

Journal #19



Schädel

Otto Dix's "Skull" etching of 1924 is a gruesome image of decay and worms investing a human skull, which is meant to symbolize the indescribable horrors of the First World War. For Dix and other artists of the WWI era, skulls were powerful tools in demonstrating the dark reality of death that war inevitably brings.

Dix is one of the few German artists who experienced the First World War almost without interruption on the front lines.

At the time, why was the war not called World War One, but rather the "Great War"? Thinking about "total war", what was so "Great" about this war?

Letter

Otto Dix explained why he had joined the German Army on the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

I had to experience how someone beside me suddenly falls over and is dead and the bullet has hit him squarely. I had to experience that quite directly. I wanted it. I'm therefore not a pacifist at all - or am I? - perhaps I was an inquisitive person. I had to see all that for myself. I'm such a realist, you know, that I have to see everything with my own eyes in order to confirm that it's like that. I have to experience all the ghastly, bottomless depths for life for myself; it's for that reason that I went to war, and for that reason I volunteered.

1. What is a pacifist?
2. Why did Otto Dix join the German Army?
3. Is this a pleasant description? EXPLAIN.

Vocabulary

Accessory: Gas. British term applied to cylinder-discharged gas, used in orders and other communications in an effort to keep its use secret.

Alley: Go! Clear out! Run away! From French *allez*.

C3: Low grade, worthless. From the lowest British Army classification of fitness - those fit only for base duty.

Kamerad: Friend, comrade. From German. Often used facetiously by British soldiers amongst themselves as a term of surrender, perhaps when a story showed no signs of ending.

Potato Masher: German stick grenade. From the shape - the handle enabled the grenade to be thrown further.