

One of TNI's first fellows, artist and author, John Berger dies aged 90

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Artist and author John Berger died on January 2, 2017 at his home in Paris. John was one of TNI's first fellows. We remember him fondly as a kind man with a singular perspective on the world and the presence of a natural performer.

John was best known for his series *Ways of Seeing* for the BBC, and novels such as *Pig Earth*, which are as relevant and insightful today as when they were written. He won the 1972 Booker prize for fiction for his novel *G* [1]. A dedicated Marxist, John also wrote on the Palestinian struggle for statehood and the exploitation of migrants in Europe [2].

In 1974 John moved to the French mountain village Quincy. The Transnational Institute initially funded his stay there, where he found the inspiration for his marvelous trilogy 'Into their labours; *Pig Earth* (1980), *Once in Europa* (1987) en *Lilac and Flag* (1990)

"John's ways of seeing were life changing for so many. He was an extraordinarily insightful man. TNI is proud to have been associated with him," said Fiona Dove, Executive Director.

"John listened to you as if you were the Delphic Oracle, thoughtfully considered what you'd said and then replied, "Yes, yes and... , "giving your own poor words a profound, stunning, and unexpected conclusion. TNI's first fellows had the privilege of looking at pictures by Van Gogh or Frans Hals or Vermeer with him from an entirely new perspective, as if he had accompanied the artists through their labours and knew them and their hardships, first-hand." Authentic "is surely an overworked word: John deserved it in every aspect of his life whether in his own labours with the peasants of the Savoie, his beautiful novels, his understanding not just of visual art but of every aspect of culture and society. He was honesty personified. All those who knew new him and many who did not are in mourning today." Susan George, President of TNI.

"I met John Berger at TNI in the early 1980s. You could listen to that man talk forever. Remarkable insights. Great politics. He learned about Palestine from Eqbal. About Zimbabwe from Basker. About Cuba from Saul. And, much more from the rest of TNI. What a joy to have learned from him. TNI should be proud that it was one of his teachers." John Cavanagh, Director Institute for Policy Studies

John Berger also wrote about two of TNI's former directors, a poem in tribute to Orlando Letelier [3] and a story that Eqbal Ahmed told him on his origins of becoming a revolutionary [4].

The Transnational Institute

P.S.

* <https://www.tni.org/en/article/john-berger-dies-aged-90>

Footnotes

[1] ESSF (article 39932), [Gostbustere – “The basic cultural value of a prize depends upon what it is a stimulus to”](#).

[2] <https://www.tni.org/en/archives/act/19053>

[3] <https://www.tni.org/en/archives/act/913>

[4] <https://www.tni.org/en/archives/act/911>