ON MILITARY THEME IN THE EARLY OTTO DIX ARTWORKS

О ВОЕННОЙ ТЕМАТИКЕ В РАННИХ ПРОИЗВЕДЕНИЯХ ОТТО ДИКСА

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S u m m a r y

This article is devoted to the study of the artistic style of the German avant-garde artist Otto Dix. In the course of the research, we study the main features of the early (war period) artworks of the artist and his critical technique. The main material of the study is paintings painted during the First World War and in the post-war period. The methodological apparatus of the research includes the following general scientific methods: analysis and synthesis of data, generalization, abstraction, comparison. Of the main methods of art criticism, we use: the descriptive method, the structural-analytical method and the system-analytical method. To obtain the most reliable data on the social nature of Otto Dix's work, we use sociological methods: document analysis and the method of summarizing characteristics. The result of the study was the refinement and detailed description of the critical technique of Otto Dix using the example of his paintings on military subjects.

Аннотация

Настоящая статья посвящена изучению художественного стиля немецкого авангардиста Отто Дикса. В ходе исследования мы изучаем основные особенности раннего (военного периода) творчества художника и его

критическую технику. Основной материал исследования – картины, написанные во время Первой Мировой войны и в послевоенный период. В методологический аппарат исследования входят следующие общенаучные методы: анализ и синтез данных, обобщение, абстрагирование, сравнение. Из основных методов искусствоведения мы используем: описательный метод, структурно-аналитический метод и системно-аналитический метод. Для получения наиболее достоверных данных о социальном характере работ Отто Дикса мы используем социологические методы: анализ документов и метод обобщения характеристик. Результатом исследования стало уточнение и детальное описание критической техники Отто Дикса на примере его картин по военной тематике.

Key words: avant-garde, portrait, self-portrait, graphics, stage, military theme, grotesque.

Ключевые слова: авангардизм, портрет, автопортрет, графика, сцена, военная тематика, гротеск.

The relevance of the topic lies in the need for a private study of the work of the German avant-garde artist Otto Dix. In particular, the artist's early works, which have not yet been sufficiently studied, are of scientific interest.

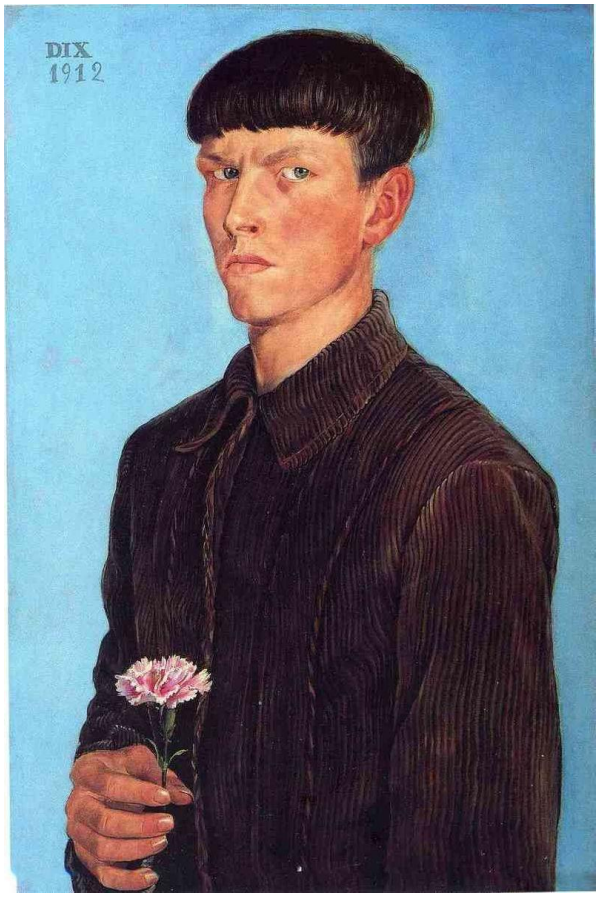
The practical significance of the study is due to the possibility of using the materials of the article in the further study of style of the German avant-garde artists (first half of the XX century). In the methodological aspect, the materials of the work can be used in a higher educational institution in the classroom in art disciplines.

The purpose of the research is a comprehensive analysis of critical techniques in the early artworks of Otto Dix.

Wilhelm Heinrich Otto Dix (1891-1969) is a German avant-garde artist and graphic artist, the most brutal satirist of the era between the two world wars. After the Expressionist and Dadaism experiments, he became a member of the «New Materiality». Otto Dix's early artworks is mainly devoted to military topics. The artist addresses the problems of morality and selfhood in a realistic and grotesque direction [1].

The artist acquired the main and saddest life experience during the First World War, in the trenches of which he spent several years. The horrors of war, seen from the trenches of the First World War and forever leaving a mark on his soul, led to a change not only in his worldview, but also in the artist's manner. 3War became the main theme of his work. In more than a hundred portraits and drawings, Dix captured wartime nightmares [6].

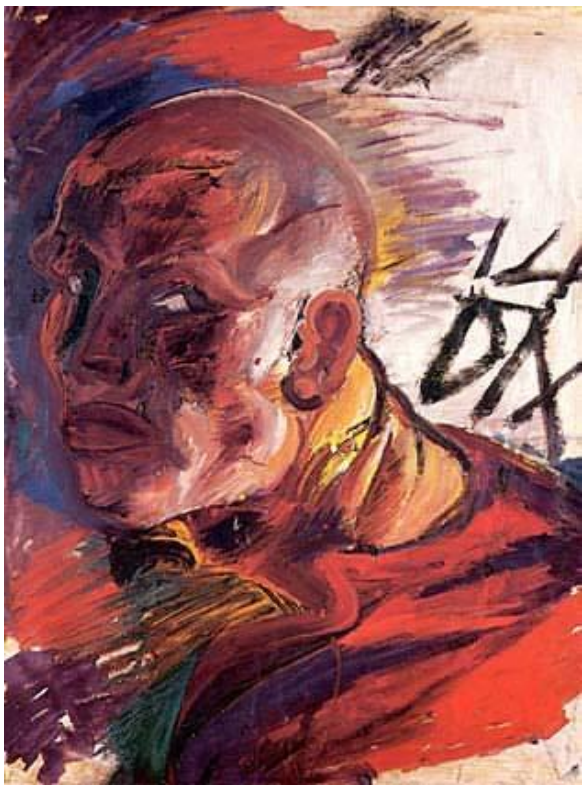
The author's pre-war works are notable for their serenity. This is especially evident in the example of the work of «Self-portrait with carnation».



App. 1. «Self-portrait with carnation», 1912

https://arthur.io/art/otto-dix/self-portrait-with-carnation

An example of a significant metamorphosis that took place in the mind and work of the artist is a self-portrait of the war period.



App. 2. «Self-portrait as a soldier», 1914/1915

https://cola.siu.edu/languages/undergraduate/language-programs/german/german-101/art/dix.php

Otto Dix became famous for his graphic series «War». This cycle is a brutal representation of the body: dying, dead, mutilated, decomposing, resting on a landscape becoming lifeless. The technique used (acid etching a metal printing plate to heighten the sense of decay) is a further reminder of the corrosive nature of the artist's experience [1].

The First World War became the hardest test for all the states participating in it. The political conflict underlying the events led to profound changes in all spheres of society, including ideology, culture, art, and influenced the development of stylistic features of European fine arts [2, p. 26].

The art of the avant-garde became a kind of reaction to the global crisis of culture. This trend is characterized by experiments in the field of style and forms, repulsion, and sometimes rejection of previously established norms and rules, from traditions.

The First World War was fundamentally different from previous military conflicts, especially in that growing industrialization allowed the development of more powerful weapons.

This war buried the humanistic hopes of artists. The joyless and pessimistic orientation of public sentiment determined the nature of the visual arts of the artists who became direct participants in this war.

Despite the fact that the artistic work of Otto Dix bore the stamp of the influence of avant-garde trends, he never broke the thread connecting his works with a realistic depiction of reality. The artist himself didn't deny this fact.

Otto Dix left to mankind a panorama of the horrors of war. The artist's personal memories became the basis for many graphic sketches he created during the hostilities, they became the basis of his grandiose grotesque world [2, p. 28].



App. 3. Works from the graphic cycle «War» I

https://socks-studio.com/2012/08/04/otto-dix-der-krieg-the-war-1924

The drawings are made in black and white and open up a real war for the viewer: with trenches, pain, fear and death. The artist in his works fiercely denounced the inhumanity and meaninglessness of the events taking place during the wars. Using the

example of World War I, Otto Dix tried to show human nature as it is. The distinctive character of this cycle is multi-genre [3].

The artist showed the trenches at the end of the battle, where, among the mash of dirt, fragments of logs and abandoned weapons that no one else needs, one can distinguish between dirty rags of clothing and torn off body parts. The artist depicted among the corpses of those killed against the background of the ashen sky, the bodies of the dead soldiers, the bodies hanging on a wire fence [1].



App. 4. Works from the graphic cycle «War» II

https://socks-studio.com/2012/08/04/otto-dix-der-krieg-the-war-1924

During the First World War, a special attitude to war and death developed in the artist's mind. Military events follow a vicious circle: images of marching soldiers doomed to death. The post-battle field is sustainable. The image of the «field» is complemented by those who fell in battle, which allows one to show death as an inevitable result of the war [5].

War is not only fearless battles of armies, glory of heroes and victors. Its consequences are visible in the post-war period as well. They are manifested in pain

and bitterness of loss and loss, in the silhouettes of ruined cities, in crowds of invalids and beggars.

A sharp social orientation distinguishes Otto Dix's post-war work. The artist addresses the topic of the post-war period, but even in them one can see a kind of continuation of the war, which has forever remained in the crippled souls of millions of people. A striking example of such works is the popular painting «The Trench» [4].



App. 5. «The Trench», 1923

http://weimarart.blogspot.com/2010/05/otto-dix-trenches-1917-at-that-moment.html

After Dix wrote the grotesque painting «Basic Vices» on the theme of Nazism in 1933, his works were labeled as «degenerate art» by the Nazi government. More than 200 of the artist's canvases were burned. However, Otto Dix, who passed through the circles of wartime hell and Nazism, left the world with deep and expressive works of art that are a vivid reflection of the brutal events of the First World War [6, p. 84].



App. 6. Triptych «War», 1932

https://www.culturematters.org.uk/index.php/arts/visual-art/item/3083-anti-war-and-anti-fascist-german-art-otto-dix-and-george-grosz

Another famous work of Otto Dix is the triptych «War». In this triptych, Otto Dix portrayed his hidden fears experienced during the war. The painting became the apogee of the artist's creativity and his «calling card». In the future, Otto Dix often turned to military themes, although the war acquired less grotesque features [1].

So, military motives were widespread in the early Otto Dix artwork. The artist tried to portray the war as it is. The artist's style was diverse: he had features of expressionism, avant-garde, pop art and French grotesque. The decomposition of individual elements of the images of the «field», «garrison» and «wire» allowed the artist to achieve absolute immersion in the military environment through different genres, types and forms of painting.

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