

## Jerry Zaslove Memorial

Jeff Wall



Portrait of Jerry Zaslove by Jeff Wall. Photo courtesy of the author.

I met Jerry for the first time in 1977 when we were both faculty members at Simon Fraser University. So we've known each other for 45 years; we started out as colleagues and slowly became friends, and remained that up to the last. I think Jerry and I spent quite a bit of time studying each other.

When I think about Jerry in his absence, I think about his voice. It was never loud. It was never hurried. It was always very calm and calming. It had a kind of pacifying effect. I never left Jerry feeling more nervous or tense than when I met up with him—always felt more serene, more cheerful, more curious about something. His voice also had a sort of a unifying quality, as if he was aiming at expressing what we all have or should have in common. I think he was always searching for that common property, talking about it, whether it was in his intellectual work or in his everyday life, in everything.

He could be critical in the most classic sense, as we know, but somehow he was never divisive. He had a splendid sense of humor, very old school, but I can't ever remember him being sarcastic. He might have meant sometimes to engage in mockery or castigation, but it always seemed somehow to transmute into psychoanalysis. And that gesture contained a kind of empathy or healing. So he brought to the critical profession that soul of a peacemaker, a healer of antipathies, of the kind he knew that still had to be thought through. He had his grudges, but he never seemed rancorous to me. It was a model of the emancipating effect of living and speaking on this ground of the common good without any illusions of the virtue of being that way. And that's what made him so admirable as a teacher, a scholar, an intellectual, and a great friend.

**Jeff Wall** was born in 1946, in Vancouver where he lives and works. His photographs have been exhibited worldwide over the past forty years. His pictures often depict events the artist has witnessed and reconstructed in a process he calls ‘cinematography.’ His subject matter ranges from everyday occurrences photographed in real places to imaginary situations constructed in a studio. He is considered to be one of the artists who since the 1970s has led the way in emphasizing the affinities between photography, painting, and cinema. He taught art in universities in Canada for twenty-five years, and his critical writing has been collected and published in several languages. His work has been the subject of numerous retrospective exhibitions, most recently at the Glenstone Museum in Potomac, Maryland in 2021.