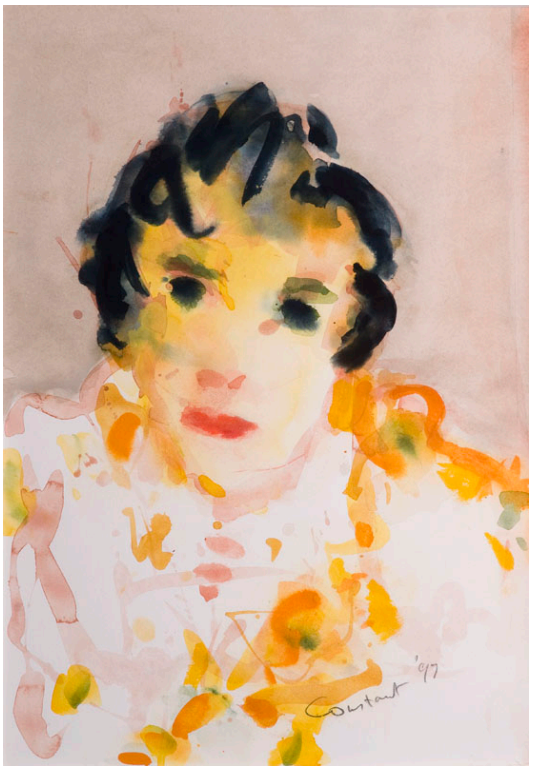


Superstar

watercolor

1997

56 x 37 cm



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# Constant

Constant Anton Nieuwenhuijs trained successively at the Kunstnijverheidsschool and Amsterdam's prestigious Rijksacademie from 1939 to 1942. In 1946 he met Asger Jorn in Paris. Around this time his paintings started to feature fantastic beasts and aggressive, frightening animal and human figures. Constant mounted his first solo exhibition in Amsterdam in 1947. In the following year he helped found the Dutch Experimental Group and subsequently CoBrA.

Together with Christian Dotremont, Constant was CoBrA's leading theoretician. As co-founder of the Experimental Group he had authored the manifesto the group published in the first issue of its newsletter 'Reflex'. In the countless manifestos and articles he wrote for CoBrA he examined the social role of the artist, calling for the liberation of creativity and imagination in the service of a culture constantly renewing itself.
In the art works that he produced during his CoBrA years we see the same sort of figures derived from children's drawings as in Appel, executed in rough lines and deliberately clumsy forms.

In 1950 Constant settled in Paris, where he met Stephen Gilbert. During this time he produced his 'war paintings', which take as their subject the remains of a destroyed world wherein helpless people stretch out their hands to heaven. It was in the late Fifties that Constant developed his ideas about the ideal city, 'New Babylon', in which people freed from work –homo ludens –would be able to develop their creative abilities. Constant took part in the 1956 conference Mouvement pour un Bauhaus Imaginiste' organised by Jorn, and in the following year he became one of the founders of the "Situationist International."

From the Seventies onwards Constant increasingly concentrated on painting, water colours and drawings. The work of the Old Masters was an important source of inspiration. Constant died in 2005 and is remembered as one of the Netherlands' best post-war artists.



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