

MENSTON 2025 HERITAGE GROUP.

Marie Walker Last

Marie Walker Last (14 March 1917 – 25 March 2017) was a British artist working in London in the late 1950s and early 1960s, returning to continue painting in her Yorkshire home until her death in 2017.

MWL's family came from Cleckheaton. She was encouraged to follow a course of study at art school in Leeds, meeting among others the abstract painter Terry Frost. From there, she entered the prestigious Chelsea School of Art in 1956. She quickly established herself as a member of a culturally avant garde group of artists and taste makers in London and counted the poet Robert Graves, artist César Domela (who shared a studio with Piet Mondrian) as friends and shared a studio with Guyanese artist Aubrey Williams. She was a member of the Women's International Art Club and associated with members of 'Zero' a pan - European group of artists at that time forging new ways of representing the world. This must have seemed a world away from her Yorkshire background.

MW returned to Yorkshire in the early 60's and married Tom Last, a solicitor in Ilkley. She continued painting, driving over from Ilkley to Menston to paint in the small chapel she

converted into a studio, The Studio, in Main Street where she worked until her death. She exhibited nationally and her work can be found in Cartwright Hall Gallery, in York, Leeds and Bradford university collections and Granada Television, as well as private collections. The Goosewell Gallery in Menston had a solo show of her work in 1969.

MWL's work is abstract, she responded to landscape and natural forms in vibrant colour and shape without needing to paint in a realistic way. She worked through a time when women artists were incredibly underrated and undervalued and was always unafraid to look to the future rather than rely on ways of looking from the past.