



A Free Course on the History of Western Art

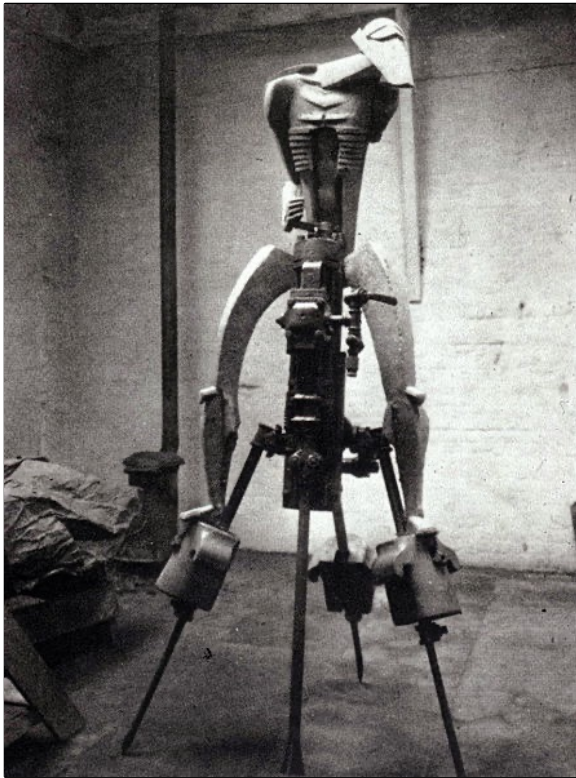
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52-05 AFTERMATH WWI ART

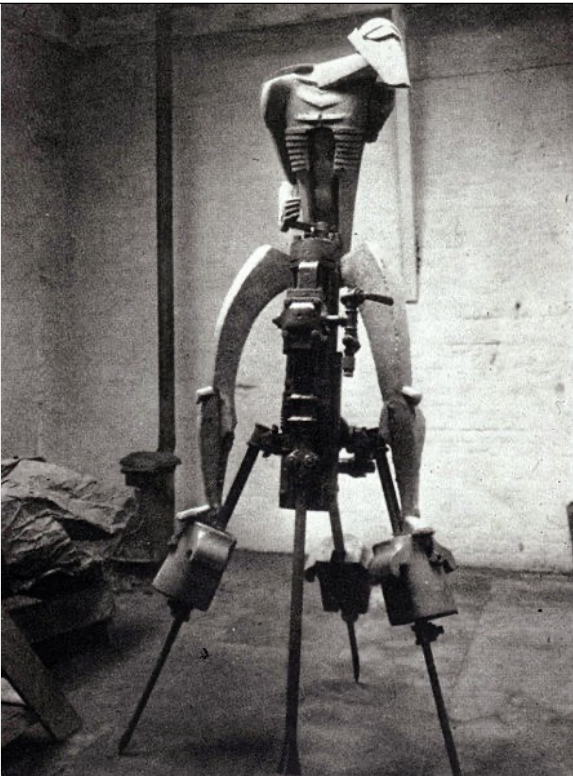
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Jacob Epstein
(1880-1959)
The Rock Drill
c. 1913-14

This talk examines how artists across Europe and Britain responded to the First World War and its violent social aftermath. From Epstein's dismembered Rock Drill to Dix's triptych painted in Old Master technique, from Grosz's corrupted Berlin streets to Höch's photomontage assault on the Weimar Republic, we trace how sculpture, painting, and printmaking became instruments of witness, grief, and indictment — and how the war's destruction reshaped every artistic tradition that survived it.



Jacob Epstein (1880-1959)
The Rock Drill
c. 1913-14
destroyed

Jacob Epstein (1880-1959), *The Rock Drill*, c. 1913-14, destroyed

We move now into the first room of the Remembrance section, where the works on display chart the war's destruction through absence as much as through direct depiction — and **Epstein's Rock Drill** sits at the threshold of that argument perfectly. **Jacob Epstein** was born in New York in 1880, trained there and then in Paris, and settled in London in 1905, becoming a British citizen in 1911. Between 1913 and 1915 he was loosely associated with **Vorticism**, and *Rock Drill* is the movement's most unsettling object. As first exhibited at the London Group show in 1915, it was a plaster figure mounted atop a real **–American rock drill**, the manufacturer's name still running down its side, the whole assembly rising over three metres. Epstein described it as "a machine-like robot, visored, menacing, and carrying within itself its progeny, protectively ensconced." Look at the form: those squared, blade-like limbs, the long armoured beak of a head, the ribbed torso, and tucked in the abdomen, an embryonic figure — life encased inside a war machine. By summer **1916** — the summer of the **Somme** and **Verdun** — Epstein dismantled it. He cut the figure in half, discarded the drill,

removed the arms, and cast only the torso, first in gun metal, then bronze. He later wrote: "I lost my interest in machinery and discarded the drill." The aggressive, phallic whole had been literally emasculated at the precise moment industrial warfare was consuming a generation.

Notes

Between 1913 and 1915, Epstein was associated with the short-lived Vorticism movement and produced one of his best known sculptures The Rock Drill.

This is a photograph of The Rock Drill in its original form. It was a plaster figure perched on top of an actual rock drill with the American manufacturer's name still displayed down the side. The work appeared at the London Group exhibition in 1915. By the time of its second outing in summer 1916, however, he had dismantled it. He discarded the drill, dismembered the figure and cut it in half, leaving a one-armed torso which was then cast, initially in gun metal and ultimately in bronze. Epstein, it seems, took an expression of masculine aggression and then emasculated it. Obvious conclusions may be drawn from the fact that he is doing this at the time of the Battle of the Somme and the Battle of Verdun.

Epstein later said "Here is the armed, sinister figure of today and tomorrow. No Humanity, only the terrible Frankenstein's monster we have made ourselves into... later I lost my interest in machinery and discarded the drill. I cast only the upper part of the figure."

Epstein often produced controversial works which challenged taboos on what was appropriate subject matter for public artworks. He also made paintings and drawings, and often exhibited his work.

The figure is sharp-edged, its limbs square in profile, and its head is a long beak-like armoured visage. The torso has what looks like armoured ribs, and in the abdomen area is an indentation containing an embryonic form. The extraordinary thing about this mechanised abstracted human figure is that it sat on top of a real miner's rock drill, with the name of its American manufacturer emblazoned on its side. The whole assembled sculpture was over three metres tall, giving it an amazing brooding and threatening physical presence. Of course, with the enormous drill jutting out from the figure's loins, it has an extraordinary phallic power about it. Writing about the piece in his autobiography Epstein said: "I made and mounted a machine-like robot,

visored, menacing, and carrying within itself its progeny, protectively ensconced.” (Tate)

Jacob Epstein (1880-1959) was born and studied as an art student in New York. From the sale of one of his early works he moved to Paris in 1902 to study. He moved to London in 1905 and married the following year. He became a British citizen in 1911 and joined the ‘Jewish Legion’ but following a breakdown he was discharged in 1918 without having left England. He was well known on the art scene and rejected pretty, decorative art in favour of rough-hewn realism. His often overt sexuality was controversial and in 1908 18 nude sculptures for the British Medical Association building on the Strand (now Zimbabwe House) outraged Edwardian society as well as artists who were shocked by the rejection of the European tradition of Greco-Roman sculptural forms in favour of classical Indian postures and hand gestures.

REMEMBRANCE: BATTLEFIELDS AND RUINS (ROOM 1)

During the war, artists were already creating works reflecting on its impact. Many of the artists whose work is in this room saw military service. They struggled to show a civilian audience what they had experienced. In depictions of battlefields, the loss of human life is indirectly expressed by mud, shell craters and broken trees. These scenes evoke silence and absence after the fighting has stopped, but also signal the violence that came before. After the war, ruined towns and battlefields became sites of pilgrimage, documented in guidebooks and postcards. Heavy artillery and automatic weapons resulted in a previously unimaginable death toll. Some artists tried to communicate the scale of this loss while others focused on individual tragedies.

The abandoned helmet became a poignant symbol of a single soldier's death shared by British, French and German artists. Artists who showed the brutal realities of conflict more directly sometimes experienced state censorship.

Epstein *Rockdrill* originally 1913 adapted in 1916 by removing legs (the drill) and the arms.

Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881-1919), *Fallen Man*, 1916, broken, fallen, destroyed. Commissioned for a war memorial in Doesburg but it was hugely controversial as it was seen as anti-military.

Group of helmets of English, German and French soldiers. Paintings behind by

William Orpen, A Grave in a Trench, 1917, 76.2 x 63.5 cm, Imperial War Museum

Paul Jouve, Tombe d'un soldat serbe à Kenali 1917 (Grave of a Serbian soldier at Kenali 1917) Musée de l'Armée (Paris, France)

Paul Segeith, Sperrfeuer auf Douaumont (Fort Douaumont), 1916-18

Helmets were lost on the battlefield and collected as souvenirs and trophies.

William Roberts, A Shell Dump (far left) and to its right Charles Sims, Old German Front Line

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/blogs/story-jacob-epsteins-rock-drill>



Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881-1919)
Fallen Man
 1915-1916

Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881-1919), Fallen Man, 1915-1916

What Epstein's truncated torso introduces — a body rendered incomplete by industrial violence — **Wilhelm Lehmbruck's *Fallen Man*** takes to its logical, devastating conclusion. Where Epstein cut his figure in the studio, Lehmbruck shows us a figure destroyed in the field. Lehmbruck was born in **Duisburg** in **1881**, the son of a miner, and trained in Düsseldorf before spending the years **1910 to 1914** in Paris, where **Rodin's** influence sharpened his instinct for elongated, emotionally freighted form. When war came, he served as a paramedic in a Berlin military hospital — not at the front, but close enough to witness the systematic destruction of bodies on an industrial scale. ***Fallen Man***, made in **1915 and 1916**, shows a figure on hands and knees, head bowed to the ground, utterly spent. The pose is not death exactly — it is something worse, the last moment of a man trying to move and finding he cannot. The German art press reviled it. Lehmbruck fled to **Switzerland** in 1916, his depression deepening, and when he returned to Berlin in **1919** — newly elected to the Prussian Academy — he took his own life within weeks. The sculpture is not a

commentary on war. It is its consequence, in stone.

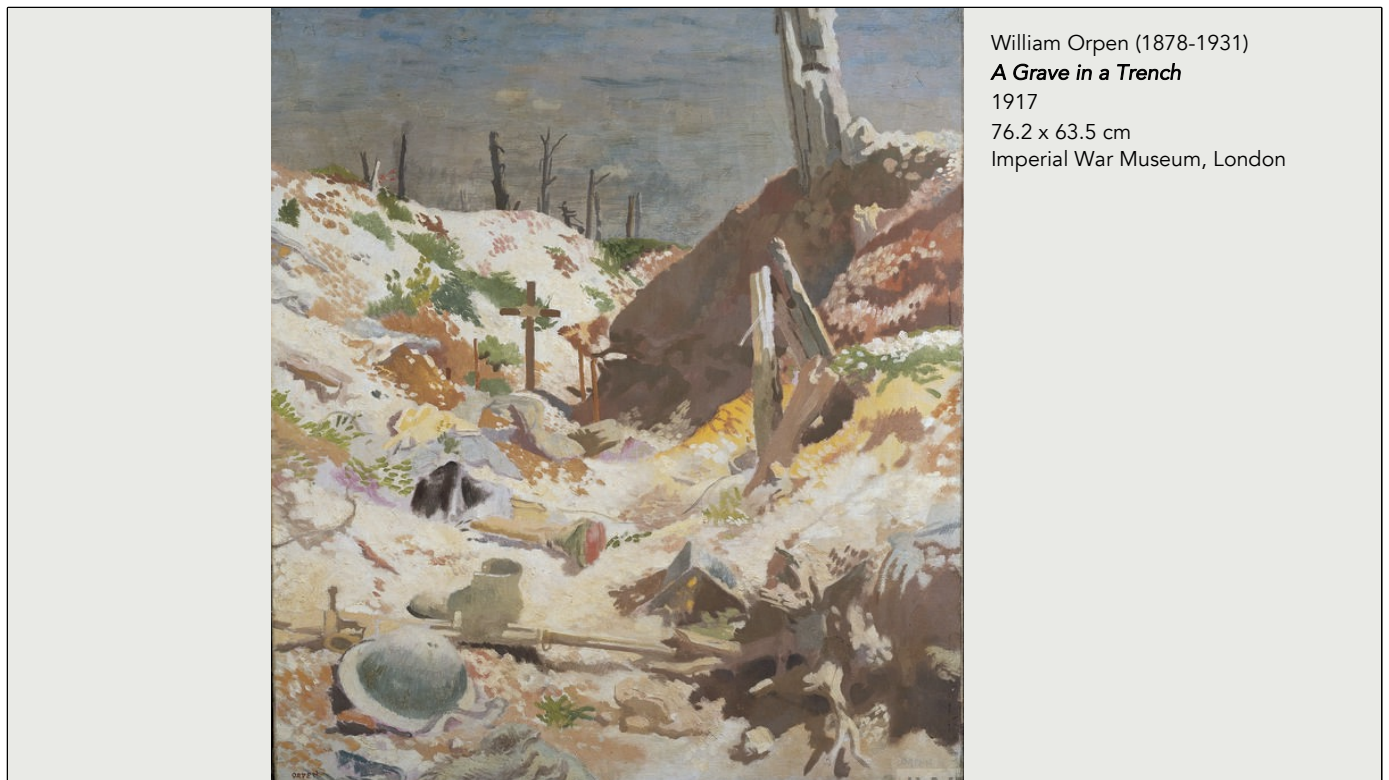
Notes

"The first room of 'Aftermath: Art in the Wake of World War One' is a wasteland of churned mud and body parts, flooded craters and hollow helmets. Jacob Epstein's Rock Drill overlooks it all, a sinister, insectile machine-man, a Terminator robot before his time. Below Epstein's creature is Wilhelm Lehmbruck's Fallen Man, on hands and knees, his buttocks raised, the top of his head against the ground, his inverted face looking back between his legs at his own drooping cock. Stalled in a position of extreme vulnerability and abjection in his attempt to crawl off somewhere.

What a heart stopping sculpture this is. Made in 1915-16 for a war cemetery in his hometown of Duisburg, Lehmbruck's figure was reviled by the German art press. The artist, who fled to Switzerland in 1916, never recovered from his experiences as a medical orderly in a Berlin military hospital and took his own life in 1919. The Fallen Man deserves to be recognised as one of the great 20th-century sculptures." (The Guardian)

Bio:Lehmbruck

Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881-1919) was born in Duisburg to a miner and he received a grant to study sculpture in Düsseldorf. He made a living illustrating scientific publications and later worked as an artist in Düsseldorf. He was impressed by the sculptures of Auguste Rodin, and travelled to England, Italy, the Netherlands, and Paris. In 1907, he married Anita Kaufmann, and they had three sons. He lived in Paris for four years (1910-1914) and had his first solo exhibition in Paris in 1914. During the war he served as a paramedic in Berlin and the suffering and misery he saw influenced Fallen Man. He suffered from depression and fled to Switzerland in 1916. He was elected to the Prussian Academy in Berlin in 1919 and returned to the city where he committed suicide a few weeks later. His figures are often elongated and melancholic. The Lehmbruck Museum in Berlin contains 100 of his sculptures and 40 paintings.



William Orpen (1878-1931)

A Grave in a Trench

1917

76.2 x 63.5 cm

Imperial War Museum, London

William Orpen (1878-1931), A Grave in a Trench, 1917, 76.2 x 63.5 cm, Imperial War Museum, London

Lehmbruck's despair was private, internal, expressed through a single destroyed figure. The painting on this slide turns outward — to the landscape itself as monument. This is **William Orpen's** work on the **Somme**, and the scene he recorded there in **1917** is one of the war's great descriptive passages. Orpen had left the Somme as mud — shell-holes, grey water, nothing living — and returned to find it transformed. He wrote: "The dreary, dismal mud was baked white and pure — dazzling white. White daisies, red poppies and a blue flower, great masses of them, stretched for miles and miles... the whole air, up to a height of about forty feet, thick with white butterflies... It was like an enchanted land; but in the place of fairies there were thousands of little white crosses, marked 'Unknown British Soldier.'" Orpen was born in **1878** in County Dublin, a brilliant draughtsman who had built a lucrative London portrait practice before enlisting — he could have returned to **Ireland** and avoided conscription entirely, but insisted on serving. He became the most prolific of Britain's **official war artists**,

eventually donating all **138 works** to the government. The **Imperial War Museum**, established in **1917**, was the institutional framework that made systematic war art possible — a recognition that witness, as much as weaponry, needed to be organised.

Notes

A view along the remains of an old trench, scattered with debris. Among the weeds and rocks there is a helmet, a boot, a rifle. A grave with a wooden marker cross stands in the centre of the composition.

The sponsorship of the arts during the First World War was started in July 1916 by the Government propaganda department (later the Department of Information) in order to provide eye witness illustrations for propaganda publications. Amongst the artists commissioned at this stage were William Orpen, Paul Nash and C R W Nevinson. The Imperial War Museum was established in 1917 and collected a wide range of material including art and it commissioned its own artists.

The white could be flowers, baked white mud, snow or chalk, all of which are mentioned by Orpen. The most likely is chalk or the reflection of the sun off baked mud. In 1917, heading south from Ypres, he encountered the Somme in summer-time and wrote, "Never shall I forget my first sight of the Somme in summer-time. I had left it mud, nothing but water, shell-holes and mud – the most gloomy, dreary abomination of desolation the mind could imagine; and now, in the summer of 1917, no words could express the beauty of it. The dreary, dismal mud was baked white and pure – dazzling white. White daisies, red poppies and a blue flower, great masses of them, stretched for miles and miles. The sky a pure dark blue, and the whole air, up to a height of about forty feet, thick with white butterflies: your clothes were covered with butterflies. It was like an enchanted land; but in the place of fairies there were thousands of little white crosses, marked "Unknown British Soldier," for the most part."

William Orpen (1878-1931) an Irish artist who worked mainly in London. William Orpen was a fine draughtsman and a popular, commercially successful, painter of portraits for the well-to-do in Edwardian society. During the First World War, he was the most prolific of the official artists sent by

Britain to the Western Front and as a Major he was allowed to stay longer. As an Irishman he could have returned to Ireland to avoid conscription as many Irish artists did but he insisted on enrolling. After the war he donated most of his 138 works to the British government. He narrowly avoided a court-martial with the help of Lord Beaverbrook for calling a portrait of a young Red Cross worker, *The Spy*. He had invented a story about a young, female German spy who had revealed herself naked to avoid being shot by a French firing squad. He was made a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the 1918 King's birthday honours list, and also elected a member of the Royal Academy of Arts, his determination to serve as a war artist cost him both his health and his social standing in Britain. After his early death, a number of critics, including other artists, were loudly dismissive of his work and for many years his paintings were rarely exhibited, a situation that only began to change in the 1980s.



Ernst Barlach (1870-1938)
The Floating One
1927
Güstrow Cathedral, Güstrow

Ernst Barlach (1870-1938), *The Floating One*, 1927, Güstrow Cathedral, Güstrow

From the landscape witness of Orpen's *Somme*, we move now to a figure that literally hovers above the carnage as witness — **Ernst Barlach's** sculpture known as ***The Floating One***. Barlach trained in Hamburg and at the Royal Art School in Dresden, working initially in an Art Nouveau idiom before a formative eight-week journey through Russia in **1906** fundamentally redirected his vision. He began covering his figures in heavy, Gothic drapery, emphasising hands and faces as the true carriers of human feeling. Like Orpen, Barlach was initially a patriotic supporter of the war. Three months as an infantry soldier, cut short by a heart condition, returned him a committed pacifist. *The Floating One* shows an angel suspended in mid-air, draped and grave, bearing witness rather than intervening. The face is that of his close friend, the German artist **Käthe Kollwitz**. The Nazis labelled him a degenerate artist, confiscated his work — including war memorials — and banned him from practising sculpture. The original *Floating One* was melted down. Barlach kept the mould, and three casts were made

after the Second World War. He died of heart failure in **1938**, never seeing his reputation restored. His war memorial at **Magdeburg Cathedral**, which showed German soldiers in horror and desperation rather than heroic sacrifice, had proved too honest for those who preferred a cleaner myth.

Notes

A controversial sculpture that was melted down, but the artist kept the mould and three casts were made after WWII. It is a floating angel that is witness to the carnage of WWI, a witness overseeing the conflict. The face is that of his friend Käthe Kollwitz.

Barlach was a German expressionist sculptor, printmaker and writer. Initially he supported the war but after his participation he changed and started producing sculptures protesting the war. He came into conflict with the Nazi Party and was labelled a degenerate artist.

Bio:Barlach

Ernst Barlach (1870-1938)

He studied in Hamburg and then, because of his obvious talent, at the Royal Art School in Dresden. At this time he worked in the Art Nouveau style and produced illustration for an Art Nouveau magazine. He lacked commercial success and travelled for eight weeks in Russia in 1906 which became one of his major influences. On his return his financial circumstances improved as he received a salary from an art dealer in exchange for his sculptures. His style changed and he focused on hands and faces with the body covered in heavy Gothic drapery. In 1909 he spent ten months in Florence before settling in northern Germany where he spent the rest of his life. He was a patriotic supporter of the war which he believed would usher in a new artistic age but three months as an infantry soldier he was discharged because of a heart problem and returned a pacifist.

After the war his fame increased, and he received many awards and he rejected a number of honorary degrees and teaching positions. From 1927 onwards he made many anti-war sculptures which brought him into conflict with the Nazi Party which was increasing in power. His war memorial for the city of Magdeburg was heavily criticized for representing German soldiers displaying horror, pain and desperation. The sculpture was hidden by his friends and returned to Magdeburg Cathedral after WWII.

In 1936 his work was confiscated as 'degenerate art' by the Nazi Party during an exhibition he held with the German artist Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945). Kollwitz was the model for the face of The Floating One. Most of Barlach's work was confiscated including his war memorials and he was prohibited from working as a sculptor and his membership of the academies was cancelled. He died from heart failure in 1938 aged 68. As well as his sculpture he wrote eight dramas, two novels and an autobiography.

REMEMBRANCE: WAR MEMORIALS AND SOCIETY (ROOM 2)

The armistice of 11 November 1918 declared the end of the war. Ceremonies of communal mourning promoted unity in the times of social and political unrest that followed. In July 1919, Britain and France marked the end of the war with public processions. Both used an empty tomb, or cenotaph, as a focus for national remembrance. The tomb of the unknown soldier specifically commemorated the absent and unidentified dead. These memorials were inaugurated in London and Paris on 11 November 1920. The end of the war and the culture of commemoration were disputed in Germany. No national memorial existed until 1931. Instead, individual cities commissioned memorials. Local monuments were also erected in France and Britain, giving communities a site for remembrance. In the military cemeteries in France and Belgium, memorial sculpture marked the sacrifices of men in all three armies. Architectural memorials such as the Cenotaph were deliberately abstract to represent all citizens. Memorial sculptures included both symbolic figures and detailed representations of contemporary soldiers. These predominantly depicted white bodies. There were few official memorials to the servicemen from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean who served with the British, French and German armies.

Most war memorials are still in place and so it was difficult to assemble works for this room.

Charles Sargeant Jager (1885-1934), maquettes, the originals are the Royal Artillery Memorial at Hyde Park Corner and the Great Western Railway War Memorial next to platform 1, Paddington Railway Station

Celebrating the ordinary soldier had previously been unusual but became common after WWI in England, France and Germany.

Germany was regionalized and complex. There was no national memorial

until 1931.

Ernst Barlach, *The Floating One*, was controversial and was melted down but the artist kept the mould and three casts were made after WWII. It is a floating angel that is witness to the carnage of WWI, a witness overseeing the conflict. The face is that of his friend Käthe Kollwitz.

No bodies were repatriated to England or Germany so many memorials are in France and Belgium.

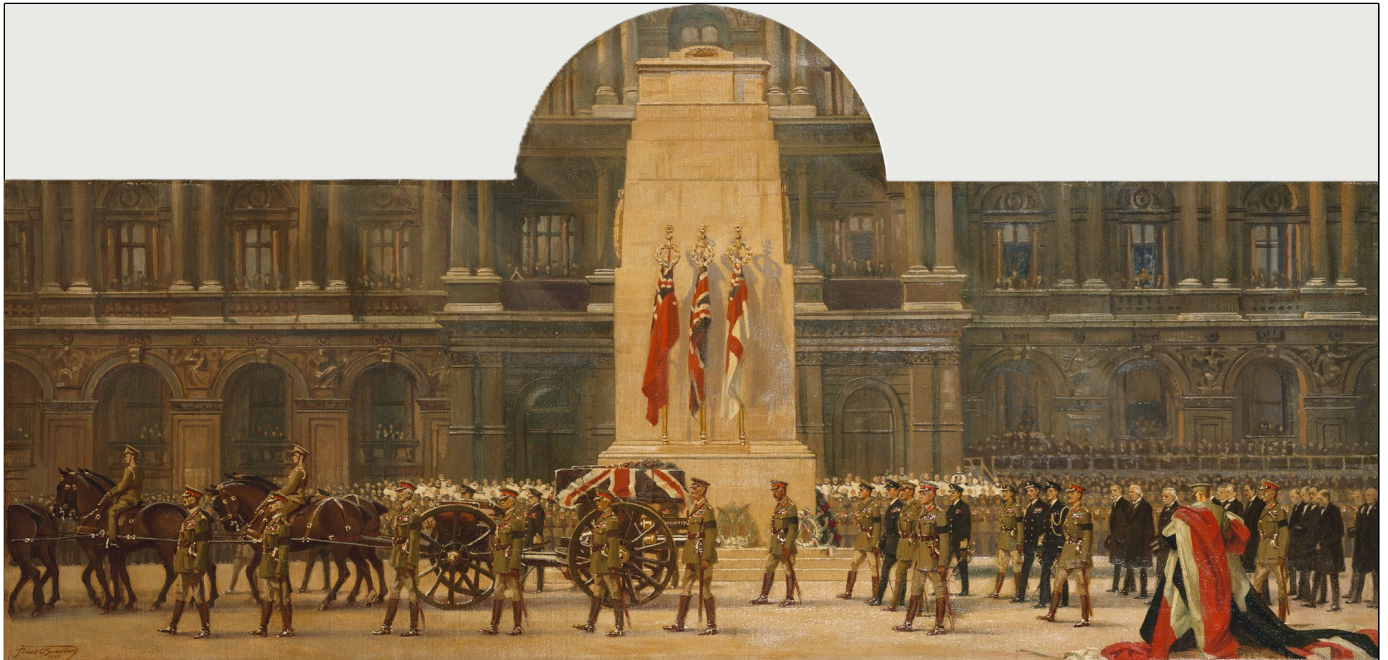
Frank O Salisbury (1874-1962), *The Passing of the Unknown Warrior*, King George V Chief Mourner, Whitehall, 11 November 1920, 1920 (the cenotaph, empty tomb), as an architectural symbol.

There is generally little diversity in memorials that are figurative, most show a soldier.

At Tate Modern in July 2018 there was an exhibition of the work of William Kentridge to commemorate the contribution of African men and women in WWI.

References

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/jun/04/brush-with-death-first-world-war-art-tate-britain>



Frank O. Salisbury (1874–1962), *The Passing of the Unknown Warrior, King George V Chief Mourner, Whitehall, 11 November 1920*, 1920, 71.7 x 147.8 cm, Royal Collection

Frank O. Salisbury (1874–1962), *The Passing of the Unknown Warrior, King George V Chief Mourner, Whitehall, 11 November 1920*, 1920, 71.7 x 147.8 cm, Royal Collection

Barlach carved his grief in wood and bronze — **Francis Owen Salisbury** recorded his in paint, and in doing so secured a place at the very heart of British national life. Salisbury, born in **1874**, came to painting through stained glass, an apprenticeship in his brother's workshop that gave him an extraordinary command of light, detail, and monumental composition. He attended the Royal Academy Schools on a scholarship, and between **1899** and **1943** exhibited seventy works at the Summer Exhibition — yet, to his lasting frustration, he was never offered membership. The painting before us records the procession of **the Unknown Warrior** past **Lutyens's Cenotaph** in Whitehall on **11 November 1920**, with **King George V** walking as Chief Mourner behind the gun carriage. George V commissioned this smaller version for Buckingham Palace after viewing Salisbury's sketches made on the day itself. A larger version entered the Government Art Collection. The Cenotaph had begun as a temporary timber and plaster structure for

the **Peace Day celebrations of July 1919**. A million people visited it; at one point the flowers were ten feet deep. Its permanence was demanded by public feeling rather than official plan, and the Portland stone version was completed just in time for this ceremony. John Galsworthy called it a "monument to the dread of swank" — and that restraint was entirely deliberate.

Notes

The full-size painting itself is 141 x 311 cm and is in the Government Art Collection. This is a smaller version commissioned by George V for Buckingham Palace.

Francis or 'Frank' Owen Salisbury was an English artist who specialised in portraits, large historic events, stained glass and book illustration. He became one of the greatest society portrait painters of his generation and in his heyday, he made a fortune on both sides of the Atlantic and was known as "Britain's Painter Laureate". His art was steadfastly conservative, and he was a vitriolic critic of Modern Art – particularly of his contemporaries Picasso, Chagall and Mondrian.

"A view of the procession to the Unknown Warrior passing Lutyens' Cenotaph in Whitehall, 11th November 1920, with King George V, the Chief Mourner behind the gun carriage.

This painting, commissioned by King George V to hang in Buckingham Palace, is a study for a larger painting in the Government Art Collection. It records an event of national significance and today's Armistice Service developed out of this occasion. A committee was established to devise a fitting ceremony to mark all those who had died in the Great War. The Dean of Westminster suggested that one of the unknown men who fell and were buried in France should be exhumed, conveyed to England, and be given an imposing military funeral in Westminster Abbey on 11 November 1920, the date of the unveiling of the permanent Cenotaph memorial.

We see King George V, the Chief Mourner behind the gun carriage and Julian Hedworth George Byng, Viscount Byng of Vimy, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, King Edward VIII, John Denton Pinkstone French, 1st Earl of Ypres, King George VI, Douglas Haig, 1st Earl Haig, Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, Henry Sinclair Horne, Baron Horne, David Lloyd George, 1st Earl

Lloyd-George of Dwyfor, Paul Sanford Methuen, 3rd Baron Methuen, Louis Mountbatten, Earl Mountbatten of Burma, Clive Wigram, 1st Baron Wigram, Sir Henry Hughes Wilson, 1st Baronet

The ceremony was masterminded by Lord Curzon, and it was to be an understated, low-key event, lacking in ostentation. It was decided that the National Anthem should be played when King George V arrived in Whitehall; that he should unveil the Cenotaph 'without ceremony'; that there should be two minutes silence at 11 o'clock; and that then the 'Last Post' should be then sounded. Here was a low-key, understated ceremonial; totally lacking in ostentation, and it was Curzon who insisted that 'fashionable society would be excluded', and that widows, ex-servicemen and members of the armed forces would be allowed to gather in Whitehall.

'The Times' reported that: 'The first thundering strokes of Big Ben boomed out, louder it seemed than ever one heard it in the stillness of dawn. The King turned to face the Cenotaph and by the touch of a button, released the flags... They fell away, and it stood, clear and wonderful in its naked beauty. Big Ben ceased, and the very pulse of time stood still.'

Salisbury, who had recently completed his painting of the Thanksgiving Service at St Paul's, attended the ceremony and recalled: 'I made two sketches, one of the unveiling of the Cenotaph, the other of the service in the Abbey, and in a few days took them to the King, who called in the Queen to have a look at them. He said I must paint both pictures to hang in a public building, and in time for the Academy; and he desired me also to paint a smaller picture of the unveiling of the Cenotaph for Buckingham Palace.'" (Royal Collection website)

Notes

The cenotaph (empty tomb) is an abstract architectural symbol representing all those who died. It was originally intended to be a temporary structure and was made from wood and plaster to the design of Sir Edwin Lutyens for the 19 July 1919 Peace Day celebrations. The peace treaty had been signed on 28 June 1919 less than a month before. A million people visited it and at one point the flowers were ten feet deep. As so many people paid their respects it was decided to erect a permanent structure, and this was completed by 11 November 1920. It was made from Portland stone by Holland, Hannen & Cubitts the firm responsible for many famous London buildings including London County Hall (1922), the Senate Building of the University of London

(1937) and the Royal Festival Hall (1951). The wooden structure was dismantled as used as the bases for models of the Cenotaph which were sold to raise money for blinded soldiers and sailors. The lack of ornament was a result of a conscious decision to erect a plain, secular structure. Ostentatious decoration was not considered appropriate in a monument to a war, which was already being interpreted as a tragedy. In John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* (1922), one character describes the Cenotaph as a "Monument to the dread of swank."

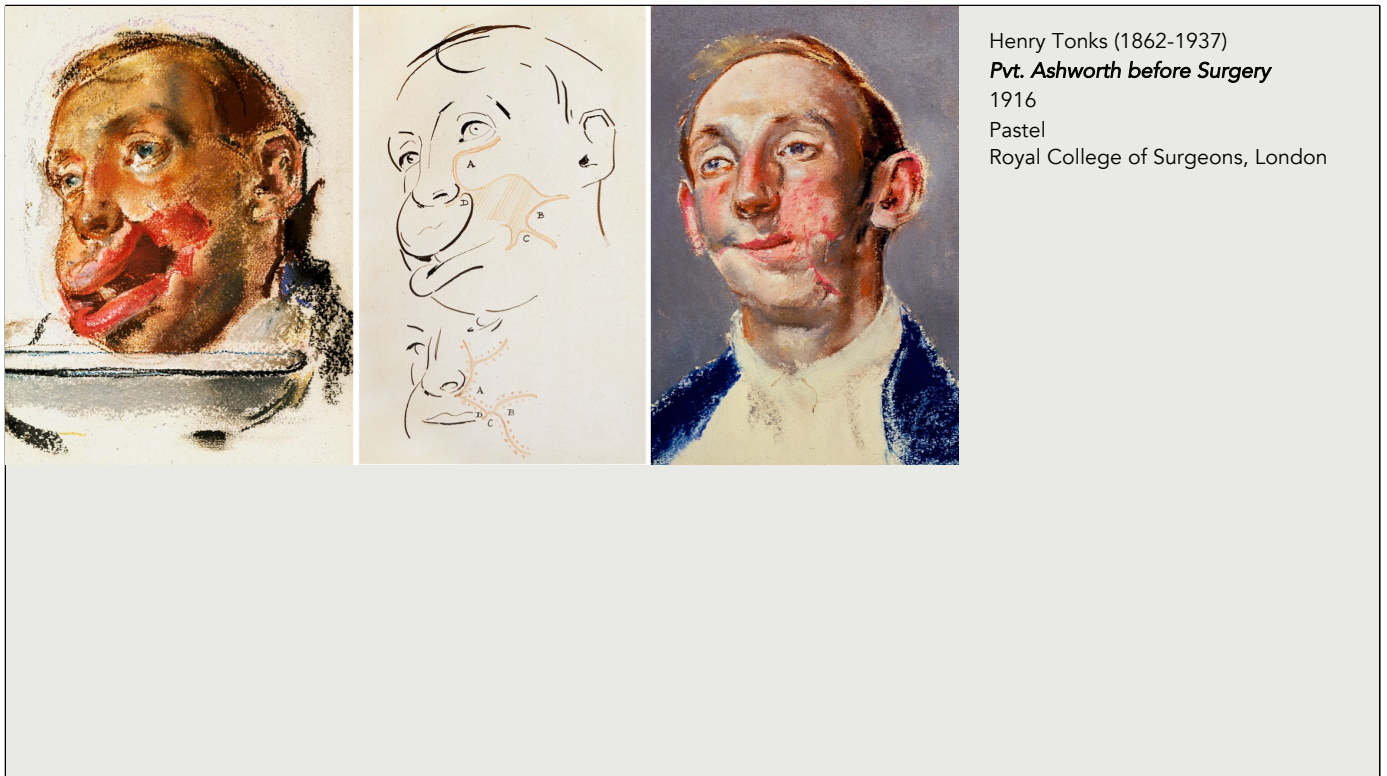
The building behind the Cenotaph is the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and Downing Street is to the right, King Charles Street to the left.

Bio:Salisbury

Francis ('Frank') Owen Salisbury (1874-1962) was a delicate child who was educated at home by his sister. He started by repairing bicycles for his father but transferred to his brother's stained-glass company where he rapidly acquired exceptional skills in painting the detail on the glass before firing. His brother sponsored him to attend art school three days a week and he won a scholarship to the Royal Academy School where he won two silver medals and two scholarships. Between 1899 and 1943 he had 70 works exhibited at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition but to his disappointment was never offered membership. He married in 1901 and had a number of children including twin daughters. He painted his twin daughters for an hour every morning and began his career with child portraiture. He was known for the rapidity with which he painted. He was introduced into society by Lord Wakefield and painted many society portraits in the UK and the US including six US Presidents and 25 members of the Royal family including the first portrait of HM Queen Elizabeth II. He also painted over 40 large canvases of historical and national events, a field in which he was virtually unchallenged until 1951. Ironically, although he was a pacifist it was his war art that served as his introduction to Royalty, the aristocracy and overseas politicians. He was a Methodist who took his faith seriously and never drank alcohol and never painted on a Sunday. Throughout his life he regarded stained glass as his favourite medium.

References

<https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/404458/the-passing-of-the-unknown-warrior-king-george-v-chief-mourner-whitehall-11>



Henry Tonks (1862-1937), Pvt. Ashworth before Surgery, 1916, Royal College of Surgeons, London

The Portland stone of Lutyens's Cenotaph memorialised the dead in public view — **Henry Tonks** worked on a very different kind of record, one the public was never meant to see. Tonks is best understood as two men in one: the formidable Slade professor who shaped a generation of British modernists, and the trained surgeon who never entirely set down his clinical eye. When war came he resumed medical work before becoming a lieutenant in the **Royal Army Medical Corps**, producing pastel drawings of facial injury cases at the Cambridge Military Hospital in Aldershot and at the **Queen's Hospital, Sidcup**, where the pioneering New Zealand surgeon **Harold Gillies** was developing what we now recognise as the foundations of plastic surgery. Gillies sought Tonks out specifically — he understood that a draughtsman's hand caught what a camera flattened. The pastels record not just wounds but surgical process: flaps of skin sutured across jawlines, incremental reconstructions across multiple operations. The case of **Private Walter Ashworth**, wounded on the first day of the

Somme in 1916, is among the most documented. Gillies noted that closing the wound required sacrificing lip length, leaving Ashworth with what he described as a whimsical, one-sided expression that was not entirely unpleasant. Tonks himself refused to exhibit the pastels, insisting they would attract what he called a bloodthirsty public seeking vicarious gratification. For most of the twentieth century they remained unseen, before entering the **Royal College of Surgeons** collection.

Notes

The eight painting shown were not produced as art to be shown in a gallery but as medical records to assist with the facial reconstruction.

Henry Tonks (1862-1937) was a surgeon and artist who became a famous teacher at the Slade. During the war he met the pioneering plastic surgeon Harold Delf Gillies (1882–1960, pronounced 'gill-eez'). An ambitious New Zealander twenty years Tonks' junior, Gillies had convinced the authorities of the urgent need for specialist centres to treat the facial casualties arriving back from the Front. Facial injuries outnumbered amputations but were far less acceptable to the general public. Pictures of amputees were shown but never serious facial injuries. Gillies sought out Tonks when he heard 'the great Henry Tonks' had been posted to Aldershot to work in the orderly room. Gillie was a keen amateur artists and understood the importance of before and after drawings to record his procedures. Gillie's unique approach was improve the appearance of the injured men and his approach to plastic surgery laid the groundwork for the field today.

'A notable example, detailed in the Gillies Archives at the Royal College of Surgeons, is Private Walter Ashworth, West Yorkshire Regiment (no. 1071), from Bradford, who was wounded on the first day of the Battle of the Somme in 1916. Tonks's first drawing (left) shows Ashworth waiting for a facial washout with sterile Milton solution. A rare surgical diagram (centre) shows the process to close the wound by suturing flaps of skin and tissue from the cheek and jaw. After three operations and discharge a year later, Gillies commented that it had been necessary to sacrifice some of the length of the lips to close the wound and that this had left his patient with a "whimsical, one-sided expression that, however, was not entirely unpleasant" (right).

Unfortunately, on Ashworth's return home this proved too much for his former employer and his fiancée to accept. However, he married one of her more supportive friends, and they successfully took up job opportunities offered by a move to Australia. Four decades later patient and surgeon met again, but the latter's offer of further improvement was turned down – perhaps as a result of Ashworth's having already undergone so much surgery, including shrapnel removal from his back, which had continued into the 1950s.

It was sometimes observed that the plastic-surgery patients benefited from the attention given to them by an artist, rather than a more perfunctory depiction by camera. However, Tonks was more concerned about another side-issue: that the pastels were 'rather dreadful subjects for the public view'. While other works by the artist, such as the previous painting, *Saline Infusion* (1915) and *An Advanced Dressing Station in France* (1918), also depict intense wartime imagery, Tonks refused to allow the pastels to be displayed at the Imperial War Museum. He insisted that 'they would be viewed by a bloodthirsty public seeking vicarious gratification', so for most of the 20th century they remained hidden away, before being acquired by the Royal College of Surgeons in London. They have now become one of the most requested loan items in the College's collection.' (Wellcome Foundation)

Henry Tonks (1862-1937) was a surgeon and artist and teacher at the Slade. He exhibited at the New England Art Club which was founded in 1885 and is still an active society. It was founded as an alternative to the Royal Academy by young English artists returning from studying in Paris. Among them were Thomas Cooper Gotch, Frank Bramley, John Singer Sargent, Philip Wilson Steer, George Clausen and Stanhope Forbes. Henry Tonks, Philip Wilson Steer and Frederick Brown became teachers at the Slade and they were all members of the New English Art Club. The Slade School of Fine Art is part of University College London and is consistently ranked the UK's top art and design educational institution. It was founded in 1868 by Felix Slade who bequeathed funds to establish three Chairs in fine art at Oxford, Cambridge and London universities.

Tonks became "the most renowned and formidable teacher of his generation". Two of its most important periods were immediately before, and immediately after, the turn of the twentieth century, described by Henry Tonks as its two 'crises of brilliance'. The first included the students Augustus

John, William Orpen and Percy Wyndham Lewis; the second – which has been chronicled in David Boyd Haycock's *A Crisis of Brilliance: Five Young British Artists and the Great War* (Old Street Publishing, 2009) – included the students Dora Carrington, Mark Gertler, Paul Nash, C.R.W. Nevinson and Stanley Spencer. At the start of the war Tonks resumed his medical career in Dorchester, where he did drawing of the refugee Auguste Rodin, and then in France and later Italy. He became a lieutenant in the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1916, and produced pastel drawings recording facial injury cases at the Cambridge military hospital in Aldershot and the Queen's Hospital, Sidcup. Tonks became an official war artist in 1918, and he accompanied John Singer Sargent on tours of the Western Front. In August 1918, they both witnessed a field of wounded men near Le Bac du Sud which became the basis for Sargent's vast canvas, *Gassed*. Tonks went to Archangel in Russia in 1919 as a war artist with a British expeditionary force. He succeeded Frederick Brown as Slade Professor of Fine Art from 1918 to 1930, although he initially turned down the appointment in favour of Walter Sickert, only taking it up when Sickert declined the position.

TRACES OF WAR: WOUNDED SOLDIERS (ROOM 3)

Soldiers' wounds represented an alternative memorial, visible in flesh rather than stone, and a constant reminder of the terrible cost of war. Disabled veterans in all three countries struggled to resume the lives they had led before military service but were represented in very different ways.

During the war the skills of artists were in demand to record the work of military hospitals and in Britain soldiers' war wounds were rarely depicted outside a medical context. The visibility of men with facial injuries - in daily life and art - was particularly sensitive. In France disabled veterans were highly visible. They attended the signing of the peace treaty at Versailles and featured prominently in the victory celebrations in 1919. The campaigning of the organization *Les gueules cassées* ('the broken faces', 'lay girl casay') ensured their continued prominence in the 1920s. In Germany, images of wounded or psychologically traumatized men circulated widely in anti-war literature and art. Artists such as Otto Dix and George Grosz criticized post-war German society by showing the marginalization and mistreatment of disabled veterans.

Wounded soldiers were recorded by artists as documentation and in

Germany as a political critique.

The Royal College of Surgeons has asked for no photographs to be taken of Henry Tonk's portraits as the pictures were only made for medical reasons at the time, not to be displayed in an art gallery. They have become one of the most moving records of the war. There are about fifty in total of which eight are shown in the exhibition. The issue of facial injuries is still with us with the war wounded from Afghanistan and Iraq.

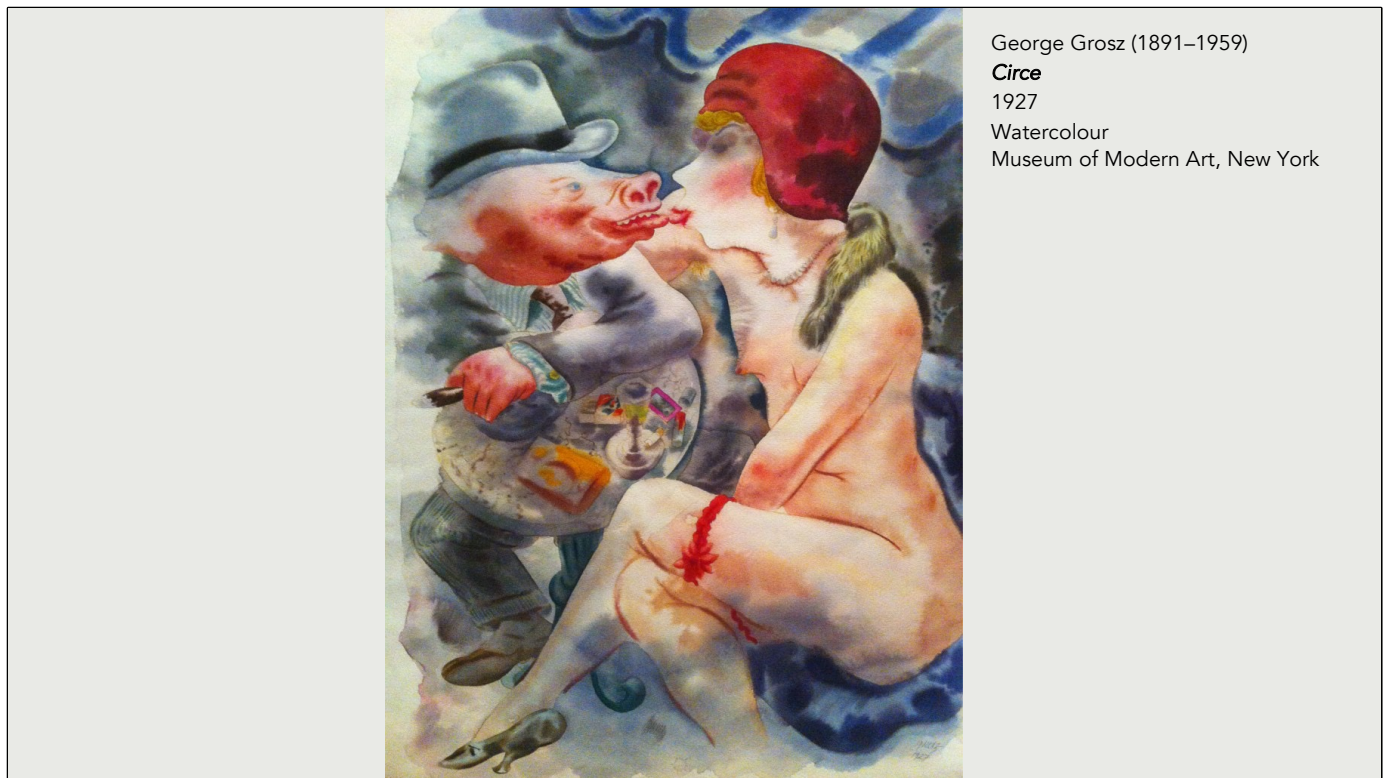
Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - There was also psychological injury, such as shell shock, muscular paralysis and uncontrollable movements. The small models are a rare sculptural representation of the condition.

Heinrich Hoerle's lithographs *Friendly Dream* and *Man with the Wooden Leg* from his *Cripple Portfolio*, 1920, directly represent unconscious interior states by drawing on aspects of fairy tale but are clearly the result of deep commitment to social and political principles.

Note 'The language and definitions of disability have changed significantly over the last 100 years. The titles of several works in this room include words that are now recognised as offensive. The term 'cripple', used to identify someone with a physical disability, was commonly used in the early twentieth century without the negative connotations it holds today.' (Tate)

References

<https://wellcomehistory.wordpress.com/2014/12/04/beautifully-hideous/>



George Grosz (1891–1959)
Circe
1927
Watercolour
Museum of Modern Art, New York

George Grosz (1891–1959), *Circe*, 1927, Museum of Modern Art, New York

From the private clinical record, we move into the street — and into one of the most corrosive visual indictments of Weimar Germany's social order. **George Grosz** was born Georg Ehrenfried Groß in Berlin in 1891, and he de-Germanised his name in 1916 as a deliberate act of protest against German nationalism. He later wrote, "I had utter contempt for mankind in general" — and his work makes that plain. His drawing technique, characterised by staring eyes and angular line, generates persistent menace even in apparently mundane scenes. The painting on screen draws on the classical myth of **Circe**, Homer's enchantress who transforms men into swine, to skewer the economic brutality of **Weimar Berlin**. A well-tailored industrialist, suit immaculate, sits opposite a naked prostitute. Heather Hess, writing for the German Expressionist Digital Archive Project, notes that Grosz renders his subject's "porcine features as meticulously as the exterior trappings of wealth" — the satire cuts both ways. Grosz is routinely labelled a German Expressionist, but he actively rejected that tradition alongside

Otto Dix and Max Beckmann, preferring first **Berlin Dada** and then **Neue Sachlichkeit** — New Objectivity — a movement defined by hard, practical engagement with social reality rather than romantic inwardness. It ended abruptly in **1933**, when Grosz emigrated to America as the Nazis rose to power.

Notes

This is by George Grosz (pronounced 'gross') and documents the uncomfortable truth behind the bourgeois façade in Berlin. He shows the rich industrialists who profited from the war as pigs and draws attention to the widespread prostitution often forced on former middle-class women, who had lost everything because of the war, in order to survive.

Berlin in the 1920s was a world leader in science, the arts, film, government, industry and many other areas. Well known names who worked in Berlin include Einstein, Grosz, Berthold Brecht, and British writers such as W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender and Christopher Isherwood. Politically, it was seen as a left-wing stronghold and a culture developed that shocked the middle-class residents and many visitors. Clubs opened for homosexuals, lesbians, transvestites and even nudists. Prostitution became entrenched and crime flourished. The city became a centre for drug taking and criminal gangs controlled the black market. The University of Berlin became a major world-leading intellectual centre for science between 1914 and 1933 when the Nazi party came to power. Between 1921 and 1923 Germany suffered from hyperinflation as the result of borrowing to fund the war and reparations demanded by the Treaty of Versailles.

Grosz was a Dadaist and a 'New Objectivity' artist. He was fascinated by street life and appears to have loved the ugliness of it. He uses various techniques, such as staring eyes, to create a feeling of violence and menace. His style softened around 1924 when he got married and had a child and in 1933 he emigrated to America and reverted to being a graphic artist.

Grosz shows victims, such as dead soldiers, crippled victims of war, beggars and prostitutes and those that were guilty such as war-mongers in the military, nationalistic politicians, the bourgeoisie who continued to indulge in luxurious living despite the war and rich industrialists who had profited from

the war.

"Reprising a theme he had often explored before, in this watercolour George Grosz shows that beneath their well-dressed and civilized exteriors, men are nothing but pigs. Grosz used the classical myth of Circe, the enchantress who transformed Odysseus's overindulgent men into swine, to attack the ongoing economic disparities of Weimar society. Grosz heightens this satire by rendering the male figure's exaggerated porcine features as meticulously as the exterior trappings of wealth and social standing. Wearing a well-tailored suit with a fresh shirt, perfectly knotted tie, and pristine shoe soles that seem to have barely touched the dirty city streets, this character wants for nothing and can afford everything. He sits across a café table from a prostitute, naked except for a few alluring accessories that her body had financed. The soft wash of colour provides a further contrast to the biting social commentary." (Excerpt from Heather Hess, German Expressionist Digital Archive Project, German Expressionism: Works from the Collection, 2011).

Confusingly George Grosz, Otto Dix and Max Beckman are often described as German Expressionists but they rejected what they saw as the self-involvement and romantic longings of the Expressionists in favour of Dada and later New Objectivity (in German *Neue Sachlichkeit*). Although principally describing a tendency in German painting, the term came to characterize an attitude to life in Weimar Germany which influenced art, literature, music, and architecture. It did not imply philosophical objectivity but a turn towards a practical engagement with the world—a business-like attitude, understood by Germans as intrinsically American. The movement essentially ended in 1933 with the fall of the Weimar Republic and the rise of the Nazis to power.

Circe is the enchantress who, in Homer's *Odyssey*, turns Odysseus's shipmates into pigs. It is one of many farcical caricatures of sexually available women and boorishly lewd men Grosz made during the 1910s and 1920s

Bio:Grosz

George Grosz (born Georg Ehrenfried Groß, 1891-1959, pronounced 'gross') was born in Berlin, Germany to devout Lutheran parents and grew up in Poland. He studied in Dresden and became known in the 1920s for his depiction of life in Berlin. He was a well known member of the Berlin Dada and New Objectivity group. He volunteered in 1914 to avoid being sent to the front. In 1915 he was discharged because of ill health and called up again in 1917 but discharged four months later. In 1916 he de-Germanized his

name to protest against German nationalism. He later wrote, 'I lived in a world of my own. My drawings expressed my despair, hate and disillusionment. I had utter contempt for mankind in general'. In 1918 he joined the Communist Party and was arrested but escaped using fake documents. In 1921 he was fined for insulting the army and his art work *Gott mit uns* destroyed. In 1922 he travelled to Russia and met Lenin but was unimpressed by communism and resigned his membership of the party. In 1928 he was prosecuted for blasphemy and was acquitted after two appeals. He stated at the time that he was neither Christian or pacifist but felt compelled to create the pictures. He emigrated to the United States in 1932/33 when the Nazi Party came to power. He went to the US to teach and became a US citizen in 1938. In America he taught and changed his style of painting. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and letters in 1954 and although he was a US citizen he relocated to Berlin in 1959 where he died two months later after falling down stairs following a night of drinking.



George Grosz (1893–1959)
Suicide (Selbstmörder)
 100 x 77.5 cm
 Tate, London

George Grosz (1893–1959), Suicide (Selbstmörder), 100 x 77.5 cm,
 Tate, London

Grosz's satirical assault on Weimar society was not only economic — it extended to the sheer human wreckage the war had left behind. The painting on screen is a nocturnal vision of **Berlin** at its most degraded: dogs roam past the bodies of suicides abandoned in blood-red streets, one man hanged, another shot. In the same scene, an aged client visits a prostitute — corruption and death sharing the same indifferent pavement. To understand why Grosz painted this, you have to reckon with what the war did to him personally. His two periods of military service, ending in discharge on psychiatric grounds in **1917**, confirmed every suspicion he already held about German militarism and the society that sustained it. The drawings he produced through these years, he wrote, expressed "my despair, hate and disillusionment" — and that word **disillusionment** is doing real work here. Grosz had no illusions left to lose. The street in this picture is not a symbol of corruption so much as a factual report on it. Where the previous Circe painting attacked the **Neue Sachlichkeit** target of class

hypocrisy, this work attacks something rawer: the collective abandonment of the most damaged human beings the war produced, left to die in the dark while the city moves on.

Notes

This work shows dogs roaming past the abandoned bodies of suicides in red nocturnal streets. One man has hanged himself while another has shot himself. The inclusion of an aged client visiting a prostitute reflects the pervasive moral corruption in Berlin during the war years.

Grosz's experience in the trenches deepened his intense loathing for German society. He later wrote, 'I lived in a world of my own. My drawings expressed my despair, hate and disillusionment. I had utter contempt for mankind in general'.



Otto Dix (1891-1969)
The War Cripples: With Self-Portrait
 1920
 Unknown (believed destroyed in World War II)

Otto Dix (1891-1969), *The War Cripples: With Self-Portrait*, 1920, Unknown (believed destroyed in World War II)

Grosz's ravaged Berlin street leads us directly to his friend and fellow traveller **Otto Dix**, who brought an equally unsparing eye to the human cost of the war — and a biographical investment in it that was, if anything, even deeper. The work on screen is **War Cripples**, made in **1920**. Four veterans march in procession through a German street, proudly wearing their decorations, apparently oblivious to their own devastation: missing limbs replaced by prosthetics, faces reconstructed or simply gone. Richard Cork, writing in **A Bitter Truth**, describes this period as an "obsessive, savage and immensely disturbing sequence of war cripple paintings," and the word obsessive is right — Dix returned to this subject again and again because he could not let it rest. The composition is deliberately frieze-like, flattening the figures against the picture surface in the manner of a Greek temple relief — war heroes rendered in the language of ancient heroism, except the heroism is exposed as grotesque. The **MoMA** note points out the darkest irony: the veterans are passing a shoemaker's shop, a trade for

which, collectively, they now have almost no use. **Dennis Crockett** argues that Dix attacked simultaneously the military, the public, and the veterans themselves — a three-way indictment, not simple sympathy.

Notes

This is Dix's first scathing critic of the war and German society. The men proudly march down the German streets unaware that they are not seen as the glorious heroes they imagine themselves to be. The figures are both men and machines and they are presented like a flattened frieze on a Greek temple showing their war heroes. After the war Germans struggled with their identity and were desperate to restore their pride by redefining themselves as heroes. Dix is declaring there is no heroism in war, only death, destruction and decay. As the years passed Germany was unable to come to terms with its defeat or its responsibility for the war.

"[Dix] Felt repelled by the sight of ex-soldiers exposing their deformations in the street. They became, for him, a symbol of the disillusionment engendered by the war, which he had initially greeted with such bull-necked aggression in 1914. Now all the Nietzschean hopes of renewal through destruction had vanished, and the enraged Dix devoted most of his energy in 1920 to an obsessive, savage and immensely disturbing sequence of war cripple paintings." (Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde. Art and the Great War* (New Haven: Yale, University Press, 1994)). This image is a print as it is believed the painting was destroyed in World War 2.

Dix attacked the military for butchering his generation, the public... for its fascination with these pathetic, reconstituted veterans and the cripples themselves for their undiminished national pride" ('The Most Famous Painting of the "Golden Twenties"? Otto Dix and the Trench Affair', Dennis Crockett, *Art Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 1, *Uneasy Pieces* (Spring, 1992), pp. 72-80).

"War veterans in full military dress march along a city street. Such horrifically maimed and disfigured men were far from uncommon in Germany after World War I, when 80,000 amputees returned home from the front. Reliant on prosthetics, canes, and crutches, these veterans have become as mechanized as the war that claimed their flesh. Yet even while depicting the tragic results of the conflict, Dix imbues the work with caustic humor: the veterans are passing a shoemaker (identified by the boot in the shop window and the word *Schuhmacherei*), a service for which, thanks to the war, they now have limited need. *Kriegskrüppel* (War cripples) is one of Dix's earliest attempts at

using drypoint, which he learned from the artist Conrad Felixmüller in Dresden. He based this print on a painting, which the Nazis later condemned as degenerate and destroyed." (Museum of Modern Art)

Bio:Dix

Otto Dix (born Wilhelm Heinrich Otto Dix , 1891-1969) was born in Germany, the son of an iron worker and a seamstress. He spent hours in his cousin's studio and served an apprenticeship with a painter. In 1910 he entered the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts and when the war started he enthusiastically volunteered. He was assigned as a non-commissioned officer of a machine gun unit on the Western front in 1915 and served at the Battle of the Somme. In 1917 he was transferred to the Eastern front and in 1918 back to the Western front for the Spring Offensive. He was awarded the Iron Cross and was promoted to the equivalent of a Company Serjeant Major. He was profoundly affected by what he saw in the war and suffered from recurring nightmares. After the war he went to Dresden and in 1920 he met George Grosz and became influenced by Dada and the German Expressionists. He later joined the Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity). In 1924, he joined the Berlin Secession and developed an increasingly realistic style that used thin glazes of oil paint over a tempera underpainting, in the manner of the old masters. He was critical of German society and drew attention to the bleaker side of life, unsparingly depicting prostitution, violence, old age and death. His 1923 painting *The Trench*, which depicted dismembered and decomposed bodies of soldiers after a battle, caused such an outcry that it was hidden behind a curtain. In 1925 the then-mayor of Cologne, Konrad Adenauer, cancelled the purchase of the painting and forced the director of the museum to resign. When the Nazi Party came to power in 1933 they regarded Dix as a degenerate artist and had him sacked from his post as an art teacher at the Dresden Academy. *The Trench* and *War Cripples* were exhibited in the state-sponsored Munich 1937 exhibition of degenerate art, *Entartete Kunst*. *War Cripples* was later burned. *The Trench* was long thought to have been destroyed too, but there are indications the work survived until at least 1940. Its later whereabouts are unknown. It may have been looted during the confusion at the end of the war. It has been called 'perhaps the most famous picture in post-war Europe ... a masterpiece of unspeakable horror'. Like all artists he had to join an organisation run by Goebbels's Cultural Ministry and had to promise to paint only inoffensive landscapes. In

1939 he was arrested on a trumped-up charge of plotting to kill Hitler but he was later released. At the end of World War II he was conscripted into the Volkssturm, captured by French troops and released in 1946. He returned to Dresden and remained there until 1966. After the war he was an internationally recognised artist and was awarded many prizes for his work.

Otto Dix was one of the greatest realist painters of the twentieth century. He was a portraitist when it was unfashionable among avant garde artists and regarded as a lower grade occupation. Dix said, "it is one of the most exciting and difficult tasks for a painter".

He fought in WWI from 1915 including fighting in the battle of the Somme. He earned the Iron Cross and was an enthusiastic soldier but the experience affected him deeply. Ten years after the war finished he produced a group of etchings entitled *Der Krieg* (The War). Dix said, "For years, [I] constantly had dreams in which I was forced to crawl through destroyed buildings".

Dix was inspired by the Old Masters and he studied their techniques including the use of egg tempera. His friend George Grosz jokingly called him 'Otto Hans Baldung Dix' after the German Old master Hans Baldung Grien.

He painted what he called 'life undiluted' and was a supporter of New Objectivity a form of realism with a social edge. Dix said about the supporters of the movement, "We want to see things completely naked, clear, almost without art."

Dix was dismissed from his professorship by the Nazis in 1933 for committing a "violation of the moral sensibilities and subversion of the militant spirit of the German people" in his painting.

He was born in Unterhaus , the son of an iron foundry worker and a seamstress. He spent hours in the studio of his cousin who was an artist and he was encouraged in art by his teacher. Between 1906 and 1910 he served as an apprentice painter and began painting landscapes. In 1910 he entered what is now the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts although at the time it specialised in applied arts. When the war started he enthusiastically enlisted and was assigned to the field artillery where he was made a non-commissioned officer in which capacity he fought in the battle of the Somme. In 1917 he was transferred to the eastern front and then in 1918 back to

Flanders where he fought in the German Spring Offensive. He was awarded an Iron Cross, was wounded in the neck and took pilot training lessons. He represented his traumatic war experiences in many of his works including perhaps his most famous, *The War Triptych* (above) painted in 1929-32.

After the war he moved to Dresden where he founded the Dresden Succession Group. In 1920 he met George Grosz and, influenced by Dada, began incorporating collage elements. He exhibited in the Dada Fair in Berlin and the German Expressionists exhibition in Darmstadt. By 1924 he was using the techniques of the Old Masters and joined the Berlin Succession. In 1923 his painting *The Trench* caused such controversy because of its dismembered and decomposed bodies that it was hidden behind a curtain. In 1925 he contributed to the New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*) exhibition in Mannheim. His work was extremely critical of German society and depicted sexual murder, prostitution, violence, old age and death.

When the Nazis came to power in Germany, they regarded Dix as a degenerate artist and had him sacked from his post as an art teacher at the Dresden Academy. His painting *War Cripples* was burned by the Nazis. *The Trench* was also thought to have been destroyed but it may have survived. He was forced to join the Reich Chamber of Fine Arts and had to promise to paint only inoffensive landscapes. In 1939 he was arrested on a trumped up charge but later released. During WWII he was conscripted into the people's army and was later captured by the French but released at the end of the war. He returned to Dresden where he remained until 1966. He received many awards after the war and painted religious allegories and post-war suffering. He died in 1969 following a second stroke.



Otto Dix (1891-1969)
Prager Straße (Prague Street)
 1920
 101 x 81 cm
 Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany

Otto Dix (1891-1969), *Prager Straße (Prague Street)*, 1920, 101 x 81 cm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany

The frieze of crippled veterans gives way here to another of Dix's first political paintings from the same period: **Prague Street**, made in **1920**, immediately after the terms of **Versailles** became brutally clear to ordinary Germans. Two disabled veterans, from visibly different social classes, beg on a city pavement while prosperous passers-by look straight through them. The shop window behind them offers prosthetics, corsets, wigs, and wax female body parts — the commodified fragments of broken bodies reduced to retail display. An immaculately gloved hand drops a worthless postage stamp into an outstretched palm; on the right, the rounded, flesh-coloured rear of a well-dressed woman disappears out of frame. Dix is precise about that detail: the sexualised body-part rhymes deliberately with the mannequin parts in the window, signalling a sexuality permanently denied to the men below. And pinned to the wall, almost casually, is a flyer reading **Juden Raus!** — "Jews Out!" — antisemitic agitation already seeping into the visual noise of everyday Berlin. *Prague Street*

belongs to a cluster of works — alongside **The Matchseller**, **Skat Players**, and **The Barricade** — in which Dix catalogues kitsch, religious relics, and human wreckage with equal contempt. By the **1930s**, the Nazis classified this entire body of work as **Entartete Kunst** — degenerate art — and banned it outright.

Notes

Another of Dix's first political paintings after the war. It was painted after the terms of the Treaty of Versailles became clear. Notice the flyer with 'Juden Raus!' ('Jews Out!') on it.

Dix created four similar works, *Prague Street*, *The Matchseller*, *Skat Players* and *The Barricade* showing permanently disabled men and other back from the war showing the detritus of war and 'civilization' with derisory religious relics, and kitsch that have been torn apart by war. Monstrous prostitutes recall the monstrosity of the front. Dix wanted to confront his contemporaries with the realities of war. In the 1930s the Nazi Party came to power and his work was considered to undermine moral and was banned.

We see two disabled men from different social classes reduced to begging on the streets. They are in front of a shop window offering prosthetics, corsets, wigs and female body parts. The beggars are ignored by passers-by who have done well out of the war. An immaculately gloved hand drops a worthless postage stamp into the hand of the one above. On the right the rounded rear of a woman is rapidly disappearing. This symbolic sexualised and flesh-coloured body-part draws attention to a sexuality denied to the men which is echoed in the body parts in the window. Dix is drawing attention to the decadence, cruelty and uncaring nature of post-war society in Germany.



Otto Dix (1891-1969), **Metropolis**, 1927-28, 181 x 404 cm, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Stuttgart

Otto Dix (1891-1969), **Metropolis**, 1927-28, 181 x 404 cm,
Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Stuttgart

The shift from Prague Street's pavement beggars to this work is a shift in scale and ambition. **Metropolis**, painted as a triptych in **1928**, is Dix's most comprehensive anatomy of **Weimar Germany's** social collapse — structured deliberately to echo a medieval altarpiece, the sacred form turned to entirely profane ends. The central panel blazes with a jazz band and immaculately dressed revellers in a **Berlin** nightclub — the hyperrich consuming pleasure as an obligation. The side panels frame that excess with the world outside: disabled veterans, amputees, and women driven into prostitution by economic desperation. On the right panel, a prostitute's fur wrap billows into a form that reads unmistakably as a giant vulva — Dix making the body itself a commodity, exactly as he did in Prague Street's shop window. The economic context is not background; it is the painting's argument. **German hyperinflation** gutted the middle classes entirely. In **1919**, a loaf of bread cost one mark; by **1923**, the same loaf cost one hundred billion marks. Savings dissolved overnight, and entire social strata were

pushed onto the street. Dix, who had volunteered for the Western Front, survived the **Battle of the Somme**, and earned the **Iron Cross**, understood that the men begging outside that nightclub had once been soldiers like himself.

Notes

In this next painting, Triptychon „Großstadt“, Dix as a double amputee watches as prostitutes flaunt themselves while a soldier, possibly dead lies on the cobbles. The right panel is dominated by a prostitute whose fur wrap takes on the form of a giant vulva while a seated soldier is again ignored by the prostitutes.

The political problems in Germany following World War I meant that the middle-class suffered through taxation and unemployment and society reduced to the unemployed and the super rich. The super rich lived for the day and adopted a hedonistic lifestyle. The unemployed look for simple solution and blamed the political elite. A large part of the unemployed were the disabled from WWI. The middle-class had to survive by begging and prostitution.

German hyperinflation in this period is legendary. Paper money became worthless, people had to carry sacks of money and prices increased during the day. In 1919, one loaf of bread cost 1 mark; by 1923, the same loaf of bread cost 100 billion marks.

This triptych by Otto Dix shows a cross section of society at the time. The centre panel shows the super rich enjoying themselves in a nightclub while in the left and right panels the streets outside are full of beggars, the disabled and prostitution. The left panel shows the lowest forms of prostitution and the right panel shows a different class of prostitute.

Otto Dix was a German painter and printmaker known for his harsh depictions of war and the Weimar Republic. As a child he worked in the studio of his cousin, who was a painter. Between 1906 and 1910 he painted his first landscapes and he then entered the Dresden Academy of Applied Arts. He enthusiastically volunteered when the war started and became a non-commissioned officer at a machine gun post on the Western front where he took part in the Battle of the Somme. He was then transferred to the Eastern front in Russia and in 1918 he was transferred back to the Western front for

the German Spring Offensive. He earned the Iron Cross and was wounded in the neck. He was profoundly effected by what he saw in the war and represented his experiences in many paintings. He returned to Dresden where he met George Grosz and both were influenced by Dada and German Expressionism. His 1923 painting *The Trench* showing dismembered bodies caused such a furore that it was hidden behind a curtain. He drew attention to the bleaker side of life, unsparingly depicting prostitution, violence, old age and death. *Metropolis* is one of his most famous paintings. When the Nazis came to power in Germany, they regarded Dix as a degenerate artist and had him sacked from his post as an art teacher at the Dresden Academy. He continued by painting only landscapes but his 'degenerate' paintings were discovered and he was arrested on a trumped up charge but later released.

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<https://utopiadystopiawwi.wordpress.com/new-objectivity/otto-dix/metropolis/>



Otto Dix (1891-1969)
The Salon I
1921

Otto Dix (1891-1969), *The Salon I*, 1921

That unsparing social vision extends to one of Dix's most direct treatments of economic desperation. **Salon** shows women driven into prostitution not by moral failing but by survival — the same hyperinflationary crisis we have just seen crushing veterans onto the pavement outside the nightclub is what has pushed these women behind this door. The figures sit in near-silence, waiting. They wear cheap jewellery, their expressions flattened by routine. One woman on the left — a figure Dix used repeatedly across several paintings — attempts a smile and raises a breast in a gesture of professional invitation that reads, in Dix's rendering, as quietly heartbreaking rather than erotic. Repetition across canvases is deliberate: she is a type, a social fact, not an individual scandal. What saves Dix from voyeurism is precisely the attitude he articulated himself. He wrote, "I'm not that obsessed with making representations of ugliness. Everything I've seen is beautiful." That is not a provocation — it is a statement of documentary commitment. He was not hunting for depravity; he was recording a world he believed people had an obligation to see clearly.

The **Neue Sachlichkeit**, or **New Objectivity**, movement to which Dix belonged demanded exactly that unflinching witness — beauty and horror held in the same unflinching gaze.

Notes

Dix did not intend to shock only to tell the truth to ensure people would never forget the war. He was critical of the German Weimar republic and his paintings often showed the more seedy and miserable side of life including prostitution, violence, old age and death.

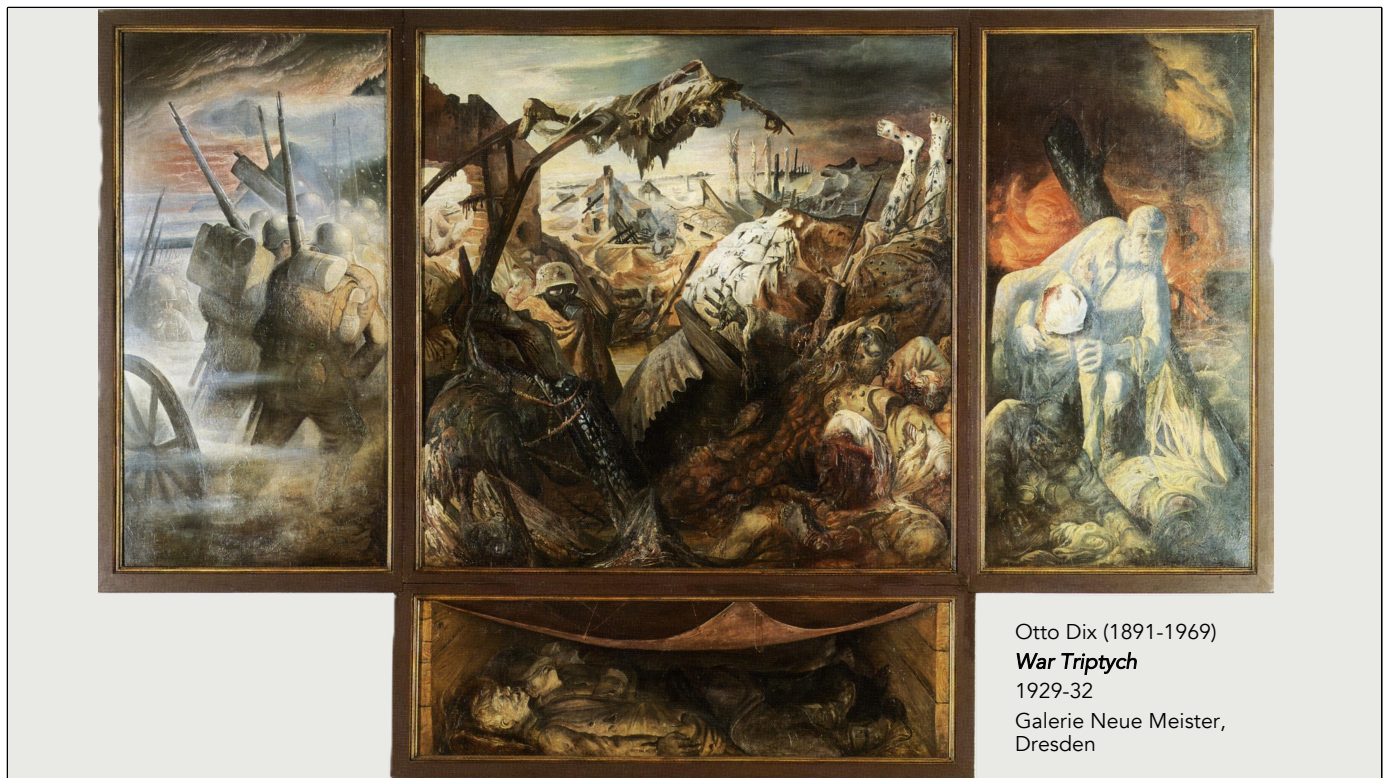
Here we see women driven to prostitution by the need to feed their families. They are wearing cheap jewellery and sit in silent contemplation waiting for the next client. The character on the left is seen in other paintings by Dix and she attempts a smile and raises a breast in an attempt to make it look more enticing.

Dix wrote, ""I'm not that obsessed with making representations of ugliness. Everything I've seen is beautiful.""

This is the time of hyperinflation when money was pushed around in barrow loads and a meal would increase in price between the beginning and end. The practical used money to light their fires during the freezing winter. It was also the time of the Cabaret and for the fortunate few, the talented and the pretty the cabaret life was one of endless parties and every imaginable vice.

References

<https://www.sartle.com/artwork/salon-otto-dix>



Otto Dix (1891-1969), War Triptych, 1929-32, Galerie Neue Meister, Dresden

That documentary commitment — that obligation to see clearly — culminates in the work that stands as Dix's most complete statement on the war: the **War Triptych** of 1932. Dix painted it in the technique of an Old Master, using **glazed tempera on wood panels**, a deliberate echo of **Matthias Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece** of the early sixteenth century. The parallel is exact and pointed. Grünewald painted his altarpiece for a monastery where monks treated skin disease, and his crucified Christ bears infected, pockmarked flesh. Dix answers that image with the bullet-scarred leg of a corpse in the central panel — the same theology of suffering flesh, drained of any promise of resurrection. The four panels follow a relentless sequence: troops moving out at dawn, the battlefield as a landscape of the dead, survivors returning broken, and in the **predella** — the horizontal strip below — soldiers lying together in a dugout that reads equally as tomb. That fourth panel draws directly on **Hans Holbein the Younger's Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb**, where salvation is conspicuously

absent. Dix was unambiguous about his purpose. He said, "I did not paint war pictures in order to prevent war. I would never have been so arrogant. I painted them to exorcise the experience of war." The **Nazis** called it unpatriotic, dismissed him as a **degenerate artist**, and removed him from his teaching post at the **Dresden Academy**.

Notes

War Triptych is painted in the style of an Old Master, the four panels reveal the First World War, showing troops setting off at daybreak (left panel), the battlefield as a place of death (central panel), soldiers returning from the hell of battle (right panel) and fallen soldiers resting in peace in a dugout (predella). The central panel reworks the themes in *The Trench*, a controversial work he produced in 1923 that is now lost.

The format of the painting reminds us of the Isenheim Altarpiece (1505-15) by Matthias Grünewald. The Isenheim altarpiece was painted for the monastery of St. Anthony in Isenheim. The monks there were known for their treatment of skin diseases, and the Christ in this altarpiece has infected skin. The pock marked skin is similar to the bullet scarred leg of the corpse on the right of the central panel. Both works are about humanity and what we are capable of doing to each other but it is not clear if Dix saw any possibility of salvation. The figure on the right looks as if he might be rescuing a friend but the future is uncertain.

In the predella, several soldiers are lying next to each other, possibly sleeping under an awning, or perhaps the dead in a tomb. This fourth panel is based on *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* by Hans Holbein the Younger.

"I did not paint war pictures in order to prevent war. I would never have been so arrogant. I painted them to exorcise the experience of war."

When the Nazis came to power they regarded him as a degenerate artist and that his work was unpatriotic. He was sacked as an art teacher at the Dresden Academy and he later moved to live on the shores of Lake Constance. Dix was accused by the Nazis of creating art that sapped "the will of the German people to defend themselves".

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Hannah Höch (1889-1978)
Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Beer-Belly of the Weimar Republic
 1919
 collage of pasted papers
 90 x 144 cm
 Staatliche Museen, Berlin

Hannah Höch (1889-1978), *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Beer-Belly of the Weimar Republic*, 1919, 90 x 144 cm, Staatliche Museen, Berlin

Dix was stripped of his teaching post and branded **degenerate** — a fate shared, as we'll see, by artists working in very different idioms from his. One of them was **Hannah Höch**, who came to the war's aftermath not through the trenches but through the radical Berlin art scene, and whose response produced one of the most densely charged images of the entire period. Höch's **Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Beer-Belly of the Weimar Republic**, made in **1919**, is a **photomontage** — a form she did more than anyone to establish as a serious political medium. The work crowds together newspaper and magazine cuttings: politicians, generals, dancers, machinery, and Dada artists themselves. **Friedrich Ebert**, head of the Weimar Republic, sits absurdly on a topless dancer's body. **Hindenburg** and the deposed **Kaiser Wilhelm II** occupy the upper right, still radiating authority even in defeat. In the lower left, **Karl Liebknecht**, the Communist leader who would be assassinated in

January 1919, calls viewers to join Dada. Höch herself appears pasted over a map showing which European countries had granted women the vote. The form enacts the argument. If the war had shattered society into fragments, Höch's scissors made that fragmentation the method as well as the message.

Notes

Hannah Höch and André Masson were instrumental in the birth of new art forms Dada and Surrealism. Perhaps Höch's most well known piece Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Beer-Belly of the Weimar Republic symbolizes her cutting through the patriarchal society. The piece is a direct criticism of the failed attempt at democracy imposed by the Weimar Republic. Cut with the Kitchen Knife is "an explosive agglomeration of cut-up images, bang in the middle of the most well-known photograph of the seminal First International Dada Fair in 1920" (Hudson). This photomontage is an excellent example of a piece that combines these three central themes in Höch's works: androgyny, the "New Woman" and political chaos. It combines images of political leaders with sports stars, mechanized images of the city, and Dada artists. The piece is literally created by cutting and metaphorically society had been fragmented by the war.

Photomontage was central to Dada in Berlin.

Top right are anti-Dadaists particularly politicians including Hindenburg and the deposed Kaiser Wilhelm II. Below them are other generals held responsible for the war and the defeat, some of whom are still in power.

Lower right are the Dadists including George Grosz, Wieland Herzfelde and Raoul Hausmann. In the centre is Lenin and Karl Marx and the art critic Theodore Daubler.

In the bottom left are scenes of mass gatherings including Karl Liebknecht German Communist Party leader who was arrested, tortured and assassinated.

Elements of the picture from

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32535532@N07/3179940950>

"Invest your money in Dada!"

The Anti-Dadaists

Einstein

Friedrich Ebert, head of the Weimar Republic on the head of a topless dancer
Head of General Hindenburg on the body of dancer Sent M'ahesa with Kaiser Wilhelm II to his right

"He, he ... young man Dada is not an art trend", that is it is not a temporary style

Head of German Expressionist artist Kathe Kollwitz pierced by a spear floating over the body of dancer Nikki Ipekoven

German minister of defence Gustav Noske

Heads of Lenin, Dadaist Johannes Baader and German Communist Party leader Karl Radek

Karl Marx

Head of writer and modern art critic Theodore Daubler on the head of a baby

Head of Dadist George Grosz and the writer Wieland Herzfeld brother of the photomontage artist Helmut Herzfeld (later John Heartfield)

Dadist Raoul Hausmann with whom Höch had a 'stormy' affair

Karl Liebknecht German Communist Party leader says 'Join Dada!'

Hannah Höch pasted on the top of a map of Europe showing countries where women have the vote

Bio:Hoch Bio:Höch

Hannah Höch (1889-1978) was born in Germany into an upper middle-class family. Her father was the supervisor of an insurance company and her mother an amateur painter. Although she attended school was taken out when she was 15 to care for her youngest sister. Her father believed 'a girl should get married and forget about studying art.' In 1912 she started classes in glass design which she chose over fine arts to please her father. At the outbreak of the war she returned home and joined the Red Cross. He returned to Berlin and entered an art class and began a relationship with Raoul Hausmann, a member of the Berlin Dada movement. Their relationship was described as 'stormy' and involved violence as he refused to leave his wife. He disparaged her views on art and she wrote a short story called 'The Painter' the subject of which is 'an artist who is thrown into an intense spiritual crisis when his wife asks him to do the dishes'. Their relationship ended in 1922. From 1916 to 1926 she worked in the handicrafts division of the publisher Ullstein Verlag. In 1926 she began a relationship with the Dutch writer and linguist Mathilda

('Til') Brugman and moved to Hague to live with her. During the period of the Third Reich (1933-1945) she kept a low profile and lived on the outskirts of Berlin. She was denounced as a degenerate artist by the Third Reich so could not exhibit her work which she continued to produce until her death in 1978. In 1935, Höch began a relationship with the businessman and pianist Kurt Matthies, to whom she was married from 1938 to 1944. Höch was close friends with many of the most famous artists of the period and she pioneered an art form known as photomontage. In one obituary she was described as "the bob-haired muse of the men's club". Since then she has been reappraised as the leading female Dadaist and one of the leading artists of the period.

TRACES OF WAR: DADA AND SURREALISM (ROOM 4)

Dada emerged in Switzerland during the war and soon became an international art movement. The artists involved felt the senselessness of the conflict called into question every aspect of society. The surrealists also aimed to destabilize conventional gender roles and social order.

In the 1920s dada artists Hannah Höch and John Heartfield made collages that contested how the war was being remembered.

George Grosz and Edward Burra depicted figures that combined flesh and machine parts. These echoed the use of prosthetic limbs by war veterans and evoked anxieties about the fragility of the male body. War damage inflicted on bodies and particularly minds also shaped surrealist art and writing.

Many soldiers suffered post-traumatic stress disorder, known at the time as shell shock or war neurosis. Symptoms included acute anxiety, paralysis and inability to reason and communicate. Surrealism channeled these symptoms in approaches that rejected rationality and conscious thought, such as Max Ernst's irrational juxtapositions of images and the automatic drawing practiced by André Masson.

George Grosz and Hartfield us a tailor's dummy to illustrate a disabled body. Electric lightbulb is a reference to the electric shock treatment that was given for shell shock.

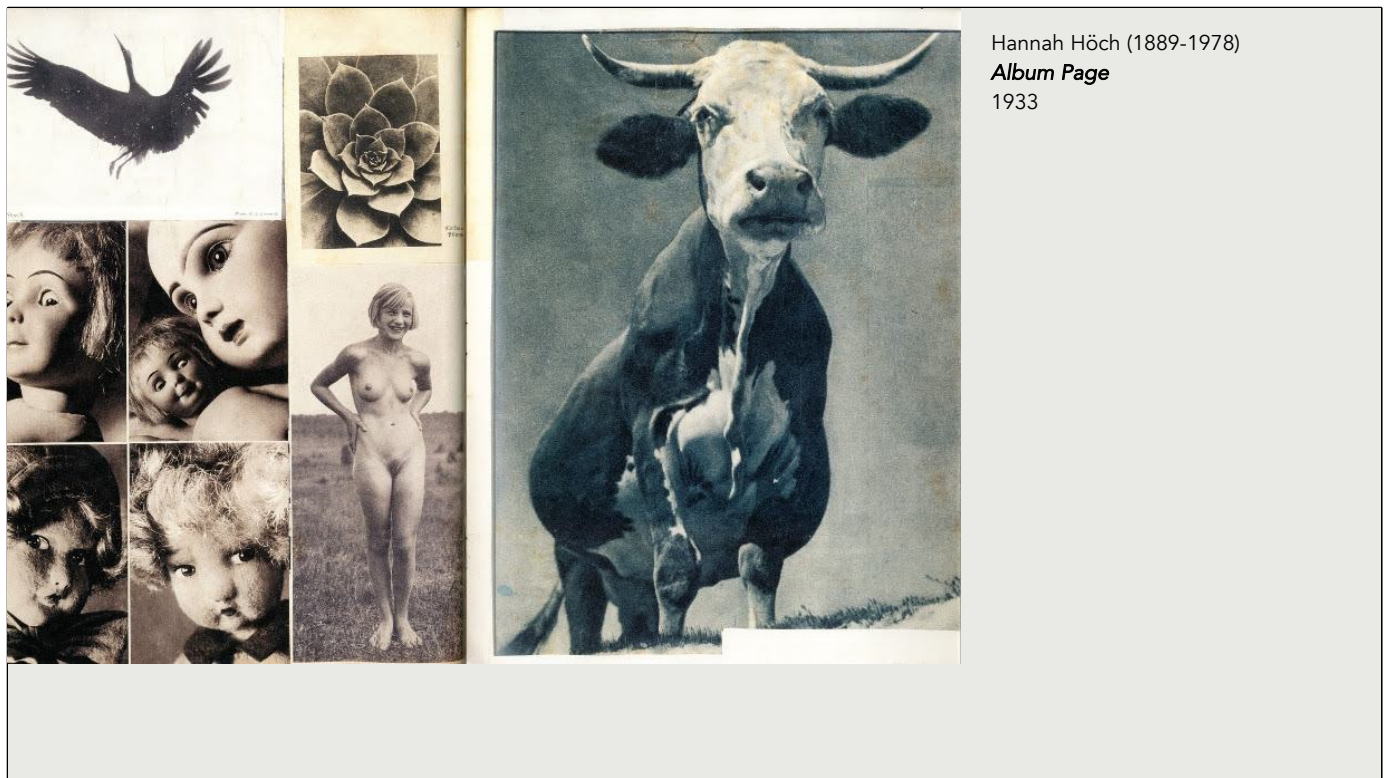
The fragmented body is a major theme in German art of the period.

Rudolph Schlichter,

Fragmentation and irrationality in art practice was associated with collage, for

example Kurt Schwitters who said "After the war everything was in fragments" and he used pieces of rubbish.

Andre Mason was rejecting bourgeois values and found new ways of making art using dream and automatic writing.



Hannah Höch (1889-1978), Album Page, 1933

The album Höch compiled around **1933** gives us an extraordinary window into her working method. Over four hundred photographs cut from magazines and journals — nudes, athletes, machinery, ethnographic images, dancers — spread across a hundred and fourteen pages. It reads simultaneously as a visual archive, a sketchbook, and a conceptual object in its own right. What the album also reveals is the disciplined intelligence behind the apparent chaos of her montages. Höch was not ransacking magazines at random; she was building a vocabulary, systematically expanding the raw material from which political meaning could be constructed. Yet her position within **Berlin Dada** was anything but comfortable. She was the only woman in the group, and the resistance she faced was explicit. **Hans Richter** later reduced her entire contribution to providing sandwiches, beer, and coffee despite wartime shortages. She alone among the Berlin Dadaists was pressured by colleagues to find conventional employment. The movement that styled itself as the demolition of bourgeois hierarchy reproduced that hierarchy faithfully when it came

to gender. The irony is sharp: **Höch** had already placed herself on the map of women's suffrage in **Kitchen Knife**, but within the studio she still occupied the margins her colleagues assigned her.

Notes

"The sheer abundance of Hannah Höch's collection of visual material is suggested by an album that was presumably compiled in 1933, a singular work within her oeuvre that poses a number of fascinating questions. Was it used as a collection of motifs for collages and photo-montages? Was it a kind of modern sketchbook? Could it have been a first step toward Conceptual Art? The album comprises 114 pages-two issues of the journal *Die Dame* were used as backing pages-and combines in an amusing fashion more than four hundred photographic images of subjects from nature, technology, sports, dance, the new woman, film, ethnology, and other areas of interest collected, cut out and mounted by the artist. The collection also contains a remarkable number of female nudes." (from Hatje Cantz > Art > Classical Modern Art website)

Among other things she did for the German Dada, Höch expanded the commonly accepted notion of what may and what may not be incorporated into a valid artwork. Hannah Höch was one of the key figures responsible for authoring the practice of collaging assorted photographic elements gathered from different sources to make a piece of art. Besides contributing heavily to the Dadaism and, indirectly, to all the following modern movements, Höch can also be described as a key feministic figure of the previous century.

Many artists were reluctant to accept Höch within their ranks simply because of her gender. For example, Hans Richter went as far as describing all of Höch's contributions to the Dada movement as the sandwiches, beer and coffee she managed somehow to conjure up despite the shortage of money. Of all the Dada artists in Berlin, Höch was the only one that was pressured by her colleagues to find a real job. Höch was the lone woman among the Berlin Dada group, stranded within what everyone wanted to describe as a male creative world

References

<https://www.widewalls.ch/artist/hannah-hoch/>



André Masson (1896-1987)

Ophelia

1937

113.7 x 146.7 cm

Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore

André Masson (1896-1987), Ophelia, 1937, 113.7 x 146.7 cm,
Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore

From the margins of Berlin Dada to the psychological wreckage of the Western Front — **André Masson's** painting of **Ophelia** takes us into a very different kind of aftermath. Masson volunteered in **1914** not from patriotic duty but, by his own account, because he wanted to experience what he called "the Wagnerian aspects of battle" and know the ecstasy of death. What he found was three years in the trenches so brutal he could not speak of them for years. In **April 1917** a bullet struck him in the chest; stretcher-bearers could not reach him, and he spent the night lying in the open, half-dead. He survived, but the wounds shaped everything that followed. The image of **Ophelia** — the woman who loses herself at the intersection of love, grief, and madness — clearly carried personal weight for him. A large female head floats in a pond, flowers rooting from it, her profile mirrored in the clouds above. Odd-angled trees, sheets of ice, strange insect figures in the foreground: the landscape refuses ordinary logic. Shakespeare's Ophelia says, "Lord, we know what we are, but know

not what we may be," and Masson's image sits exactly there — between the known and the unknowable, between life and dissolution.

Notes

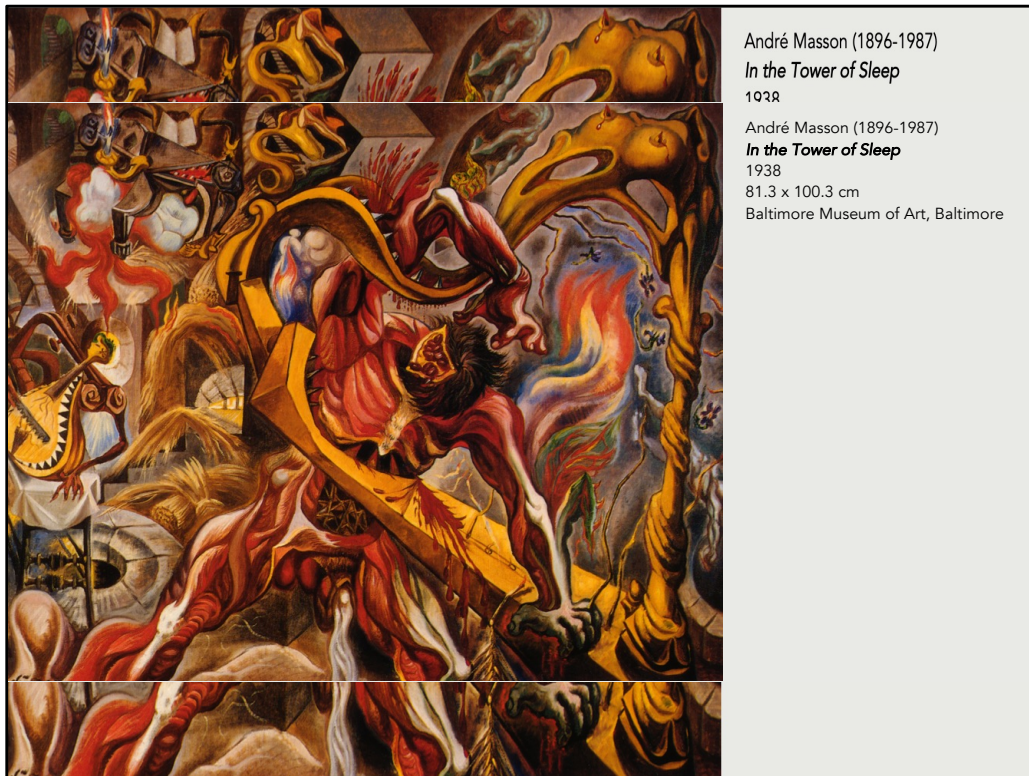
This illustrates the story of Ophelia, Prince Hamlet's betrothed who committed suicide after Hamlet accidentally kills her father and in his (feigned) madness implies he no longer loves her. In the painting we can see two ponds in a meadow, one containing a large female head with flowers growing from it. The profile of the face is reflected in the clouds above. The background contains fields and sheets of ice. To the left and right trees grow at odd angles. In the foreground there is an insect playing an instrument and another with a curled body. Ophelia stands for life and death and may reflect the despair of women in the post-war period. Masson may also be depicting the cruelty of the world but the meaning is elusive. As Ophelia said, "Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be (i.e. become)".

Bio:Masson

André-Aimé-René Masson (1896–1987) was a French artist who began to study art when he was eleven at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. He fought in World War I and was seriously injured. When war was declared he volunteered because he wanted to experience "the Wagnerian aspects of battle" and know the ecstasy of death. In April 1917 he was hit in the chest by a bullet and stretcher-bearers were unable to reach him so he spent the night half-dead, on his back. Masson had spent three years in the trenches in conditions so horrible he was unable to speak of them for years, and his wounds caused him mental problems for the rest of his life.

He was initially interested in Cubism and later Surrealism. He was interested in automatic drawing and experimented with altered states of consciousness. From 1926 he would start by throwing sand and glue on a canvas and then use oil paints to build upon the shapes created. He later turned to a more structured style often with a violent or erotic theme. He made a number of paintings in reaction to the Spanish Civil War. Under the German occupation of France during World War II, his work was condemned by the Nazis as degenerate. He managed to escape on a ship to Martinique and from there to the United States. He lived in Connecticut and his work became an important influence on American abstract expressionists, such as Jackson

Pollock. Following the war, he returned to France and settled in Aix-en-Provence where he painted a number of landscapes. One of his sons is a conductor and composer, another an actor and his daughter is a painter.



André Masson (1896-1987), *In the Tower of Sleep*, 1938, 81.3 x 100.3 cm, Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore

The Spain that promised Masson relief from city life delivered, instead, another war. Arriving with his family just before the **1936** Barcelona insurrection, he found himself once again lying flat behind mattresses while shells fell outside — the trenches, returned. That biographical loop closes with terrible neatness in *In the Tower of Sleep*, painted the following year as *Guernica* burned and **Picasso** worked on his own response to the same catastrophe. Masson himself explained the central flayed figure plainly: it "came from a memory of the war — a figure lying in a trench with his head split open." The tower, he added, offers "no way out except into the abyss." A titan, muscle and bone, stomach filled with thorns, is caught in a harp-like structure edged with teeth — the more he struggles, the deeper they bite. Vital fluid pours from him; a head wound spills seeds like a split **pomegranate**; at upper right a woman's nipples bleed as though pierced from within. The **Bosch**-like instrument at the left tears its own strings in what scholar **Martin Ries** calls a sadomasochistic serenade. Where Ophelia floated

between life and dissolution, this figure barrels forward with his head down — equally lost, but violently so, destroying as he falls.

Notes

Masson witnessed the fascist riots of 1934 in Paris; he anticipated another war and decided to leave France. Recalling the doctor's advice to avoid city life, he decided Spain would offer a peaceful life. Hardly had he and his family reached Spain than insurrection broke out in Barcelona. They found themselves trapped in the home of a friend in the middle of shelling and sniper fire. Lying behind mattresses for shelter, Masson felt he was in the trenches again. The Masson family returned to France when the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936.

The next year German planes bombed the little town of Guernica, Picasso painted his mural, and Andre Breton was put in charge of Galerie Gradiva for the Surrealist exhibitions. It is likely that Masson, just returned from the terrible scenes of the Civil War, and disturbed by the indifference of Europe to the fascist horror, was making a statement about the existence of dreadful suffering and impending disaster. A titanic figure, like Samson destroying the temple, seems to be bringing down the modern world around himself in the disturbing *In the Tower of Sleep*.

Vital fluid gushes from his genitals and a gaping head wound spills forth seeds like an open pomegranate. Blood flows, fires (Heraclitean?) are burning. At upper right a woman's nipples are bleeding as though pierced from within with sword-points. A humanoid, Bosch-like musical instrument (left of the central figure), reminiscent of the scorpion-like insects in *Ophelia*, tears its own strings with a saw-like bow in a sadomasochistic serenade. The flayed figure 'came from a memory of the war,' explained Masson, 'a figure lying in a trench with his head split open;' it all takes place in a tower 'from which there is no way out except into the abyss.'" (Martin Ries, see reference 1)

"Masson's painting is a complex and chaotic work, seething with symbolic imagery and intricate motifs. The subject of the painting is an immense and powerful man composed of nothing but muscle and bone with a stomach filled with thorns and fluid that appears to be seminal flowing from the genital area that is lacking a phallus. His struggle is extremely heart wrenching, since

he is caught within a harp like structure laced with teeth that will inevitably dig deeper the more the human physique struggles. Symbolically a harp can represent spiritual harmony, but within the context of this painting the harp is transformed into an obstruction to harmony. The figure indiscriminately barrels forward with his head down, contributing to the chaos in a desperate attempt to escape the burning tower. This may represent humanity's tragic ignorance of the effects of war on the collective of mankind, who've become blinded by the ideologies of nationalism." ('An Examination of Andre Masson's In the Tower of Sleep' by Chuck Angeline, see reference 2)

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Otto Dix (1891–1969)
Wounded Man (Autumn 1916, Bapaume) from *The War (Der Krieg)*
 1924
 Etching and aquatint
 19.7 x 29 cm (plate); 35 x 47.4 cm (sheet)

Otto Dix (1891–1969), *Wounded Man (Autumn 1916, Bapaume)* from *The War (Der Krieg)*, 1924, 19.7 x 29 cm (plate); 35 x 47.4 cm (sheet)

From Masson's mythologised trench memory, we move to an artist who was actually in the trenches for the entire war — **Otto Dix**. Where Masson processed the First World War through Surrealist displacement, Dix returned to it with forensic directness. His portfolio **Der Krieg**, fifty prints published in **1924**, appeared a decade after the conflict began. Dix had served as an artillery gunner at the **Somme** and on the Eastern Front, was seriously wounded, and later described being haunted by recurring nightmares of crawling through ruined buildings. He called the portfolio an act of exorcism. The print before us, **Wounded Man, Autumn 1916, Bapaume**, exemplifies his method. Dix manipulated multiple acid baths so the plate itself seemed to decay, mimicking rotting flesh. Brilliant stopped-out whites expose bone against black shadow. Precise titles — place, date — create the illusion of documentary record, though the images draw on memory, censored wartime photographs, and his visits to catacombs, not direct transcription. His publisher **Karl Nierendorf** distributed the portfolio

through the pacifist **Never Again War** movement, yet from an edition of seventy, only one complete set sold. Dix himself was blunt: he doubted the prints could prevent another war. He was right.

Notes

Otto Dix. Wounded Man (Autumn 1916, Bapaume) [Verwundeter (Herbst 1916, Bapaume)] from The War (Der Krieg), 1924, etching and aquatint from a portfolio of fifty etching, aquatint and drypoints, plate: 19.7 x 29 cm; sheet: 35 x 47.4 cm, publisher Karl Nierendorf, Berlin, printer Otto Felsing, Berlin, edition of 70

"Appearing ten years after the conflict began, Otto Dix's monumental portfolio Der Krieg (The war) neither glorifies World War I nor heroizes its soldiers but shows, in fifty unrelentingly graphic images, the horrible realities experienced by someone who was there. Dix, an artillery gunner in the trenches at the Somme and on the Eastern Front, focused on the aftermath of battle: dead, dying, and shell-shocked soldiers, bombed-out landscapes, and graves.

Dix manipulated the etching and aquatint mediums to heighten the emotional and realistic effects of his meticulously rendered images of horror. He stopped out ghastly white bones and strips of no man's land, leaving brilliant white patches; multiple acid baths ate away at the images, mimicking decaying flesh.

Titles detailing precise places and dates confer an illusion of documentary authenticity. Dix did not transcribe his wartime sketchbooks; these nightmarish scenes are based on his memories of battle, on photographs (including many that had been censored during wartime), and on catacombs. For Dix, these prints were like an exorcism. Dix's publisher, Karl Nierendorf in Berlin, circulated the portfolio throughout Germany with a pacifist organization, Never Again War, though Dix himself doubted that his prints could have any bearing on future wars. Despite the intensive publicity, Nierendorf sold only one complete portfolio from the edition of seventy." (Publication excerpt from Heather Hess, German Expressionist Digital Archive Project, German Expressionism: Works from the Collection. 2011)

THE PRINT PORTFOLIO (ROOM 5)

The print portfolio was an important medium for artists in France and Germany commenting on the impact of the First World War. The format had an established audience in these two countries. Produced in editions of tens or hundreds, compact and relatively inexpensive, it had a broader reach than painting or sculpture. It offered the opportunity to create a narrative with a thematic set of images. It was also a medium that could be consumed at home rather than in the gallery in which it was easier to present critical responses to the war to counter official propaganda. Max Beckmann's *Hell* series was made in 1919, during a period of intense political upheaval. It presents post-war Berlin as a violent and lawless society in chaos. Otto Dix's *The War* encapsulates the horror of the trenches through shocking depictions of dead soldiers and shattered landscapes. Käthe Kollwitz's *War*, one of the most powerful anti-war statements made in Germany, focuses on the war from the perspective of mothers and children. Georges Rouault worked on his series *Miserere et Guerre* (Mercy and War) for fifteen years between 1916 and 1931, adapting biblical imagery to reflect on contemporary experience. In it, he connects the population's suffering with Christ's agony on the cross.

A narrative through a series of prints.

Max Beckmann (1884-1950), *Hell*, 1919, chaos, poverty and violence.

Otto Dix, *Der Krieg*, 50 prints he produced in 1924. It is one of his most important works and was shown in total at Tate Liverpool. Dix was a soldier for the entire war and survived although he was seriously injured.

Kollwitz, *Krieg*

George Rouault, *Bella matribus detesta*



Max Beckmann (1884–1950)

Hell (Die Hölle)

1919

Eleven transfer lithographs (including front cover)

61.4 x 87.2 cm or 87.3 x 61.2 cm (each approx., orientation varies)

Max Beckmann (1884–1950), Hell (Die Hölle), 1919, 61.4 x 87.2 cm or 87.3 x 61.2 cm (each approx., orientation varies)

Dix doubted his prints could prevent another war, and he was right — but he was not alone in dragging the catastrophe back into the streets of German cities. **Max Beckmann's** portfolio **Hell, Die Hölle**, eleven transfer lithographs published in **1919**, does something distinct: it maps not the battlefield but the wreckage of civilian life in a city coming apart at the seams. Beckmann served as a medical orderly rather than a combatant, and the breakdown he suffered in **1915** after witnessing surgical wards full of the shattered left a permanent mark on his line — figures contorted, space compressed, bodies jutting beyond the picture's edge as though the frame itself cannot contain the violence. In the opening print, **Der Nachhauseweg**, he encounters a disfigured veteran on the street; in **Die Nacht**, his own attic becomes a torture chamber; in the final sheet, his young son **Peter** reaches for a grenade as though it were a toy. War has come home. One print shows the murder of **Rosa Luxemburg**, a killing carried out in plain sight, while in **Die Strasse** a man is dragged away in broad daylight

and nobody turns to look. His publisher **J. B. Neumann** exhibited the portfolio that same year and sold nothing.

Notes

Max Beckmann (German, 1884–1950), *Hell (Die Hölle)*, 1919 (prints executed 1918-1919), eleven transfer lithographs (including front cover), sheet (each approx., orientation varies) 61.4 x 87.2 cm or 87.3 x 61.2 cm, paper cream, smooth, wove "japan.", publisher J. B. Neumann, Berlin, printer C. Naumann's Druckerei, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

This portfolio of eleven lithographs by Max Beckmann describes the disintegration of Berlin in the post-war period. In the first sheet, *The Way Home*, he encounters a disfigured war veteran on the street. In *Night*, Beckmann and his family are tortured by intruders in their attic. And in the final print, *The Family*, Beckmann's young son, Peter, mistakes a grenade for a toy.

"Unlike many of his compatriots, including the disfigured veteran he encounters in the first print, *Der Nachhauseweg* (The way home), Beckmann came back whole. He presents a fragmented city, with bodies jutting out of the pictures' frames and figures contorted in impossible spaces. In *Die Strasse* (The street), a thoroughfare is bustling with daytime activity, yet no one notices the man being carried off, arms flailing, by another man. In *Das Martyrium* (The martyrdom), under the cover of night, communist leader Rosa Luxemburg is about to be murdered. Speeches, songs, and even last stands are futile. No place is safe: Beckmann transforms an attic into a torture chamber in *Die Nacht* (Night), while quiet desperation pervades his own family's home in *Der Hunger* (Hunger). In the final print, *Die Familie* (The family), Beckmann's young son, Peter, mistakes a grenade for a toy. Beckmann brings the hell of war home in these prints. His publisher, J. B. Neumann, did not sell any when he exhibited them in 1919." (Museum of Modern Art)

The room also contains,

Otto Dix, *Der Krieg*, 50 prints, important, was shown at Tate Liverpool, Dix was a soldier for the entire war

Kollwitz, *Krieg*

George Rouault (1871-1958), *Bella Matribus Detestata* (War, Dread of Mothers)

Bio:Beckmann

Max Beckmann (1884–1950) was a German painter, draftsman, printmaker, sculptor, and writer. Although he is classified as an Expressionist artist, he rejected both the term and the movement. He was born in Leipzig and his traumatic experiences in World War I changed his art from academically correct to distortions of figures, forms and space. In the 1920s, he was associated with the New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*), an outgrowth of Expressionism that opposed its introverted emotionalism. He is known for the many self-portraits he painted throughout his life. He was well read in philosophy and literature and influenced by mysticism and theosophy. He enjoyed great success and was honoured by the Weimar Republic. Beckmann suffered from his harrowing experience as a hospital orderly during World War I and had a breakdown in 1915. After this his painting took on a harsh realism in which he created a complex and mysterious symbolism to express his tragic view of human nature. Beckmann's fortunes changed for the worse with the rise to power of Adolf Hitler, whose dislike of Modern Art quickly led to its suppression by the state. In 1933, the Nazi government called Beckmann a "cultural Bolshevik" and dismissed him from his teaching position at the Art School in Frankfurt. In 1937 the government confiscated more than 500 of his works from German museums, putting several on display in the notorious Degenerate Art exhibition in Munich. The day after Hitler's radio speech about degenerate art in 1937, Beckmann left Germany with his second wife, Quappi, for The Netherlands. For ten years, Beckmann lived in self-imposed exile in Amsterdam, failing in his desperate attempts to obtain a visa for the United States. In 1944, the Germans attempted to draft him into the army, although the sixty-year-old artist had suffered a heart attack. The works completed in his Amsterdam studio were even more powerful and intense than the ones of his master years in Frankfurt. They included several large triptychs, which stand as a summation of Beckmann's art. After the war, Beckmann moved to the United States. During the last three years of his life, he taught at the art schools of Washington University in St. Louis.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)

Mother and Child

1921

142.9 x 172.7 cm

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Mother and Child*, 1921, 142.9 x 172.7 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago

The fracture Beckmann exposed in German civic life had its mirror image across Europe in a very different response — not expressionist rupture, but a deliberate return to order. Where Dix and Beckmann pushed form to breaking point, many artists pulled back toward tradition, classicism, and the reassuring solidity of the human figure. This **Return to Order** was not mere conservatism. It was a cultural reckoning. **Geometric and mechanised forms** had defined the pre-war avant-garde; after industrialised slaughter on an unprecedented scale, those same forms felt contaminated. Artists reached instead for portraiture, landscape, religious painting — genres with deep roots — and recast them with a new precision and psychological weight. The impulse ran across national boundaries. In France it aligned classicism with civilisational recovery and national identity. Religious subjects allowed artists to map **Christ's suffering** directly onto the soldier's, giving grief a theological frame. **Pastoral landscape** carried a different charge: unpopulated fields and quiet countryside evoked not peace

but absence, the pervading sense of an entire generation gone. Women's roles, transformed irreversibly by the war years, generated sharply contrasting imagery — **maternal femininity** on one side, the emancipated **new woman** on the other — reflecting a society unsure of what it had become.

Notes

After the war artists divided in those, such as Pablo Picasso and Winifred Knights who returned to tradition and classicism and those, like Otto Dix, who continued to experiment with new forms to show the horror of war.

“In 1917 Picasso travelled to Rome to design sets and costumes for Sergei Diaghilev’s famed Ballets Russes. Deeply impressed by the ancient and Renaissance art of that city, he began painting monumental figures inspired by antiquity. His new classical style was influenced by the finely modelled odalisques of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres and the late, oddly proportioned female nudes of Pierre-Auguste Renoir. This painting was also inspired by Picasso’s own life. Just three years earlier, he had married Olga Khokhlova, a Russian dancer, with whom he fathered his first child, Paolo, in 1921. A new father, Picasso made many images of mothers with children: between 1921 and 1923, he produced at least twelve works on this subject, returning to a theme that he had explored during his Blue Period. But whereas those figures are frail and anguished, his classical-period figures, with their sculptural modelling and solidity, are majestic in proportion and feeling. Here an infant sits on its mother’s lap and reaches up to touch her. The mother, dressed in a Grecian gown, gazes intently at her child. Behind them stretches a simplified background of sand, water, and sky. Picasso’s treatment of the mother and child is not sentimental, but the relationship between the figures expresses a serenity and stability that characterized his own life at this time.” (The Art Institute of Chicago website)

RETURN TO ORDER (ROOM 6)

Artists' experience of the catastrophic impact of war often prompted a radical change in their work. Geometric and mechanised forms had been central to avant-garde movements before the war. Many artists turned instead to realism and traditional genres such as portraiture, religious painting and landscape. This revival became known as the 'Return to Order'. But more than

revisiting old approaches, it took realism in new directions, rendering everyday life with precision and clarity amidst a chaotic economic and political climate. Classicism was used to align values of civilisation and tradition with national identity. Artists also depicted biblical stories in contemporary settings to reflect on the consequences of war. There was a revived interest in landscape painting in this period. Pastoral scenes reflected nostalgic longing for a time of peace before the onset of war and unpopulated landscapes evoked the pervading sense of loss. Women's roles had changed dramatically during the war and contrasting imagery of maternal femininity and the emancipated 'new woman' presented different views of their place in post-war society.

Agricultural workers became symbolic of the old order and most of the French soldiers were agricultural workers.

Religious paintings, particularly linking Christ's suffering to that of the soldiers.

Birkbeck Christ in a contemporary setting

Spencer Christ on the cross.

Winifred Knight, biblical destruction, she was traumatized by witnessing a terrible explosion in a munitions factory.

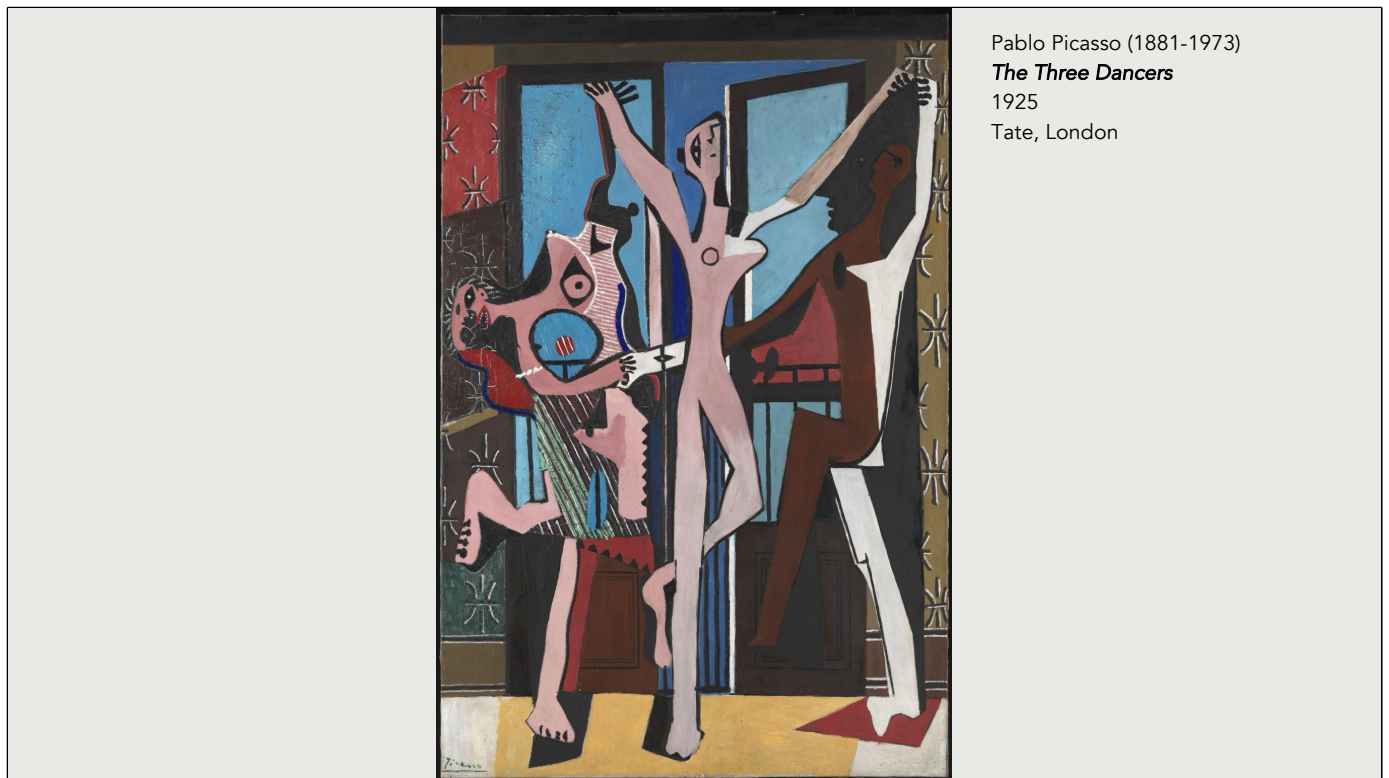
There was a revival of classicism particularly in France.

Maternal imagery.

Picasso, Woman in a Chemise. Family by the seashore (is the father dead? Sinister)

Dod Procter Morning

New woman, British, German art, women given the vote after WWI in Britain and Germany but not in France until after WWII.



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *The Three Dancers*, 1925, Tate, London

The Return to Order brought many artists back to the human figure — but in **Picasso's** hands, the figure became a battlefield of personal grief. **The Three Dancers**, painted in **1925**, looks at first like a celebration of movement. It is anything but. Picasso told his dealer and friend **Roland Penrose** that it should really be called "The Death of Pichot" — **Ramón Pichot**, a fellow painter and old companion, had just died, and the loss reopened a wound twenty-five years old. That wound centred on **Carlos Casagemas**, who had travelled with Picasso to Paris in **1900** and fallen desperately in love with **Germaine Gargallo**. She rejected him; he tried to shoot her in a restaurant, failed, and shot himself instead. Germaine later married Pichot. Casagemas's suicide had triggered Picasso's **Blue Period**, and here, decades later, that triangle resurfaces: the shadowy figure on the right is Pichot, the woman on the left is Germaine, and the contorted central figure — despite its female breasts, which scholars read as a reference to Casagemas's impotence — represents Casagemas, crucified between them, the darker blue behind forming the shape of a cross. X-ray

analysis confirms the painting began as three classical **Three Graces** figures. The violent distortions that erupted across that calm foundation mark the decisive break with Picasso's classical period — and, as Picasso himself insisted, contain the first traces of **Guernica**.

Notes

Description. This is Pablo Picasso's *The Three Dancers*. The shadowy figure on the right whose profile is shown against the window is a man. The central figure that looks like a woman is probably a man, for reasons explained below, and the figure on the left is a woman with two faces like a New Guinea mask.

Pichot. We know from X-ray analysis that the painting started out as three classical figures but the violent distortions signal a break with his classical period. Picasso told his dealer friend Roland Penrose, 'While I was painting this picture an old friend of mine, Ramón Pichot, died and I have always felt that it should be called "The Death of Pichot" rather than "The Three Dancers".' According to Picasso, the shadowy figure on the right behind the dancer is his friend Pichot. The figure on the left is female and has two faces based on a mask from New Guinea that Picasso owned. She is associated with a young model in Paris, called Germaine, who married Pichot. Although the central figure retains the female form of one of the original three classical female figures the pose and position suggest it represents Carlos Casagemas crucified between Germaine Gargallo and Ramón Pichot. The cross on which he is crucified is indicated by the darker blue background behind the central figure and the closeness of the central railings which look like wood grain.

Background. In 1900, Picasso had gone with Pichot on his first long visit to Paris together with another young painter, Carlos Casagemas. In Paris, Casagemas fell in love with a young woman friend of Picasso named Germaine Gargallo. She rejected him and Casagemas committed suicide by shooting himself, after first taking a shot at Germaine, who soon after married Pichot. This drama greatly affected Picasso and *The Three Dancers* can be read as a reference to the affair. Picasso wrote, 'My work is like a diary, to understand it you have to see how it mirrors my life.' Picasso never forgot Germaine Pichot and four decades later he took his very young lover [Françoise Gilot] to see her. She later wrote that Picasso spoke with her and left her some money. After they left she asked him why he had taken her there and he said, 'I want you to learn about life'. 'She's old and toothless and

poor and unfortunate now but when she was young she was very pretty and she made a painter friend of mine suffer so much that he committed suicide ... She turned a lot of heads, now look at her'.

Guernica. This therefore, is a work expressing his deep feelings about the death of his friend Casagemas. The Three Dancers is the first work he sold to a gallery. He kept it for 40 years and sold it to the Tate through his friend Roland Penrose in 1965. It was the first work of modern art to be purchased by the Tate. Picasso said that he had not sold the work before as it was important to him as it showed the first traces of his famous anti-war painting Guernica. If you visit the 'Artist and Society' gallery you will find Picasso's Weeping Woman, an equally emotional but much more planned and distilled work based on his reworking of the woman in Guernica.

Notes on Pablo Picasso 1881-1973, The Three Dancers, 1925

Pablo Ruiz y Picasso (Málaga 25 Oct 1881-8 April 1973). Blue Period (1901–1904), Rose Period (1904–1906), African-influenced Period (1907–1909), Analytic Cubism (1909–1912), and Synthetic Cubism or Crystal Period (1912–1919). In 1899 he met his closest friend Carlos Casagemas (1881-1901) who shot himself in 1901 and this precipitated Picasso's Blue Period. In 1904, Picasso met Fernande Olivier, a bohemian artist who became his mistress. Picasso left Olivier for the frail and enigmatic Eva Gouel, who called herself Marcelle Humbert when she arrived in Paris, and he was devastated when she died of tuberculosis or cancer in 1915 aged 30. After the loss of Eva Gouel, Picasso had an affair with Gaby Depeyre (later Lespinasse) and, in 1918, he married the respectable and elitist Ukrainian ballet dancer Olga Khokhlova and they had a child Paulo. In 1927 Picasso met 17-year-old Marie-Thérèse Walter and began a long affair and fathered a daughter Maya. To avoid splitting his estate he never divorced and was married to Khokhlova until her death in 1955. In the 1930s and 40s the artist Dora Maar (born Theodora Marković) was a constant companion and lover and she documented Guernica. In 1944, aged 63, he began an affair with Françoise Gilot aged 23. Dora Maar famously said, 'After Picasso, only God' and when he left her in 1946 she became a Roman Catholic. Their split was painful and Picasso found ways to inflict pain but she outlived Picasso and continued to paint into the 1990s and was still exhibiting two years before she died aged 89. When Picasso grew tired of Dora Maar he and Gilot began to live together. They had two children: Claude, born in 1947 and Paloma, born in 1949. She

described his abusive treatment and many affairs including Geneviève Laporte. He met Jacqueline Roque in 1953 and she became his second wife in 1961 until his death in 1973. She shot herself in 1986 aged 59.

The pattern on the wallpaper mirrors the stance of the dancers crossed by the bar of the balcony. The figures each have two faces. The one on the left has a tiny crescent-moon shaped face looking inwards and forming part of an aggressive mask-like face with sharp teeth. The vertical slit against blue could be part of the railings or a reference to female genitalia. The central figure can be read with the head upright or on its side. Read vertically the eye becomes a gaping, grinning mouth. The reading of the central figure as his friend Carlos Casagemas is contradicted by the female breasts but it has been suggested that this is a reference to Casagemas's impotence. The head on the right has a small, neat profile surrounded by a second darker more naturalistic silhouetted profile. The two faces could refer to the figures' social face or, in Jungian terms, their persona and their true nature.

Picasso in here in the Surrealist room but he claimed he was not a Surrealist. The Surrealist though loved him. This is a key work which some describe it as the most important work in Britain.

In 1925, Picasso was designing sets for Serge Diaghilev in Monte Carlo with his wife Olga Khokhlova. At first glance this painting might appear to be a celebration of the joy of dance. But it is associated with hate and violence. Picasso's old friend Ramon Pichot (pronounced 'Pee-cot', in French 'Pee-show') had just died, reviving memories of 25 years earlier when Picasso's friend Carlos Casagemas had had an affair with Germaine Gargallo (born Laure, pronounced 'law', Gargallo had, when she was very young, married a man named Florentin and changed her first name to Germaine). Germaine had an affair with Casagemas who fell deeply in love with her. Germaine slept around and Casagemas became impotent because of the drugs he'd been taking. As a result, he tried to shoot her when he arrived for a meal at a restaurant called L'Hippodrome with seven others present. He hit Germaine but did not kill her and then shot himself in the head and died later. Picasso had had an affair with her friend Louise Lenoir, known as Odette, and later he had an affair with Germaine before she married Ramon Pichot who was also a friend of Picasso.

Other historians have equated the suppressed violence with the anger Picasso was feeling for his wife Olga Khokhlova. Olga was a dancer for Diaghilev's Ballet Russe.

The Three Dancers was based on the classical composition of The Three Graces.

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<http://web.org.uk/picasso/dancers.html> (suggests the dancer on the right is Olga not Pichot)

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=NVkxBwAAQBAJ> (chapter on The Three Dancers from The Mythology of Dance by Harry Eiss)

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Winifred Knights (1899-1947)
The Deluge
 1920
 152.9 x 183.5 cm
 Tate, London



Winifred Knights (1899-1947), *The Deluge*, 1920, 152.9 x 183.5 cm, Tate, London

Where Picasso used the human figure to externalise private grief, **Winifred Knights** channelled collective trauma into something altogether different — monumental, disciplined, and steeped in the Italian past she would soon go to study firsthand. Knights was born in **1899** in Streatham and trained at the **Slade School of Art** under **Henry Tonks**. In January 1917 she witnessed the **Silvertown explosion**, when a TNT processing works in east London detonated with catastrophic force. The experience traumatised her and interrupted her studies entirely. When she returned to the Slade, she channelled that experience of mass catastrophe into **The Deluge**, completed in **1920** for the Rome Scholarship competition. Working through tonsillitis and serious eye problems across just eight weeks, she produced a painting in which figures flee rising floodwaters with a frieze-like composure drawn directly from **Quattrocento** Italian painting, yet animated by something close to **Futurist** energy. The ark sits small and remote in the background. The human figures — including Knights herself and

her mother — bear the drama entirely. The **Daily Graphic** declared her a genius. More significantly, she became the **first woman in England** to win the **British School at Rome** scholarship in decorative painting. Now held by **Tate Britain**, **The Deluge** is the work on which her reputation rests.

Notes

Inspired by the masterpieces of Italian Early Renaissance artists, painstakingly exact in her working methods, and even declared a genius, Winifred Knights (1899-1947) is one of the most original, pioneering British artists of the first half of the 20th century. However, she produced little during the war and died in 1947.

This painting was produced for the 1920 Prix de Rome scholarship which she won despite intense competition from other Slade School students and tonsillitis and eye problems during the eight weeks allowed for the task.

Initially she planned a scene of figures and animals entering Noah's ark but this final design is more dramatic with figures fleeing the flood. The ark is a small windowless vessel in the background while in the foreground fleeing figures create a sense of dynamic movement that combines the frieze-like structure of fifteenth-century Italian painting with the energy of Futurism. The *Daily Graphic* (8 February 1921), declared the painter a genius.

Knights herself appears as the woman centre right in the foreground and her mother modelled for the woman holding a baby. Her friend Arnold Mason (1885-1963) modelled for the man next to her and the crouching figure scaling the hill behind them.

Knights continued to paint religious subjects for the rest of her life like fellow artist Stanley Spencer (1891-1959).

The first major retrospective of the award-winning Slade School artist, this exhibition will reunite all her completed paintings for the first time since their creation, including the apocalyptic masterpiece *The Deluge*, 1920, which attracted immense critical acclaim.

Knights worked with determination and extreme attention to detail, and all five of her major works were supported by exquisite and numerous studies. As well as her five most famous works - *A Scene in a Village Street, with Mill Hands Conversing* (1919), *The Deluge* (1920), *The Marriage at Cana* (1923), *Santissima Trinita* (1924-30) and *Scenes From The Life of St Martin of Tours* (1928-1933) - nearly 120 intricate preparatory studies,

illustrations and portraits will provide a true insight into the artistic processes of this incredibly talented and under-appreciated woman artist.

Bio:Knights

Winifred Knights (1899-1947) was born in Streatham and went to school in Dulwich where she showed artistic talent early on. She went to the Slade School of Art from 1915-17 and 1918-20 under Henry Tonks and Fred Brown. During World War One, Knights was traumatised after witnessing the Silvertown explosion at a TNT processing works in January 1917, which led to the break in her studies while she recuperated on the farm of her father's cousin. In 1920, she became the first woman in England to win the prestigious Scholarship in Decorative Painting awarded by the British School at Rome with her critically acclaimed painting *The Deluge*. That year she became engaged to fellow student Arnold Mason and moved to Italy to complete her scholarship, living in a small village south of Rome. The relationship with Mason ended and she married fellow Rome Scholar Thomas Monnington in 1924. On her return to England in 1926 she returned to the Slade for a year. In 1933 she worked on the decoration of Eltham Palace for Stephen Courtauld. She died of a brain tumour in 1947, aged 47. Her first major retrospective was at Dulwich Picture Gallery in 2016 and typical reviews were:

'Spellbinding genius of a neglected artist' - The Telegraph, Five stars

'The lost talent of Winifred Knights' - The Times

'An intensely sensitive and compelling exhibition' - The Guardian

Amongst her most notable works are *The Marriage at Cana* produced for the British School at Rome, which is now in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and her winning Rome Scholarship entry *The Deluge* which is now held by Tate Britain. Knights' style was much influenced by the Italian Quattrocento and she was one of several British artists who participated in a revival of religious imagery in the 1920s, while retaining some elements of a modernist style.

Knights died in 1947 at the young age of 47, leaving behind unfinished works. She had a retrospective at Dulwich Picture Gallery in 2016 and her work is being re-evaluated. However, her portfolio is very small.

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Dod Procter (1892–1972), *Morning*, 1926, 76.2 x 152.4 cm, Tate, London

Dod Procter (1892–1972), *Morning*, 1926, 76.2 x 152.4 cm, Tate, London

Knights won her scholarship on the strength of monumental figuration rooted in the Italian tradition — and **Dod Procter**, working from the Cornish fishing village of **Newlyn**, arrived at something strikingly similar through a different route entirely. Procter was born Doris Shaw in **1890** in Hampstead, though her family soon settled in Cornwall. At fifteen she enrolled at the **Forbes School of Painting** in Newlyn, where she met her future husband **Ernest Procter**, and the two travelled to Paris together in **1910**, encountering **Renoir** and **Cézanne** at first hand. That double inheritance — Impressionist light, Post-Impressionist structure — runs directly into her mature work. **Morning**, painted in **1926**, shows **Cissie Barnes**, a sixteen-year-old fisherman's daughter who posed almost every day for five weeks. The figure lies across white sheets with a composure that is serene rather than inert. Procter's limited palette of stone and cream tones, and her precise modelling of light across volume, give the body a sculptural gravity. The critic **Frank Rutter** in the **Sunday Times** called it "a new vision of the human figure which

amounts to the invention of a twentieth-century style in portraiture." Bought by the *Daily Mail* and donated to **Tate Britain**, the painting toured New York and then Britain for two years — an extraordinary public reach for a living woman artist.

Notes

Dod Procter (1890-1972), 'Morning', 1926

This painting is called Morning and is by an artist called Doris 'Dod' Procter. In the 1920s she painted many female figures like this one; they were simple and monumental. The power and solidity of the figure is achieved by means of a limited palette, the use of stone colours and an emphasis on bringing out the volume of the figure through her use of strong light and shadow. The woman is lying on top of the sheets and seems to be wrapped in a sheet. She appears to be asleep, but from her pose she may be resting and daydreaming with her eyes closed. The Sunday Times critic, Frank Rutter, wrote, 'Here is no artificial composition reeking of the studio, but a fragment of life, nobly seen and simply stated'. I think what the critic meant was that it is not artificially posed like a typical studio portrait but, as I said, she has manipulated the colour, form and lighting to create a particular feeling of solidity and timelessness. The Sunday Times critic went on to say it was 'a new vision of the human figure which amounts to the invention of a twentieth-century style in portraiture'.

It was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1926 and was admired by the public and the press who described its 'sensuous but sombre style'. It won the Portrait of the Year award and was bought by the Daily Mail and donated to the Tate, where we see it today. It was so highly regarded that it was sent to be exhibited in New York and then went on a two-year tour of Britain.

The work reminds me of the term the 'male gaze', invented in 1975 to describe the way in which women in works of art are often depicted as objects of male pleasure. It is claimed the male gaze robs women of their human identity as it relegates them to the status of objects. The three elements are the artist, the person represented and the viewer. In this case the artist is a woman which raises the possibility that this is an example of the female gaze. This is difficult to define but it has been suggested that it involves transparency and the ability to connect with the person represented at a deeper level. So, the description of the painting as 'sensuous but sombre' might mean that although the sexual attractiveness of the model has been captured, eroticism

and objectification have been avoided.

We know who the model is. It is 'Cissie' Barnes, the daughter of a local fisherman who received some publicity at the time. She modelled for other Newlyn artists and in 1926, when she was 16, she posed almost every day for five weeks for this painting. Five years later she married, and moved to London.

I should also add that other paintings by Dod Procter were controversial. During the 1920s she painted many sensuous female nudes including young girls and when this worked toured the country it was accompanied by some of these other works. As a result, some venues would not display her work and three years later a painting of a young female nude called Virginal that she submitted to the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition was excluded on the grounds of indecency.

Ernest Procter, her man who was to become her husband, and her were both star pupils at art college and went together to Paris where they both met Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Paul Cézanne and were influenced by Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. However, like many women artists married to well-known male artists her work has often been defined in terms of her husband's art.

Bio:Procter

Dod Procter (1890-1972) was born Doris Margaret Shaw, the daughter a former art student at the Slade and her father was a ship's doctor. She was born in Hampstead, but the family moved to Cornwall when she was young. When she was 15 she joined the school of painting run by Elizabeth and Stanhope Forbes in Newlyn where she met her future husband Ernest Procter. In Newlyn, she met Laura Knight who became a lifelong friend and influence. In 1910 she went with her mother and Ernest Procter to Paris where they met Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Paul Cézanne. They married in Paris in 1912 and the following year their son was born, and she first exhibited at the Royal Academy. During WWI Ernest worked in an ambulance unit. and after the war they settled in Newlyn. They were commissioned to go to China for a year to decorate a Palace and when she returned she started painting portraits usually of young women.

Procter and her husband attended art schools in England and in Paris together, where they were both influenced by Impressionism and the Post-

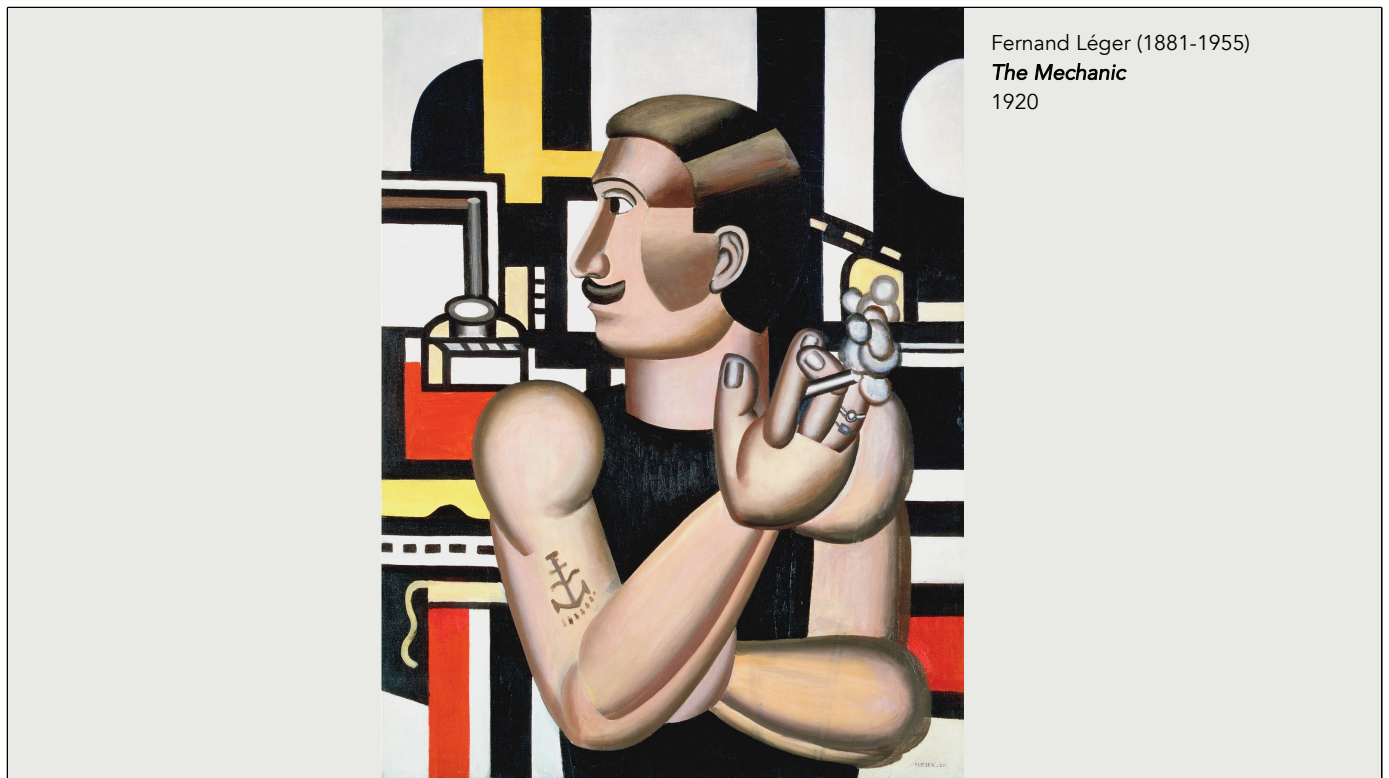
Impressionism movements. They also worked together at times, sometimes sharing commissions and other times showing their work together in exhibitions. Procter was a lifelong artist, active after the untimely death of her husband in 1935. After Ernest's death, Procter travelled to the United States, Canada, Jamaica and Africa.

Frank Rutter, added, this 'noble painting of a sleeping girl is the outstanding 'picture of the year' so far as the Academy is concerned. ... How exquisite is the painting of that left hand, at rest but full of life'.

She sold the work for £300 but could have achieved ten times that price. There is a smaller version called Early Morning in the Royal Pavilion, Brighton. Her painting of Cissie Barnes was regarded as one of the best at the Royal Academy in 1925 and in 1927 this portrait of Barnes won Portrait of the Year. It was bought by the Daily Mail and donated to the Tate which sent it on a two-year tour of New York and Britain. She sold the work for £300 but could have achieved ten times that price.

The model was Sarah ('Cissie') Barnes (1910-1979), born in Newlyn, Cornwall, the daughter of a fisherman or fish merchant. Her mother died when she was born, and she was brought up by maternal aunt and uncle. She modelled for other Newlyn artists and in 1926 she posed almost every day for five weeks for this painting. She married Francis Garner in 1931, the best man at her brother's wedding.

The term male gaze was coined by feminist film critic and academic Laura Mulvey in 1975.



Fernand Léger (1881-1955), *The Mechanic*, 1920

From Cornwall to the continent, and from figuration to something altogether more political — **Fernand Léger** represents a very different response to the aftermath of war. Léger served as a stretcher-bearer on the Western Front and was gassed at **Verdun** in **1916**. That experience of mass industrial slaughter left a permanent mark, but not in the way you might expect. Rather than turning away from the machine, he doubled down on it. His convalescence confirmed what became his defining conviction: that the machine age was the age of the common worker, and art had a duty to reflect that. **The Mechanic**, painted in **1920**, shows a muscle-bound, well-groomed labourer smoking quietly before a backdrop of chimneys and cables. The critic **Louis Vauxcelles**, who had already coined the terms Fauvism and **Cubism**, dubbed Léger's thickly cylindrical style **Tubism** — a nickname that stuck. But the figure is no mere cog. He has self-possession and dignity, elevated into something close to a civic ideal. This connects directly to what the exhibition calls the **return to order** — the post-war turn toward legible, socially committed figuration — which, as we will

see, shaped artists across every political landscape in **1920s** Europe.

Notes

Fernand Léger was one of the key Cubist painters after Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Georges Braque (1882-1963) and Juan Gris (1887-1927). Léger, unlike Picasso and Braque retained three-dimensionality and form and his preference was for machine-like elements and well-defined cylindrical forms. His fascination with the machine is shown here with a machine-like mechanic and this interest aligned him with the Futurists and their interest in speed, power and the machine.

The art critic Louis Vauxcelles (1870-1943), who coined the terms 'Cubism' and 'Fauvism' christened Leger's style 'Tubism'.

In the war Léger was a stretcher bearer which inspired him to produce art for all people and all social classes. Even during the war, and he was gassed at Verdun, he continued to retain an interest in machinery and the machine-like dynamism of modern life. After the war, during the 'return to order' also called the Classical Revival he produced socially relevant works of representational art featuring factory workers, bargemen and other urban figures.

The Mechanic shows a working man against a semi-abstract industrial background of factory chimneys and railways. This is not a cog in a machine however but a well-groomed, muscular individual smoking a cigarette and contemplating his surroundings. It does not debase or dehumanize the working man but elevates him into a self-confident vision of the future.

Bio:Léger Bio:Leger

Joseph Fernand Henri Léger (1881–1955, aged 74) was a French painter, sculptor, and filmmaker. In his early works he created a personal form of cubism which he gradually modified into a more figurative, populist style. His boldly simplified treatment of modern subject matter has caused him to be regarded as a forerunner of pop art. He was born in Normandy where his father raised cattle. He initially trained as an architect before moving to Paris as an architectural draftsman. He was rejected by the École des Beaux-Arts but studied as an unenrolled student which he regarded as three wasted years. He did not begin to paint seriously until the age of 25 in 1904. He

moved to Montparnasse in 1909 where he met many other artists. He painted in a personal Cubist style that his critics called 'Tubism'. Up until 1914 his paintings became increasingly abstract. When the war started he spent two years at the front and produced many sketches of soldiers and military equipment. In 1916 he was also killed in a mustard gas attack. His convalescence marked the beginning of his 'mechanical period', during which the figures and objects he painted were characterized by sleekly rendered tubular and machine-like forms. Starting in 1918, he also produced the first paintings in the Disk series, in which disks suggestive of traffic lights figure prominently. His 'mechanical' works of the 1920s including mother and child, the female nude and figures in the landscape mark a post-war 'return to order'. As an enthusiast of the modern, Léger was greatly attracted to cinema, and for a time he considered giving up painting for filmmaking. Starting in 1927, his work changed as organic and irregular forms assumed greater importance. In 1931, Léger made his first visit to the United States, where he travelled to New York City and Chicago. During World War II Léger lived in the United States where he taught at Yale University, and created a new series of paintings inspired by the sight of industrial refuse in the landscape. The shock of juxtaposed natural forms and mechanical elements, the 'tons of abandoned machines with flowers cropping up from within, and birds perching on top of them' exemplified what he called the 'law of contrast'. In 1945 he returned to France and joined the Communist Party and his work became less abstract. In 1950 his wife died and he remarried in 1952.

IMAGINING POST-WAR SOCIETY: POST-WAR PEOPLE (ROOM 7)

"Social unrest and political upheaval were intense in the 1920s, particularly in Germany, where inflation and mass unemployment resulted in acute inequality. Many New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit) artists tackled social themes from a political perspective. George Grosz's *Grey Day* explores the impact of the war on a series of social types, suggesting that despite the upheaval society had reverted to its old class divisions. Artists also commented on the unequal fortunes of those who had stayed at home and those who had fought for their country. The figure of the profiteer who benefited financially from the war frequently provided a focus for social critique. Urban society could be shown either as a hotbed of decadence and moral corruption or as a site for new opportunities. Many artists were

committed socialists in this period and used their work to argue for a more equal society. The ordinary worker was often presented as a heroic figure. Jazz and dance culture swept London, Berlin and Paris as pleasure-seeking offered a release from the problems of daily life. In Britain and Germany many women were able to vote for the first time and their increased presence in the workforce also gave them greater economic freedom and independence in city spaces."

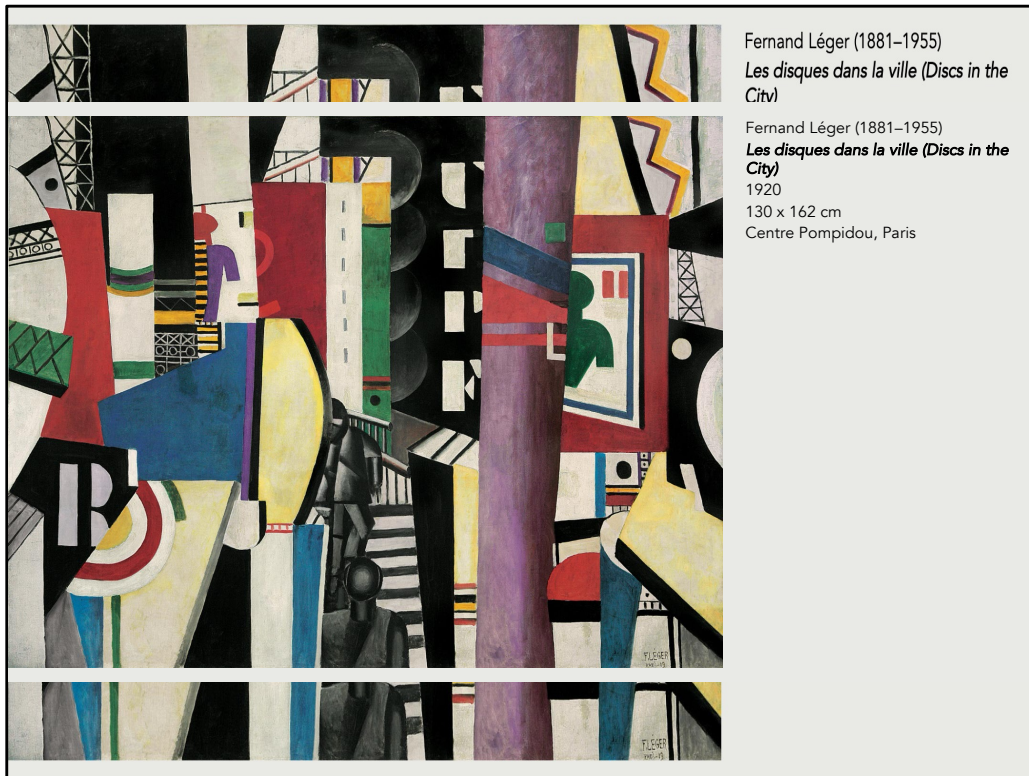
Notes

In 1918, Parliament passed an act granting the vote to women over the age of 30 who were householders, the wives of householders, occupiers of property with an annual rent of £5, and graduates of British universities. In 1928 women were granted the same right to vote as men.

In Germany women were granted the right to vote and be elected from the 12th November 1918.

European countries such as Finland (1906), Norway (1913), and Denmark and Iceland (1915) granted women the vote early in the 20th century.

Though it did not achieve nationhood until 1907, the colony of New Zealand was the first self-governing country in the world in which all women had the right to vote in, but not to stand for, parliamentary elections in 1893, followed closely by the colony of South Australia in 1894. America granted women the right to vote in 1920.



Fernand Léger (1881–1955), *Les disques dans la ville (Discs in the City)*, 1920, 130 x 162 cm, Centre Pompidou, Paris

Picking up that thread of the **return to order** and Léger's faith in the machine age, we can now see where that conviction led him most ambitiously. On demobilisation in **1918**, Léger moved straight to the canvas, producing a series of large urban paintings built from the same flattened, contrasting geometry we saw in **The Mechanic**. **Discs in the City**, painted around **1920**, gives you the raw material: oblique beams, circular signals, advertising lettering, and building facades all colliding in a single dynamic plane. It is less a landscape than a sensory report from inside the modern city. But the great statement is **The City**, completed in **1919** and now in the **Philadelphia Museum of Art** — more than seven feet tall, nearly ten feet wide, closer in scale to a billboard than an easel painting, and deliberately so. Léger described modern urban life as "more fragmented and faster moving than life in previous eras," and the canvas performs exactly that: shapes crowd forward, figures half-emerge from scaffolding and stairwells, and his own initials appear embedded in the architecture like a signature

advertisement. The lower figure on the central stairs becomes a grey, ovoid automaton — human presence absorbed into the urban mechanism, not crushed by it, but transformed.

Notes

"On his demobilisation in the summer of 1918, Fernand Léger started painting large canvases on the theme of the city, his language based on simple forms that echo and contrast. Emphatic broad obliques and strongly contrasting circles and bands of colour are all deliberately flattened, deliberately abstract. *Les Disques dans la ville* [Discs in the City] depicts a dynamic urban space, traversed by the movement of machinery and a chaos of metal beams, signals of all sorts, building facades and lettering from advertisements. This city, though no doubt inspired by the Paris of 1920, reflects above all Léger's fascination with New York, familiar to him from the moving images of film." (website Centre Pompidou)

Léger left the war not with a dread of the future but with an optimism about where technology could take humanity.

This painting is the first stage of one of his great masterpieces, *The City*, also of 1919 and now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The final version is more than twice the size at 231.1 x 298.4 cm.

It is a celebration of the vitality and mechanical splendour of the modern city. Fragments of the city, some recognisable, some not dance across the canvas. There is a flight of stairs in the centre and figures flit in and out of focus as structures appear to emerge and retreat. The cross hatching of electricity pylons and scaffolding is interspersed by what could be cut off billboards.

In the final version he includes his initials 'F' and 'L' in the central area and the two figures on the stairs become more mechanical with the lower figure changed to a grey automaton with a plain ovoid head.

The City (1919), "The French artist Fernand Léger (fair-NON LAY-jay) was inspired by the modern city and celebrated its vitality in his art. In *The City*, he filled the painting with geometric shapes and patterns that remind us of lights, shop windows, signs, buildings, and other objects. Unlike a traditional landscape in which space recedes into the background, many shapes and colours push toward the foreground. Léger described modern urban life as "more fragmented and faster moving than life in previous eras." He captured

this exciting, fast-paced movement with striking colours, eye-catching patterns, and overlapping shapes that crowd together and compete for our attention. Our eyes jump from one place to the next, creating a sensation similar to what it feels like to move through busy city streets. With so many interesting things to see, we seem to only catch glimpses of each. Living in the vibrant city of Paris, Léger admired the bold text and graphics on billboards and posters, and was fascinated by the power of train engines and airplane propellers. He also enjoyed movies, a relatively new form of popular entertainment in the early twentieth century, and appreciated the way scenes quickly moved from one to the next. All of these sources of inspiration are reflected in *The City*, such as in the white letters (including Léger's initials), flat colours, mechanical people, and its collage-like quality. The painting's size—over seven feet tall and almost ten feet wide—is also similar to a billboard or movie screen, encouraging viewers to feel as though they can easily enter this lively and colourful city.” (website, Teacher's Notes, Philadelphia Museum of Art)

IMAGINING POST-WAR SOCIETY: THE NEW CITY (ROOM 8)

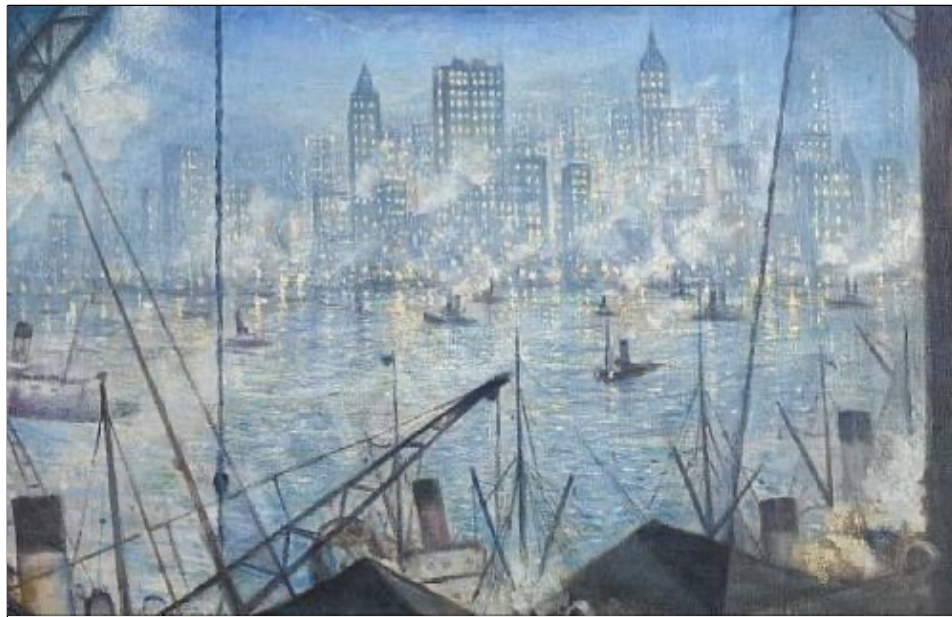
Artists responded to the technological changes shaping and reconstructing the modern city with a mixture of hope and anxiety. In the 1920s many looked to the United States as an example of technical progress and modernity. The skyscrapers of New York feature in cityscapes by CRW Nevinson, Paul Citroen and El Lissitzky. Fernand Léger extolled the beauty of machinery and was fascinated by the automated production processes of American factories. The photomontages of Alice Lex-Nerlinger present a less positive view of these new developments, showing workers becoming part of the factory machinery and subject to its relentless schedules. The Bauhaus, a German school of art and design founded in 1919, aimed to shape the modern world by integrating art into society. Professors and students there imagined how the city might be transformed by new design and architecture. Bauhaus teacher Oskar Schlemmer's abstracted figures offer a universal representation of humanity for modern times.

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C.R.W. Nevinson (1889–1946)
New York, Night
 c. 1920

C.R.W. Nevinson (1889–1946), *New York, Night*, c. 1920

Where Léger saw the machine as liberating, **C. R. W. Nevinson** arrived at something far darker — and he did so from direct experience.

Nevinson was born in **1889** in Hampstead, the son of a war correspondent and a suffrage campaigner, and trained at the **Slade** before moving to Paris, where he shared a studio with **Modigliani** and absorbed the lessons of **Futurism** at first hand. Back in London he aligned himself with **Wyndham Lewis**, though Lewis later excluded him from the **Vorticists**. Nevinson had embraced Futurism's celebration of speed and violence — until the war showed him what those things actually looked like. He served as an ambulance driver at Dunkirk, dressing the wounds of thousands of French soldiers left to die in a railway station, and later worked with shell-shock victims and men with severe facial injuries. **La Mitrailleuse**, painted in November **1915**, is the direct result: three soldiers in Adrian helmets fused with their machine gun into angular, grey geometric slabs, their individuality dissolved. A fourth lies dead beside them. Nevinson wrote that he aimed to show "the soldier going to be dominated by the machine," and **Walter**

Sickert, writing in the Burlington Magazine in **1916**, called it "the most authoritative and concentrated utterance on the war in the history of painting."

Notes

As a Futurist, Nevinson initially celebrated and embraced the violence and mechanised speed of the modern age. But his experience as an ambulance driver in the First World War changed his view. In his paintings of the trenches, the soldiers are reduced to a series of angular planes and grey colouring. They appear almost like machines themselves, losing their individuality, even their humanity, as they seem to fuse with the machine gun which gives this painting its title.

The painting shows three soldiers in the trenches wearing metal Adrian helmets, one firing a machine gun. A fourth soldier lies dead beside them. Around them are wooden beams and barbed wire. The subjects are abstracted into angular geometric blocks of colour, becoming dehumanised components in a machine of death. Nevinson later wrote: 'To me the soldier going to be dominated by the machine ... I was the first man to express this feeling on canvas.'

Nevinson knew trench warfare from his time in the ambulance service including the First Battle of Ypres, October-November 1914. By then, Nevinson's worsening rheumatism resulted in his return to London. He painted *La Mitrailleuse* (The Machine Gun, 'lay mit-ray-urs') in November 1915, during the last two days of a honeymoon with his (remarkably understanding) new bride.

Towards the end of the war, Nevinson began to lose his artistic bearings and Evelyn Waugh's brother cruelly described his greatest post-war contribution as the invention of the British cocktail party. He was attacked by critics for producing 'pictorial cartoons' and, in 1925 he bizarrely attacked himself by writing to the Tate asking them to take down and burn *La Mitrailleuse* calling it the 'World's Worst Picture'. Walter Sickert called the work 'the most authoritative and concentrated utterance on the war in the history of painting'. (Burlington Magazine, 1916)

Bio:Nevinson

Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson (1889–1946) was born in Hampstead

the son of a war correspondent and a suffrage campaigner. He attended the Slade and for a time Mark Gertler was his closest friend until they both fell in love with Dora Carrington. At the Slade Professor Henry Tonks advised him to give up art which led to a life-long feud between them and to Nevinson imagining conspiracies against him. After the Slade he studied in Paris and knew Pablo Picasso and Vladimir Lenin and shared a studio with Amedeo Modigliani. Back in London he joined forces with Wyndham Lewis until they fell out and Lewis founded the Vorticists from which Nevinson was excluded. During the war he was in the ambulance service and helped clean the sheds and dress wounds of the injured at Dunkirk railway station. Three thousand French troops had been taken from the front to Dunkirk and then abandoned and were left for weeks to die of their wounds. His rheumatism rendered him unfit to drive and he returned to England and worked in a hospital with shell shock victims and those with severe facial injuries. He married in 1915 and the following year was invalided out of the service with acute rheumatic fever. He returned as an official war artist and became one of the best known war artists. His work *Paths of Glory* showing two dead soldiers was ordered not to be shown but he exhibited it with brown paper across it with the word 'Censored'. After the war he went to New York where he was initially well received but his boasting and exaggerated claims about the war made him enemies and his depressive personality escalated the situation.

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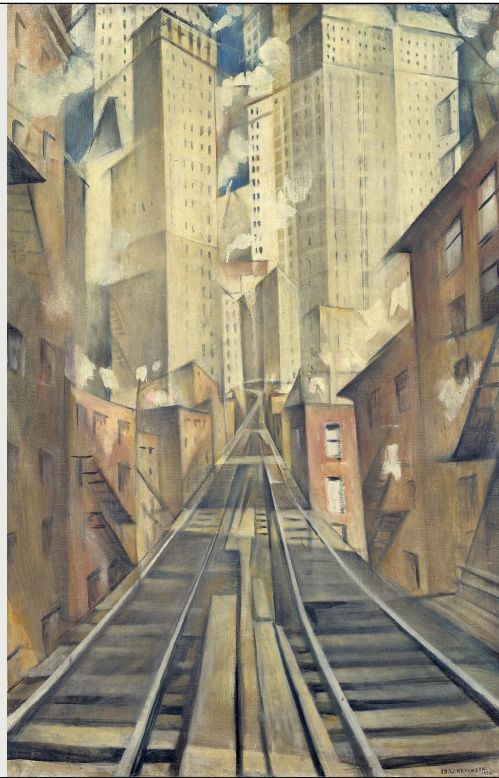
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Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson
(1889-1946)

*The Soul of the Soulless City ('New
York - an Abstraction')*

1920

91.5 x 60.8 cm

Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson (1889-1946), *The Soul of the Soulless City ('New York - an Abstraction')*, 1920, 91.5 x 60.8 cm

From the ruins of the Western Front, Nevinson turned to the city that seemed to embody everything the modern world was becoming. He first visited **New York** in **1919** and was overwhelmed — he declared it was "built for me," a city of steel and verticality that matched his own aesthetic instincts exactly. The result was **The Soul of the Soulless City**, painted on his return to England, depicting an imaginary stretch of **Manhattan's elevated railway** driving towards the viewer in a relentless diagonal. An American critic described it as "hard, metallic, unhuman" — which Nevinson almost certainly took as a compliment. The title carries an edge. It alludes to **Karl Marx's** description of religion as "the heart of a heartless world," inverting that famous phrase to suggest that modernity itself had become the new faith — hollow, mechanical, offering no comfort. When a second New York exhibition in **1920** was poorly received, Nevinson grew bitter and volatile, and the painting's title acquired a more personal charge. The broader context is the **return to order** — the postwar retreat from avant-garde experiment

toward classicism and the natural world. Nevinson followed that drift in later years, producing landscapes such as **A Winter Landscape** of 1926, though the visionary ferocity of his wartime work never fully returned.

Notes

Nevinson first visited New York in 1919 and his work was well received. He was impressed by the architecture (he said the city was 'built for me') and made numerous sketches. On his return to England he produced this and other works before his next visit the following year for a second exhibition. However, this second exhibition was poorly received and Nevinson became bitter and may explain the change in title. The new title may have been a reference to Karl Marx's comment that religion was the 'heart of a heartless world'.

The painting depicts an imaginary section of the elevated railway running through Manhattan. The image described by one American critic as 'hard, metallic, unhuman' shows elements of Cubism, including the narrow range of colours, and Futurism through the interest in speed and modernity.

The taste for painting modern cities and for modernity as a subject waned in the aftermath of the First World War with a shift known as the 'return to order', a renewed interest in the classical style and in nature and the countryside. A growing number of Nevinson's later paintings were of nature, such as *A Winter Landscape* (1926).

In a 1920s catalogue it said of Nevinson, "...It is something, at the age of thirty one, to be among the most discussed, most successful, most promising, most admired and most hated British artists..." He was becoming disliked for his outbursts, he suffered from depression, was volatile, had an unfortunate habit of bragging and embellished his war experiences. His autobiography displays right-wing xenophobia and some of his correspondence is explicitly racist.

The last picture in the exhibition.

Summary

George Grosz and Otto Dix exposed the unequal treatment of disabled veterans in post-war society

Hannah Höch and André Masson were instrumental in the birth of new art forms dada and surrealism

Pablo Picasso and Winifred Knights returned to tradition and classicism

Fernand Léger and C.R.W Nevinson produced visions of the city of the future as society began to rebuild itself

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52-05 AFTERMATH WWI ART

DR. LAURENCE SHAFE

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Christopher Richard
Wynne Nevinson,
The Soul of the
Soulless City,
1920

This talk has traced the war's aftermath through sculpture, painting, printmaking, and photomontage — from Epstein's dismembered torso and Lehmbruck's fallen soldier, through Dix and Grosz's indictments of Weimar social collapse, to the clinical records of Tonks, the political fury of Höch, and the return to order in Léger, Knights, and Procter. What unites these artists across nations and idioms is a refusal to look away from what industrial war had done to the human body, the city, and the social contract.



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