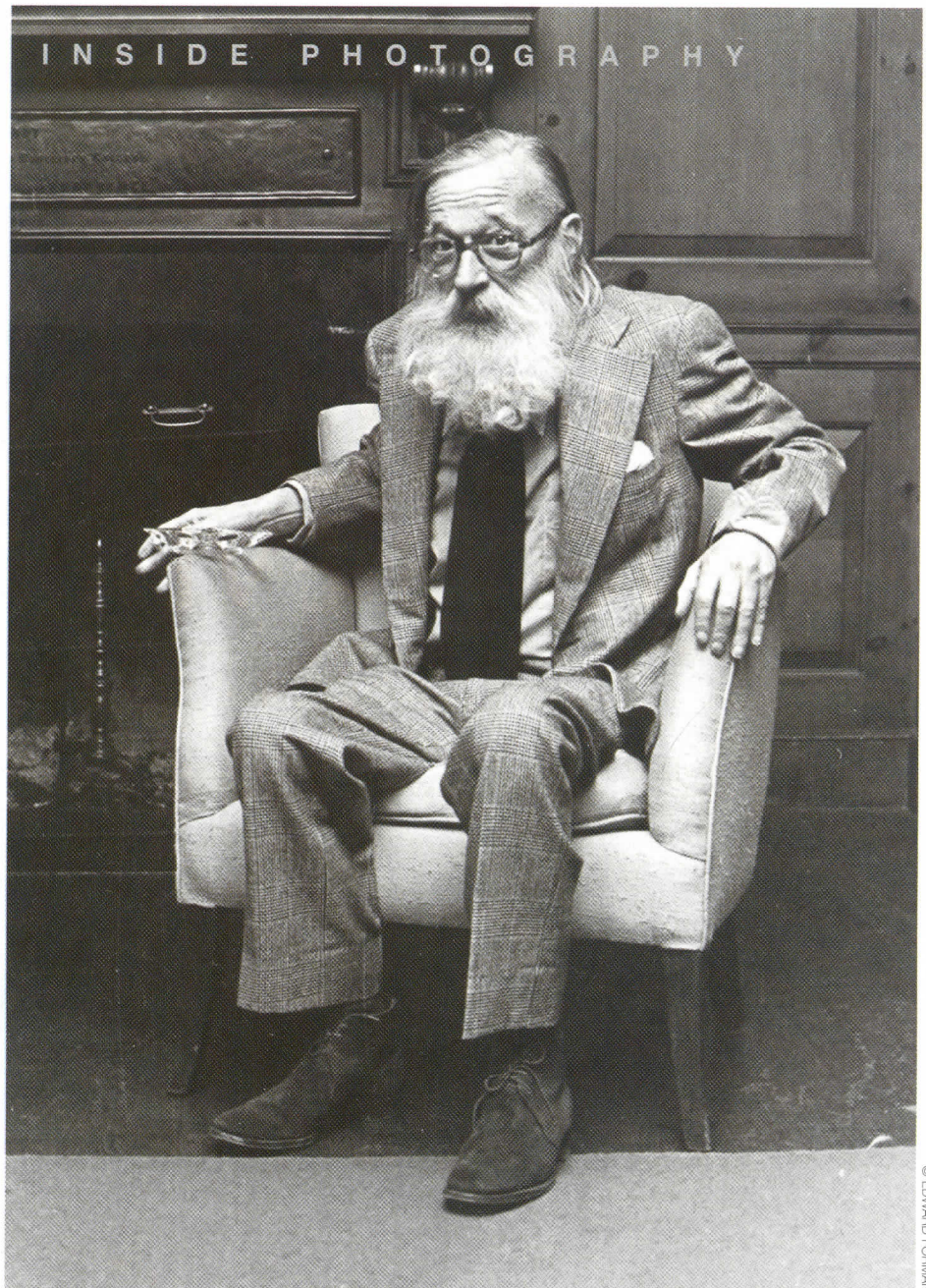




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The night before Walker Evans died, he sat down with a small group of students at a Radcliffe College dorm to talk about his life's work. The great photographer was perched like royalty in an armchair, smoke from his cigarette swirling through his long

AGE BEFORE BEAUTY

AN UNKNOWN LAST PORTRAIT AND AN INTIMATE MEMOIR CAST NEW LIGHT ON WALKER EVANS. BY RUSSELL HART

IN PRINT

STORY BY STOREY



Walker's Way
My Years with Walker Evans
Isabelle Storey



Important photographers such as Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander, and Helen Levitt make cameo appearances in *Walker's Way*, Isabelle Storey's readable and illuminating memoir of her married life with Walker Evans.

white beard. He looked older and frailer than his 71 years but was lucid and opinionated. This writer, an invited guest, was sitting on the floor to the right of *Harvard Crimson* photographer Edward Forman when he shot the last picture ever made of Walker Evans (left).

Two things come to mind about Evans that night. One is that he was wearing a salmon-pink dress shirt. The other is that he wasn't particularly warm or likable. In fact, he seemed rather formal and a bit supercilious, if memory serves.

Those qualities, and Evans's fondness for pink shirts, are affirmed in a new account of the photographer's later life, *Walker's Way: My Years With Walker Evans* (powerHouse/Redux, \$30). Penned by Evans's second wife, Isabelle Storey, the book spans the 1960s, a decade of social and artistic ferment that the apolitical Evans, who comes off as aesthetically conservative, seemed to want nothing to do with.

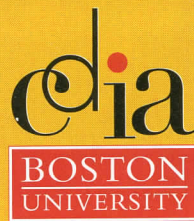
But what's so disappointing about Storey's enlightening memoir is that despite Evans's photographic interest in vernacular expression—the craft brought by common folk to the making of practical things—he was a dandy and a snob, preferring to keep company with club-hopping Manhattan glitterati and dismissing his Yale students as “ill bred.”

Yet Storey, a student of fashion and textile design, is surprisingly sparing in her judgment. Her indictment is in the details, presented with phenomenal recall. She was romantic, lonely, and unfulfilled; Evans was self-centered, hypochondriacal, sexist, and sexually repressed despite his wandering eye. And he was bitter that the art world (including MoMA's Edward Steichen, whom he hated) hadn't given him more recognition.

Storey's extraordinary memory also makes her book a *Who's Who* of the 1960s art world. Some of these vignettes are charming and telling, such as the time *Harper's Bazaar* art director Marvin Israel brought Mr. and Mrs. Evans the portfolio of an up-and-coming Diane Arbus, then revealed that she was waiting outside in a cab. Arbus was invited in, but she was too shy to meet the estimable Walker Evans. ■

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