Version 1.0 | **Last updated 31 August 2015**

Dix, Otto

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Dix, *Otto*
German artist
Born 02 December 1891 in Gera-Untermhaus, Germany
Died 25 July 1969 in Singen, Germany

In his oeuvre, the German painter Otto Dix dealt more intensively with wartime experiences than any other artist. Hundreds of drawings and gouaches capture industrialised combat. After the Great War, he created works that are among the most important examples of anti-war art.

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1. Otto Dix draws in the trench

Otto Dix (1891-1969) volunteered for war, like many other German artists and writers. Afterwards, he said: "war was a terrible thing but nevertheless something powerful. [...] You have to have seen people in this untamed state to know anything about them."

During his long training period in Dresden and Bautzen from 1914 to 1915, he painted *Self-Portrait as Shooting Target* and *Self-Portrait as a Soldier*, which showed him with a shaved head, deformed by fever. In 1915, *Self-Portrait as Mars* came into being. At this time, Dix was still influenced by [expressionism](#) and futurism.

From autumn 1915 to the end of the war, he was based in the western theatre, except for a short mission to the Eastern Front in 1917. In November 1915, Dix was promoted to officer and received the Iron Cross 2nd Class. The abstract, dynamic and expressive compositions by Dix that were published in 1961[1] originated in the trenches. He sought to represent the characteristic dynamics of war in typical moments, which the artist himself experienced as machine gunner at the front.

2. Art against war

Veristic-realistic works followed after the end of the war: in 1923, the large-sized painting *Trench,* lost today; in 1924, fifty etchings as part of his cycle of prints *War* – primarily depicting the consequences of battle; from 1929 until 1932, *War Triptych*; and, in 1936, *Flanders*, his last painting in the context of World War I. Furthermore, Dix approached the theme of the consequences of war by using war cripples as a central subject during the early years of the Weimar Republic. Later on, the Nazis defamed these works as "painted military sabotage."[2]

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Section Editor: Christoph Nübel

Notes

1. ↑ Dix, Otto: Der Krieg (Zeichnungen und Guaschen 1914-1918). Ausstellung 25. Nov. 1961-17. Jan. 1962. St. Gallen 1961.
2. ↑ Reprint of the page of the catalogue for the exhibition "Entartete Kunst", Munich 1937, titled "Gemalte Wehrsabotage des Malers Otto Dix", in: Wulf Herzogenrath, Johann-Karl Schmidt (eds.): Otto Dix: Zum 100. Geburtstag 1891-1991. Stuttgart 1991, p. 25.

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Citation

Fitzke, Kirsten: Dix, Otto , in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014-10-08. **DOI**: 10.15463/ie1418.10718.

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