

## Constant Permeke

Constant Permeke was born on July 31, 1886 in Antwerp, Belgium. His father, Henri Permeke, was also an artist. In 1891 the family left Antwerp with their boat, the *Artis Amor*, and arrived at their final destination Ostend in 1892. In 1897 Henri Permeke would even become the first director of the Museum of Fine Arts in Ostend.

Constant Permeke studied from 1903 to 1906 at the Academy of Bruges. From 1906 to 1908 he had to fulfill his military duty. Together with his friend Gust De Smet, who he met in the army, they rented a room in the "Kaaistraat" in Ostend to paint.

On June 27, 1912, Constant Permeke married Maria Delaere and they moved to the part of the city where all the hard labouring fishermen lived. This is where the famous Flemish Expressionism of Permeke flourishes with its bland tonality, brutal forms and dary shapes.

When World War I starts in the year 1914, Permeke is summoned to join the army again to help defend Antwerp. He was heavily wounded at a battle in Duffel and he was transferred to the United Kingdom to a hospital in South Hillwood. After his recovery he finds his mother and wife back in Folkestone. This is where his first son John is born.

In 1916 Permeke settles in Chardstock (Devonshire), and although he still suffers from his wounds, his painting spirit returns. The family Permeke returns to Ostend on April 1919. The nice landscapes of Devonshire made room for the poor fishermen world again. Starting from 1921 Permeke led a pretty succesful painting career in Belgium.

From 1937 on, Permeke started sculpting as well. In is sculptures, he searches for the isolation of the human figure. This gave him in 1934 international fame when he joined the "Biënnale of Venice".

The next World war was a true tragedy for Constant Permeke. His son Paul was kidnapped by the Germans and they forbid him to paint. Bittered, Permeke sought a place to stay in Brussels.

After WWII, Constant Permeke was appointed director of the National Higher Institute and the Royal Academy of Antwerp. Only a year later though, in October 1946, he resigns. Meanwhile his son had returned and Permeke found joy again in his life and work.

Constant Permeke reached the very top of his career when he had a retrospective in Paris in 1947. Unfortunately for him his wife died May 3, 1948.

Constant Permeke followed the advice of Maurice de Vlaminck and left on a trip for ten days to Pont-Aven (Bretagne) in 1951. After this trip his health began to suffer and from November on he had to stay in his bed.

Constant Permeke died on January 4, 1952 at age 65. He was buried on January 8 next to his wife "Marietje".

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