



John Willemsma grew up spending time at the horse stables surrounding his home in Southern California. After leaving California and moving with his parents to the Netherlands and then to Virginia, he continued to ride and compete in rodeos. John returned to the west in 1976, moving to Amarillo, Texas, where he attended a saddlemaking trade school. After a year in Texas he would spend the next 10 years working in saddle shops in Kansas, New Mexico and Oklahoma, opening his own shop in

1987. His first introduction to seeing saddles as "Functional Art" came in 1988 when he was invited to show his work at the "Trappings of the American West" in Flagstaff, Arizona. Seeing and being influenced by the work of contemporary masters such as Dale Harwood, Don King and Chuck Stories, led John on a journey that he continues to this day.