Otto Dix (1891-1959) was the third artist who, along with Beckmann and Grosz, was most closely associated with Neue Sachlichkeit. Although Beckmann, for the most part, avoided specific war imagery, Dix embraced it. Having served as both a machine gunner and an aerial observer, he was well acquainted with war’s effects. Like Grosz, he initially tried to find redeeming value in the apocalyptic event. Dix explained: “The war was a horrible thing, but there was something tremendous about it, too... You have to have seen human beings in this unleashed state to know what human nature is... I need to experience all the depths of life for myself, that’s what I go out, and that’s why I volunteered.” This idea of experiencing the ‘depths of life’ stemmed from Dix’s interest in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. In particular, Dix avidly read Nietzsche’s *The Joyous Science*, deriving from it a belief in life’s cyclical nature – procreation and death, building up and tearing down, and growth and decay.

As the war progressed, however, Dix’s faith in the potential improvement of society dissipated, and he began to produce unflinchingly direct and provocative artworks. His *Der Krieg (The War)* vividly captures the panoramic devastation that war inflicts, both on the terrain and on humans. In the left panel, armed and uniformed soldiers march off into the distance. Dix graphically displayed the horrific results in the center and right panels, where mangled bodies, many riddled with bullet holes, are scattered throughout the eerily lit apocalyptic landscape. As if to emphasize the intensely personal nature of this scene, the artist painted himself into the right panel as the ghostly but determined soldier who drags a comrade to safety. In the bottom panel, in a coffinlike bunker, lie soldiers asleep – or perhaps dead. Dix significantly chose to present this sequence of images in a triptych format, and the work recalls triptychs such as Matthias Grunewald *Isenheim Altarpiece*. Christ’s death and suffering there serve as reference points for Dix’s dead soldiers. However, the hope of salvation extended to viewers of the *Isenheim Altarpiece* through Christ’s eventual Resurrection is absent from Der Krieg. Like his fellow Neue Sachlichkeit artists, Dix felt compelled to lay bare the realities of his time, which the war’s violence dominated. Even years later, Dix still maintained:

> You have to see things the way they are. You have to be able to say yes to the human manifestations that exist and will always exist. That doesn’t mean saying yes to war, but to a fate that approaches you under certain conditions and in which you have to prove yourself. Abnormal situations bring out all the depravity, the bestiality of human beings... I portrayed states, states that the war brought about, and the results of war, as states.