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The stylistic evolutions of these artists, but rather, with the overall themes and attitudes they present, with the similarities and disparities between the artists. The new objectivity became a distinct force in German art in 1923, and a year later, it received its name from a German critic, Dr. Hartlaub. Hartlaub wrote at the time, "The expression, or really to apply as a label to the new realism, for the new realism baring a socialistic flavor. It was related to the general contemporary feeling in Germany of resignation and cynicism after a period of exuberant hopes, which had found an outlet in expressionism." He's referring to the first wave of expressionism, represented by Kirchner and Nolde. Cynicism and resignation [01:00] are the negative side of new objectivity. The positive side expresses itself in the enthusiasm for the immediate reality, as a result of the desire to take things entirely objectively, on a material basis, without immediately investing them with ideal implications. An American art historian, Bernard Myers, has summarized the social and political situation in Germany that gave rise to the new objectivity.

"By 1923," he writes, "it had become sufficiently clear to the idealistic expressionists that there was no longer much to hope for." The war had not brought a regeneration in the wake of its sacrifice. Revolution had been followed by inflation, war by the so-called disgraceful peace of Versailles. Blockade from the countries, which the idealists had been [02:00] willing to welcome as brothers, augmented the terrible need and brought about the years of hunger that were still remembered by older Germans during the rise of Hitlerism, when the Ruhr was occupied in 1923, all hope was abandoned by those Germans who had been looking forward to a better world. From the high plains of ethical and moral striving, German culture in the '20s turned to a variety of ideas that pointed in the opposite direction, and were concerned, for the most part, with an economic distress, which, in spite of temporary palliatives, remained basic. German literature and art as late as the end of the 20s and the early 30s, into the very period of proto-fascism, was to be dominated by the often dry and hard realism of the new objectivity. [03:00]

Sorry, that's wrong.

Otto Dix was born of a railroad worker in 1891. He had an academic training as a youth, and then developed -- one more try.

He had an academic training as a youth... yes. And then developed several manners of painting, from impressionism to cubism to a manner derived out of futurism. And futurism -- the manner derived out of futurism is seen here, in a picture called *War of 1914*. [04:00] This is a youthful work, which may have been painted before Dix was drafted. The painting is allied to Italian futurist painting in the composition, the way splintered, fragmented forms are made to fill the entire canvas; the emphasis upon motion, speed, and energy; the attempt to characterize or delineate motion by the use of those great linear bands that traverse the canvas.

Italian futurism, as practiced by Balla, Boccioni, and Severini, and as promulgated by the poet Marinetti, was also an exhortation to a war sensibility. The futurists actually urged war. They saw in combat the excitement of dangerous machines, and the presentation of new possibilities for heroism. Futurism glorified war, at least until the war came. [05:00] And Dix, at this early

time, also shares, I believe, a predilection for the imagined excitement of the combat situation, the horrified little faces which appear, especially in the lower left of the canvas, are, in part, a disclaimer to this attitude. But I think the painting as a whole, with the aggressive cannons and shells, the parts of machinery, gears, and wheels, and the ubiquitous thorn shape, probably suggested by barbed wire -- the painting, as a whole, presents not a condemnation, but rather, implicit sympathy or rapport for the dynamism, the imagined dynamism of war.

George Grosz was born two years later than Dix, in 1893 in Berlin. He also had an academic training in art, and like Dix, became attracted to futurism in the mid-1910s. [06:00] The drawing at the right reveals Grosz, at a time when futurism -- when futurist style was becoming assimilated into Grosz's personal view, into Grosz's personal style of expression. Forms and lines are dispersed over the field, as in the Dix, both pictures being related, in a sense, to the futurist practice. And the lines themselves are energetic, impulsive. They clash into each other, and they break away. And in the process, they capture the essence of a structure, a street, or the bright, cold sun, and they pause and linger to delineate the female parts of a woman. At the bottom, in the center, there is a self-portrait of Grosz, immersed in the turbulent activity and the noise of the city. Grosz shows himself wearing a bowler hat, proclaiming his detachment, [07:00] his artistic detachment. The head is placed next to a liquor bottle, and this may be an unwitting or unconscious placement, but it is seen now as a tragic prophecy of Grosz's fate.

The actual experience of combat washed away any sympathy Dix may have had for war. Pictures such as the one at the left were inspired by deeply-felt horror, fear, and disgust. The incredible minutia that fills this landscape of destruction testifies to the impact made on the artist. A more poetic, darkly poetic, vision, appears at the right, called *Meeting a Madman at Night*. The forms are inherently expressive, tortured, anguished. The strange light that bathes these ruined forms recalls the flares used to light the terrain in trench warfare. [08:00] Everything is drenched in this savage, cold, artificial light. Everything but the hysterical, shocked face of the dark figure in the front, who commands our attention.

Here at the left is an etching with aquatint, one of a series Dix made in the early '20s, presenting different episodes of the war. The best of these graphic works, such as this one of storm troopers advancing through a region of deadly gas. The best of this series project a combination of terror and super-reality, a merger of the unreal with the all-too-real that calls to mind Goya's aquatint etchings of the disasters of war. The forms are large and clear, and they advance right upon us, as figures do in motion pictures, [09:00] when they lumber directly into the camera eye. The gestures are slow and hypnotically menacing. Above all, it is the gas masks that capture us. Masks rendered to express a fusion of human emotion with animal physiognomy. In previous weeks, we have seen how the Belgian painter Ensor used masks of the carnival to expose the stupidity and duality of certain classes. We saw how later German artists, such as Kirchner and Nolde, were attracted to masks also, but for less satiric reasons, for more mysterious effects. Dix finds masks where they were, finds instruments that almost, but not entirely, obscure and hide the individual in anonymity. Masks that allow the animal in man to take prominence. [10:00]

Dix also saw the forces behind the machineguns. Here in *Barricade*, the machine gunner wears civilian clothes, a white collar and a business suit, and a helmet, absurdly perched upon his head, and right next to him lies a broken statue of classical vintage, symbolic of the destruction of

civilization, the destruction of rational and creative activity. The ugly, leering face is identified in Dix's mind with all the exploiters, the sadistic pimps, and the corrupt capitalists prevalent on the German scene.

Grosz was drafted into the army in 1914. He felt himself to be as mentally unfit for war as this skeleton, [11:00] which is here being pronounced *kriegsverwendungsfähig*, "fit for active service." In the army, Grosz soon broke down. He was put in a military asylum for the shell shocked and the insane. He recalled his service in drawings such as the one at the right, intense recreations of the bitterness of soldiers' lives. The series of works he made in the early 1920s are his most potent creations, images drawn with an acid-biting line, sparse, spare [mordent?], accurately capturing essentials with great economy of means.

Grosz returned to Berlin in 1918, filled with a deeper hatred and pessimism than he had ever known. And his hatred was directly channeled into mass editions of his drawings and lithographs, works designed to infuriate the rich bourgeoisie, to expose the corruption of the church, [12:00] especially for the church's attitude of *Gott mit uns*, "God's on our side," attitude in the war, and he made works etched in hatred for the military class as well. These violent attacks came from a left political orientation, and were designed to inflame the working class to revolution, but although Grosz was identified with the left, he had little sympathy for the proletariat, and there was little of the reformer in his heart.

Grosz became a scandalous figure in Berlin for drawings such as Christ with a gas mask. He was arrested and tried three times. Twice, his work was confiscated, and he was fined exorbitant amounts. The charge against Grosz for this picture [13:00] was defaming public morals, specifically, and I quote, "corrupting the inborn sense of shame and virtue innate in the German people."

The White General is an attack on the [Free Corps?], a fascist army clique, which Grosz savagely attacked in 1919. The Free Corps stood for the restoration of the monarchy, and used the swastika as its symbol long before Hitler's rise.

Grosz believed, by the way, that the army was behind much of the litigation against him. The army was primarily infuriated by the fact that he had purposely misdrawn the uniforms, giving them the wrong number of buttons, and subtly distorting them in other ways. [14:00]

Dix returned from the army to find the military on parade in postwar Berlin. As here, they strut along on a promenade, crippled, distorted invalids displaying their wounds as they display their medals. Dix projects his repulsion into a repulsive image, as in the crippled man, second from the left, who's compulsive twitch and shudder is rendered with unflinching realism.

Dix saw the streets filled with mangy animals and hungry, crippled ex-soldiers, men become beggars. Amputated and broken men who respectable society passes by. Both the etching at the left and the painting at the right are marked by an incisive line and extreme gesture.

The cut-off U that we see in both pictures [15:00] here appears in this street scene at the left, where it serves -- the cut-off U serves to transmit the random frenzy and disjunction, the mad,

frantic pace of Berlin street life in the postwar period. Here, the beggar sits while the world rushes by. We do not know whether the passerby who reaches for the beggar's hand is giving arms or stealing them. In either case, he is mutilated himself. He has one eye, and he is pathetically placed next to the great artificial optometrist's eye.

Another street picture by Dix, at the right, shows that this street theme was a burning reality to Dix, as it was also to Grosz, and to other German artists of the time, not only painters and draftsman, but also writers, and especially filmmakers, such as Pabst, who made *Die freudlose Gasse*, *The Joyless Street*, [16:00] in 1925, from a popular novel by Hugo Bettauer. An entire series of German films in this period, this period which is the Golden Age in German cinema, have been designated as "street films" by Siegfried Kracauer, the film historian. Usually, the films include the word "street" or a synonym in their titles, as in *Asphalt* or *Tragedy of the Street*, or in the earliest of these street pictures, simply called -- from 1923, simply called *The Street*. In some of the films, the street becomes a dreadful jungle of prostitutes and panderers, of thieves and gamblers. In all of the films, the street is indicated to be the center of life. People, not with proletarians, but with outcasts, with all the discontented.

And I might note, one other element that appears in the Dix at the left, that giant eye, [17:00] makes one of its first appearances in art or film here in this work of 1921. The isolated, watchful eye becomes a trademark in much German work in the '20s, and in the following decade, becomes a stock device of the French surrealists. The CBS television eye, an item of mass culture, is derived from a surrealist picture by Magritte, which may, in turn, be traced to works such as this one. Thus, a device created to shock the viewer becomes assimilated, in time, by the enemy. And in its assimilation, it is made a feat.

Grosz wrote in his autobiography, "The streets became dangerous, and where markets for prostitution, murder, and cocaine deals. Barbarism prevailed." In the gripping image of a knifing at the left, [18:00] we see an economy of means harnessed to the greatest intensity. Grosz is nothing if not direct. He chooses the precise moment of the killer. The architecture, also, all points to the incident. On top, an animal-like man is like a hyena waiting for the kill before he steps in. The petrified burger sits in his house at the right. And, in the picture at the right, again, flagrant activity, this time more sexual, is indicated in the wild, teeming street.

Grosz sees the same mayhem and violence inside private homes. In his home, or what passes for a home, man must live with himself, with his own guilt, his own dark drives. In the picture at the left, the frozen sun blazes down, hypnotizing and paralyzing the pathetic creature, paralyzing him in his room. [19:00] And the room seems rent, as by an earthquake, rent by surging crazy forces.

A peacetime world here in the 20s, where private violence carries on where the war left off. Would you bring that one on the right for a second, [Daring?]? That's right.

Dix came back, and he looked inside houses, too, and he also finds murder and dismemberment, as in this *Lustmörder*, murder and dismemberment with a sexual bias. But, Dix's taste [20:00] was always a bit more for the bizarre, as seen here, in this earlier picture of a tattooed woman. And his taste reveals itself in this later picture, one of his most famous pictures, *The Salon*, 1922.

Dix presents images of repulsion, but too often, they are presented with a concomitant [soddenness?] to the touch, a blatant and heavy rendering, without sufficient interest in compositional or painterly concerns. The pictures too often give their yield too quickly.

In Dix's watercolors, he was most lively and spontaneous, the subtlety of the watercolor medium brought out unexpected layers of artistic sensitivity in Dix. [21:00]

The styles of Grosz and Dix are most closely related in watercolor. This is by Grosz, and you can recall the similar elegant washes laid down within nervous, linear frames, and the similarities of design, connections of design between the two works. Also similar is the caricaturing aspect, the hostile antagonistic attitude, the seizure of a facial peculiarity, and its exaggeration.

These watercolors will introduce us to another important subject of Grosz and Dix, the portrait. Both pictures on the screen are by Dix: a portrait of a doctor at the left, and a portrait of the artist's parents at the right. I think we can immediately recognize a different sense of objective reality in these works. In fact, the term new objectivity has two sizes, or rather, two inclinations. [22:00] The works we have seen previous to the portraits were invested with a stylistic ferocity that was appropriate to the subjects. They were objective insofar as they all proclaim "This is the way things are."

With a change in subjects from, say, street scenes to portraits, with a change to a subject that is naturally less violent, there is a corresponding change in both Grosz and Dix in terms of stylistic and formal expression. Now, the style becomes objective, whereas in the other works, it is the candid viewpoint that is objective. Caricatural elements, as well as aspects of distortion in the portraits are kept down to a minimum. If the models all seem exaggerated in their parts, we feel that here, it is largely due to Dix's choice of subject. [23:00] Paint is applied with great precision, with almost incredible minutia in the picture of the doctor at the left, a rich array of medical instruments and tools surround the doctor and serve to characterize him; his round form that holds the dangerously pointed syringe is echoed in the alternating curve [unto your?] instruments.

At the right, the working-class sensibility of Dix's parents, their stolidity and simplicity, their industry, their lack of pretension is transmitted by the large, block-like forms, and by their straight forward placement on the heavy-curved couch.

Here, in Dix's portrait of an acquaintance, Dix relates the oratorical hand gesturing of the man to the gesticulations of the architecture, [24:00] with perhaps the suggestion that the man, his face, his hands, his body, is, like the structure, nothing but a façade.

Other types from the Bohemian intelligentsia of Berlin were exposed without mercy. It is difficult to know, in portraits such as this one, of Sylvia [Hardon?], how much is caricature, but one suspects that there is actually very little.

The most interesting portrait by Dix that I know is the portrait of Dr. Meyer-Hermann in the Museum of Modern Art. It sustains our interest because of the greater formal means in the

canvas. Virtually the entire surface is composed of circles, even the hands and the eyes. And the painted distorted reflection above the doctor's head contains greater subtleties [25:00] than we usually find in Dix.

I have just one Grosz portrait to show, but perhaps this is Grosz's best. The portrait of the hunchback poet Max Herrmann-Neisse. Grosz made a full-scale, minutely detailed drawing and traced it on the canvas. While the poet consumed great quantities of corn liquor, Schnapps, and while he recited the story of his unhappy life, Grosz laboriously painted, in thin glazes, every detail and texture of head and hands, even to the individual white eyelashes, which we can't make out, really, here, and the cracks in the lips. This is a new objectivity of style.

Now, more quickly, let us turn to the work of Max Beckmann. Born in 1884, Beckmann underwent an academic training [26:00] similar to that received by Grosz and Dix. In the first decade of our century, while still a young man, Beckmann allied himself with the German impressionists known as the succession group, which was led by Max Liebermann. He developed a mature, polished brand of impressionism, as seen in the landscape at the right, and it is essentially an impressionist technique of sketchy stroking that characterizes this self-portrait with his wife at the left. Pictures such as the landscape at the left were very well-received.

More tentative efforts, efforts at a more personal and expressive statement, such as the picture now on the screen, called *The Great Death Scene*, received critical disapproval from everyone except Edvard Munch, the Norwegian expressionist artist who was in Berlin at the time. [27:00] Munk saw a great latent force in this picture, and urged the young Beckmann to pursue the course implied in the painting. Eventually, Beckmann would delve deeply into himself, but it was not for over a decade.

In 1915, Beckmann enlisted in the medical corps. Soon, he became severely wounded, and spend two years convalescing. Early in 1918, Beckmann made these powerful etchings, *Siesta*, at the left, and *There's a Brain*, at the right. They are clearly, clearly related to the contemporaneous Grosz-Dix style, in the compositional distribution of shapes on a vertical bias, the flattened-out shapes flattened out on the picture plane, and in the use of anatomical deformation and expressive exaggeration of gesture. These and related works also fall [28:00] in the general category of new objectivity in their attention to contemporary phenomenon, to the life and manners of the time.

The essential difference between Beckmann and the others is more important. That difference concerns the power of the forms in Beckmann, for example, the way in which the shapes in the picture at the left seem almost to tumble out of the picture; the forms are fuller and denser, they have more weight. And even in these linear etchings, we can detect a painterly quality, a concern for the substance and texture of objects, that is not to be found in the works of either Grosz or Dix.

Many mature aspects of Beckmann's style appear three years later, in this painting called *The Green*. [29:00] The forms are piled one on top of the other, and the general effect is of turmoil and disarray, yet carefully arranged and restrained by the painter. The figures are delineated with a hard, almost-metallic realism which is [constant?], again, with the tenants of new

objectivity, but the scene presented, the meaning of the figures, the meaning of the relationships among the figures, is not clear or explicit. It is not readily recognizable, as in pictures by Grosz and Dix.

Beckmann presents here the first of his allegories. The interpretation of the allegory must be a personal one; it must be made freshly and with imagination, by the individual viewer. Here, a country girl sits in the center of the canvas, holding a toy in her lap. Arranged in an oval round her [30:00] are four figures. A drunken woman at the bottom, who is associated with emblems of the revelry of the night before. Above her, to the right, wearing a soldier's helmet, appears a man with stumps for legs. He wears the shirt of a clown. At the upper right, trying to make his way up a ladder is the mustached man with no hands carrying a fish under his arm. And at the upper left, an organ grinder blows his horn. The girl's eyes are wide open, staring strangely, while the eyes of all the other figures are closed or hidden or gouged out. One critic has interpreted the four figures as the four basic types of the post-war world, as Beckmann saw it. The whore, [31:00] the cripple, the beggar, and the criminal. All the types being contrasted with the girl, who is presumably a symbol of innocence. There may be something in this, but not enough. For one thing, the classifications beggar, cripple, and criminal, could be interchangeably applied to the three male figures.

Beckmann's allegories cannot, in my opinion, be translated in a direct fashion. Take John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* for example, in which the character named Christian represents the average good man in search of God. The village that he enters on this search is called Vanity Fair, a region filled with the shame and banality of the material world. Beckmann's images, at least those of the '20s, are not allegories at all in this traditional sense. I think they have to be seen as concrete realizations of, as here, a nightmare world, who's theme may concern good and evil, [32:00] but who's individual symbols are intensely personal and ambiguous. They must be treated with the sensitivity one uses when analyzing an actual dream, and how much more difficult that is when it is not even our own dream.

In the 1920's, Beckmann took steps in other directions, as indicated here, in *The View of [Genoa?]*, at the left, and the picture called *Dream*, sometimes called *Chinese Fireworks*, at the right. The mysterious, brooding power of the cool shades and the abstracted forms in the landscape mark this painting as one of the masterpieces of its kind in our century. The Chinese fireworks at the right presents wonderful, almost abstract shapes, perhaps suggested to the artist's imagination by a parade of floats. [33:00] The concentric circles at the right are especially a beautiful invention.

Beckmann painted himself regularly throughout his life. The self-portrait here, in the Museum of Modern Art, is a condensed crystalline image, powerful and controlled. The figure seems compressed by a narrow space, forced into himself. He wears a look of intense concentration. He stiffly holds the cigarette before him, and the stiffness and tension of his pose is echoed in the design and the nature of the formal outfit he wears. This portrait was painted in 1923. The photograph, now at the right, was taken in 1950, when Beckmann was in New York teaching at the Brooklyn Museum. The resemblance is, of course, striking. It is as though the young Beckmann [34:00] looked so deeply at himself that he saw how he would look almost three decades later.

Guggenheim Museum Archives Reel-to-Reel collection
Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, and George Grosz by Maurice Tuchman, 1962

In the 1930s, and until his death in 1950, Beckmann created great triptychs, and other large paintings, that are more deeply felt and are more philosophically sound than the works I have shown this afternoon. Like the later works of Grosz and Dix, these works by Beckmann fall, by and the large, outside of the expressionist traditions we are concerned with in this series of lectures. But just as Beckmann's art took on new and greater dimension in the 1930s, so the art of Grosz and Dix sharply and drastically declined. When the Nazis took power in 1933, Dix was fired from his position in the Prussian Academy. He was forbidden to exhibit in 1934. Five years later, he was imprisoned by the state, accused of participation in the attempted assassination [35:00] of Hitler in Munich. In 1945, Dix, who had just been freed, was drafted into the Volkssturm at the age of 53. One month later, he was taken prisoner by the French.

After the war, Dix resumed painting with a style that was anticipated in his work in the late 1920s, a sort of mystical expressionism with romantic overtones, unhappily mediocre, lacking the intensity and conviction of his early works.

George Grosz's career presented striking parallels. Grosz accepted an invitation from the Arts Students League in New York, and came and settled here in New York in 1933. His work became immediately drained of all passion and almost all talent. The [tense line?] that was his forte was negated and denied. [36:00] Images of a quasi-romantic and sentimental tone alternated with unconvincing [cretenance?] of apocalyptic themes and also warlike themes.

In the summer of 1959, Grosz decided to move back to Berlin. Three weeks after his arrival there, he suddenly collapsed and died.

One last note: psychiatrists talk of reactive personalities. By that, they mean personalities who's attitudes and feelings depend upon the way things are, in the immediately given situation. Personalities who's emotional framework is determined solely by a state of affairs that is external to themselves. Reactive personalities do not develop their own personalities; they are constantly prey to changing, external conditions that affect them. It is possible that decline [37:00] in the creative expression of artists like Grosz and Dix is tied into the qualities of their work; is tied into an essentially reactive sensibility.

The reverse case may be equally true. With artists like Beckmann, there may be a tie-in between work which feeds upon personal founts of creativity, work which became richer regardless of changing external conditions.

Thank you very much. Next week, (inaudible).

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Max Beckman, George Grosz, Otto Dix / Maurice Tuchman. 1962/3/30. Reel-to-Reel collection. A0004. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, New York