

*Friday, December 30, 2005*



'Avant le depart' is the name of the documentary about Constant (1920 - 2005) a painter who belongs to the Cobra group. It is a moving account of the last year of his life working on his very last painting. At the beginning of this movie he is saying: 'Het zit er op' which means "Time is up". It is no so dramatic as it sounds though. He is looking back on a long productive life with an interesting oeuvre and a succesful career. Constant is kind of proud. And I appreciate that he believes in himself and in his art as that is the right attitude for an artist to survive.

In this 90 minutes documentary you can see quiet images of an old man slowly working on his painting. Not many questions are asked nor is he trying to explain. By a short lecture on colourism his wife is trying to secure him a place in art history. The camera is patiently recording the painting process. It can be expected that these kinds of quality tv productions will disappear from the screen with the reform of the Dutch public broadcast system and be soon replaced by uptempo commercial crap.

I like his watercolour style of his 'portraits imaginaires'. For instance this portrait of a woman is very special. The face has a good expression although he totally forgot to paint her nose. Look at this magnificent background how the pinkish red matches well with the red brown and bluish grey. I think a background can make or break a portrait. In the painting of the clothes a white gouache has been applied, which is against the principles of this transparent technique. but masters can afford to break the rules.