and Parc Howard, Llanelli.

Author

Donald Moore

Sources

Ernest David Bell, *Evan Walters, 1893-1951, memorial exhibition, May 10th-August 6th* (Swansea 1952), catalogue with biography

Kirstine Brander Dunthorne, *Artists exhibited in Wales 1945-74* (Cardiff 1976)

Michael Jacobs and Malcolm Warner, *Art in Wales* (Norwich 1980)

Erna Meinel, 'The visual wasteland', *The Studio*, February 1955

Evan Walters, 'Binocular vision', *The Artist*, xix, March-August 1940, nos 1-6

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Evan Walters](#)

Works

Evan Walters, *Dewi yn Llandewi Brefi*

Art UK: [Evan Walters 1893-1951](#)

Additional Links

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