



Constant Montald

1862-1944

The Snow

Gouache on paper signed and dated 1916 lower left

Dimensions : 71,5 x 89,5 cm

Dimensions : 27.95 x 35.04 inch



Dimensions with frame : 82,5 x 101,5 cm
Dimensions with frame : 32.28 x 39.76 inch

Biography

Constant Montald grew up in a modest family in Ghent where his father was a shoemaker. At 12, he started his artistic training at the Academy of Fine Art and also followed the industrial school of his native city. Thanks to the gain of a grant, he settled in Paris and exhibited his first monumental work Human fight in 1886. On the same year, he gained the Prize of Rome with Diagoras porté en triomphe par ses fils, vainqueurs des Jeux Olympiques and started his three years Italian trip. Classical Roman architecture, Michelangelo's and Giotto's works, as well as his visit in Pompei strongly touched him. From this time, he began the creation of a very large canvas titled L'Antagonisme social (The class struggle).

Back to Belgium, Montald was deeply interested in Idealist movement. The latter advocated the transcendence of art on materiality in order to make the concept of Idea prevail. Similar to symbolism, this movement distinguished by its choice of presenting Idea in a figurative and explicit way more than just by suggestion.

From 1894, Montald realized monumental works in which the visual language of Antiquity prevails. He gave up the traditional animated figuration to favour a style more imbued with serenity and reserve. He showed his ideals : Beauty, Strength, Grace, Purity, Inspiration and Determination.

In 1896, he became professor at the Brussels' Academy of Fine Arts where he teach decorative art. There René Magritte, Paul Delvaux and Anto Carte were of his students. Two years latter, he met Emile Verhaeren for the first time, the beginning of a long friendship had started.

In 1906, during a walk with Verhaeren, Montald decided to buy a land located 270 chaussée de Roodebeek in Woluwe-Saint-Lambert. The architect Henri Van Massenhoven built the villa-studio, a place symbol of the social ascension of Montald. Here he welcomed famous visitors, like his close friend Verhaeren of course, but also sculptor Charles Van der Stappen, painter Victor Gilsoul, writer Stefan Sweig and even Belgian sovereigns Albert and Elisabeth.

At this time, the successful Montald received a lot of private and public orders, like frescos for the Ghent Royal Theater. He exhibited during the Universal Exhibition in Brussels in 1910 his art work Sous l'arbre sacré (Under the holy tree).

During WWI, Montald couldn't work on monumental pieces anymore and turned to easel painting with realist subjects. He painted landscapes and people around him and realized a set of snow-covered landscapes still tinged with symbolism.

From 1921, he participated in the foundation of monument art with Jean Delville. He drew the mosaic panel for the auditorium with colonnade of the Cinquentaire, featuring Moral life. Then he took part in many exhibitions around his country. He played a key role in the rise of cultural life in Woluwe-Saint-Lambert by his personal involvement in the communal painting competition from 1923.

In 1925 a whole room of the Belgian pavilion at the Industrial Arts Exhibition was dedicated to him. Four years latter, he realised the new 10.000 francs bill for the National Bank. In 1932, he finally retired from teaching at the Academy after 36 years.

He began his last monumental artwork in 1943 by realising the decoration of the walls of the cloister of the cemetery of the abbey of Orval. He died in 1944 after a traffic accident.

Museums

Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Bruxelles

Musées des Beaux-Arts, Gand

Théâtre de la ville de Louvain

Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Bibliography

Archivris.be : <https://archivris.be/fr/2019/08/11/constant-montald/>

Georges Mayer, " Constant Montald ", in Éliane De Wilde (préface), Le dictionnaire des peintres belges du XIVE siècle à nos jours depuis les premiers maîtres des anciens Pays-Bas méridionaux et de la Principauté de Liège jusqu'aux artistes contemporains, t. 2, Bruxelles, La Renaissance du Livre, 1995, p. 754.

Paul Piron, Dictionnaire des artistes plasticiens de Belgique des XIXe et XXe siècle, t. 2, Ohain, Art in Belgium, 2003, p. 194.