

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

WALKER, George

fl. Edinburgh 1781–1815

Scottish landscape painter and teacher. a pupil of Alexander Runciman, he started to take pupils in 1781 and from 1782 he advertised drawing classes, with emphasis on landscape and watercolour, in Edinburgh (e.g. *Caledonian Mercury*, 2.XI.1782, where he mentions that specimens of his performance might be seen at Mr Sibbald's Circulating Library etc.). His illustrations to Cririe's *Scottish scenery* (London, 1803) were engraved by W. Byrne from crayon sketches which "may be seen at Mr Walker's Drawing and Painting Academy, Edinburgh" according to the preface. Walker evidently used the crayon pencils made by George Riley: attached to Riley's letter to the *Newcastle courant* of 25.X.1788 was a letter from Walker praising his "ingenious improvement of the Patent-coloured Crayon Pencils; for by them nature may be imitated, not only with great truth, but with more facility than any other method of drawing I am acquainted with." He noted in particular the excellent effect when the crayons were "worked on paper of a dark ground", particularly for moonlit, nocturnal or storm scenes or "towns on fire", while the richness and brilliancy of effect in landscapes were nothing inferior to painting in oil."

An article "by the late George Walker" providing "Directions for painting landscape in crayons" appear in *The Scots magazine*, LXXVIII, .II.1816, pp. 104–5. It provided useful advice on the need to use soft crayons which can work freely. He recommends genuine Swiss pastels, failing which the common sort of English crayons, prepared with chalk, are preferable to those prepared with white lead (as French crayons do), as these invariably change colour. Boxes of London-made crayons should also be rejected as they generally contain yellow and orange orpiments. He advises that the best wove paper should be used, prepared with size and pumice powder. Colours should be blended with the fingers rather than with pieces of cork.

Gibson (1816) dismissed him: "He painted most usually in crayons, but his pictures are of little value considered as works of art"; of the designs for Cririe, "neither in point of accuracy, of delineation, nor beauty of effect, are they entitled to our consideration." Walker was nevertheless appointed Landscape Painter in Crayons in Ordinary to George III in 1806. From 1810 until his death in 1815, his drawing academy at 1 Hunter Square appeared in Edinburgh directories. He exhibited three topographical pieces (medium unspecified) at the Royal Academy in London in 1800; but he may be the same as the homonymous honorary exhibitor at the Royal Academy between 1792 and 1815. Walker also had a large collection of landscapes, including work by Jacob More (*q.v.*).

Bibliography

Robert Brydal, *Art in Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1889, p. 294f; [Patrick Gibson], "View of the arts of design in Britain", *The Edinburgh review*, IX, 1816, p. cccclxxix; Joe Rock, hughwilliamwilliams website, accessed 30.V.2011