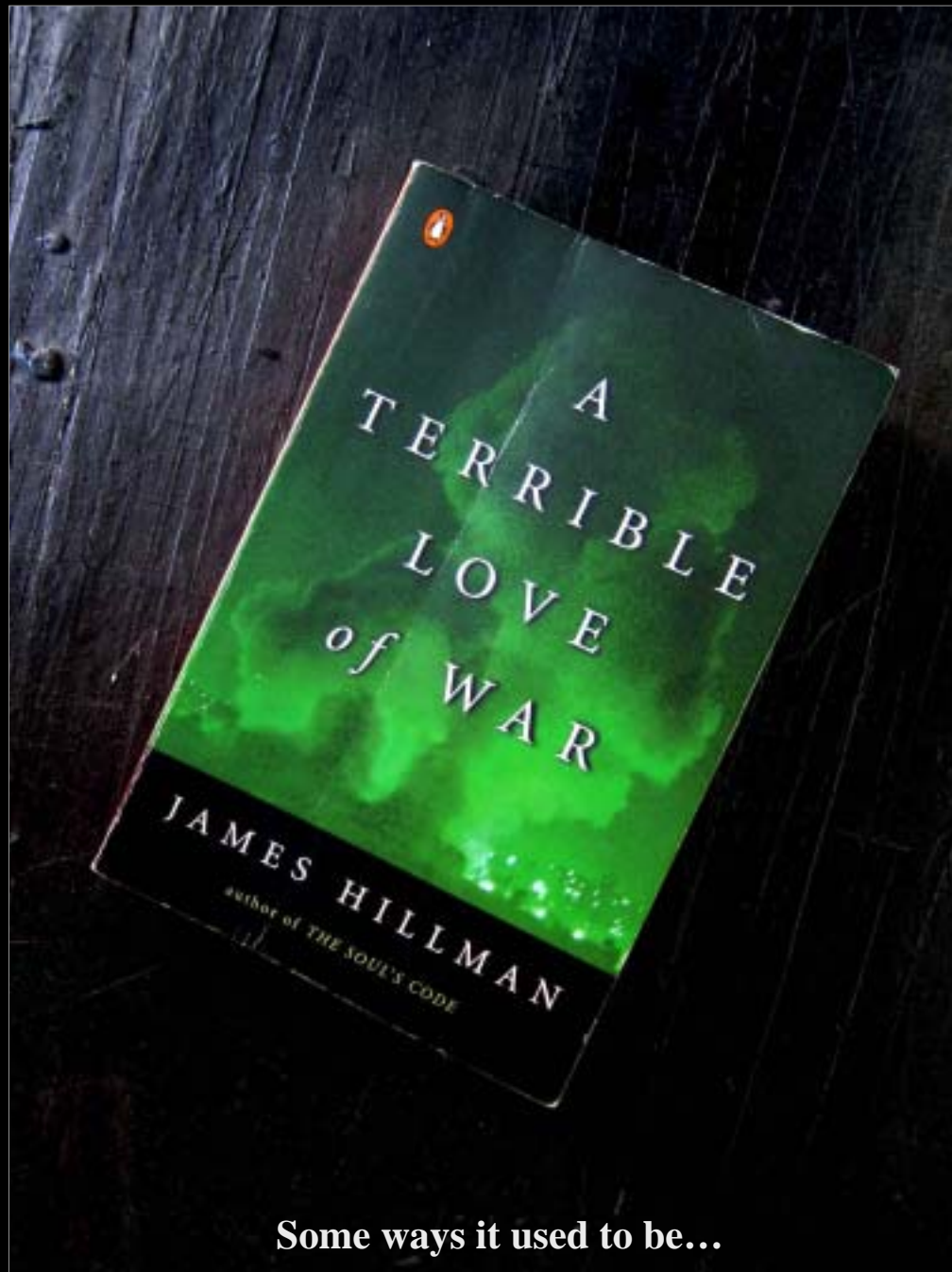


**A TERRIBLE LOVE OF WAR**



Some ways it used to be...

As artists, we begin as seeds  
planted in the earth of our times...

Amid the events of our worlds  
we grow into the trees of our maturity...

And then into the autumns of our old age

As artists, we begin as seeds planted in the earth of our times...  
Amid the events of our worlds we grow into the trees of our maturity  
and then into the autumns of old age

Childhood... birth to onset of puberty

Youth... puberty means figure out about sex

Early Maturity... figure out and prepare  
for a place in the world (education)

Maturity... build and maintain your place in the world (career)

Old Age...

?

As artists, we begin as seeds  
planted in the earth of our times...

**John Singer Sargent, b. Florence 1856, d. London 1925**

Childhood... birth to onset of puberty

“The son of prosperous and cultured parents  
who had settled in Europe and gave him  
an international upbringing and career.”

As artists, we begin as seeds planted in the earth of our times  
to grow into the trees of our maturity and the autumns of old age.



Sargent, an early self-portrait

Early Maturity... figure out and prepare  
for a place in the world.

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to grow into the trees of our maturity and the autumns of old age.



Early Maturity... figure out and prepare  
for a place in the world.

Sargent, Carolus-Duran, *drawing and portrait in oil.*

He was encouraged to paint directly by his teacher Carolus-Duran (with whom he studied in Paris 1874-6); but the virtuoso handling of paint that characterized his style derived more particularly from old masters such as Velasquez and Halls.

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Sargent: Mr. and Mrs. John Phelps Stokes, 1897

“He was described as an American born in Italy, educated in France, who looks like a German, speaks like an Englishman and paints like a Spaniard... “In maturity he is chiefly famous as the outstanding society portraitist of his age. The lavish elegance of his work brings him unrivalled success and his portraits of the wealthy and privileged convey with brilliant bravura the glamour and opulence of high society life.”



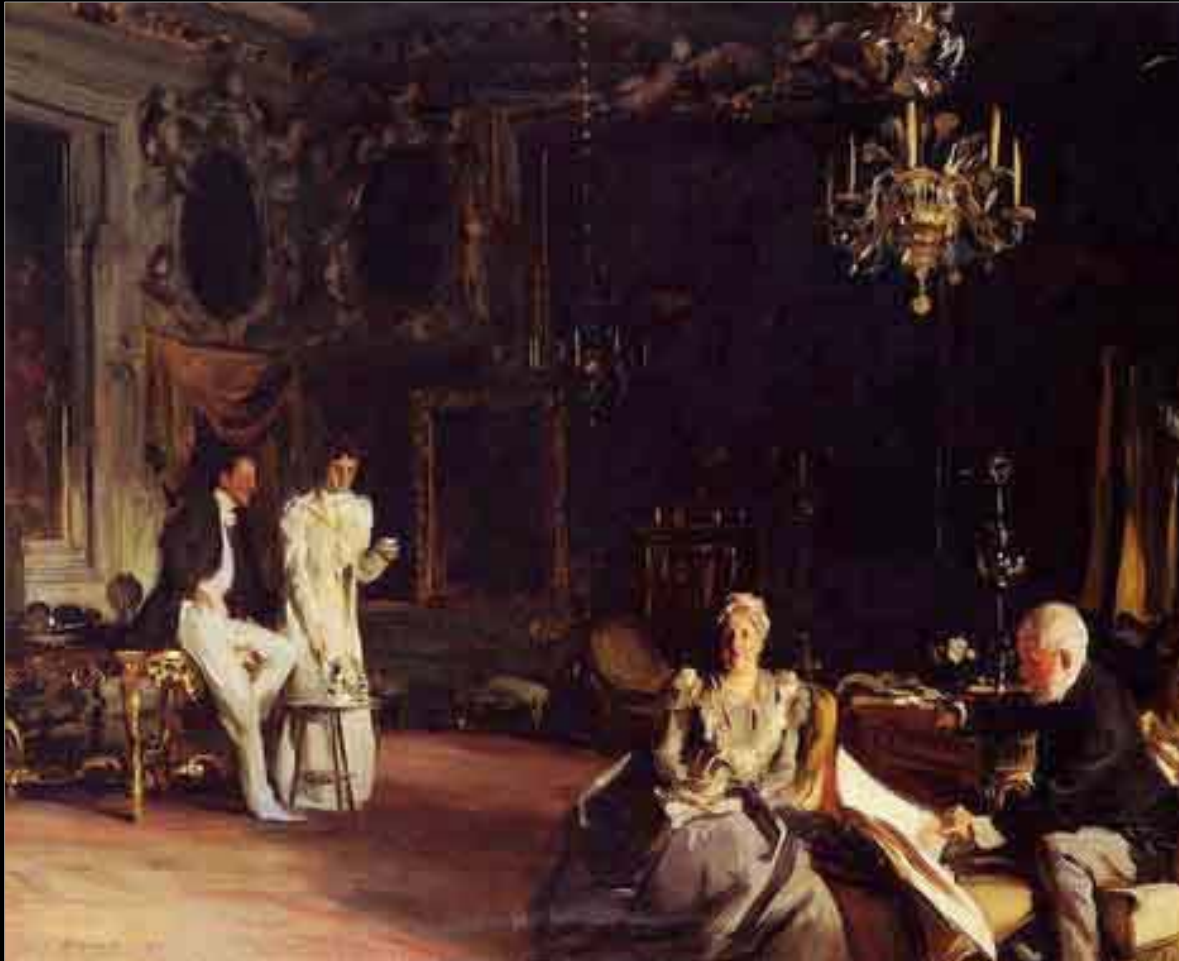
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Sargent: Non-chalant Repose, 1911

“He was described as an American born in Italy, educated in France, who looks like a German, speaks like an Englishman and paints like a Spaniard... “In maturity he is chiefly famous as the outstanding society portraitist of his age. The lavish elegance of his work brought him unrivalled success and his portraits of the wealthy and privileged convey with brilliant bravura the glamour and opulence of high society life.

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Sargent: An Interior in Venice, early 20<sup>th</sup> C.

“He was described as an American born in Italy, educated in France, who looks like a German, speaks like an Englishman and paints like a Spaniard... In maturity he is chiefly famous as the outstanding society portraitist of his age. The lavish elegance of his work brought him unrivalled success and his portraits of the wealthy and privileged convey with brilliant bravura the glamour and opulence of high society life.”

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Sargent, drawings from life for *Gassed*, 1918.

And in old age painted *Gassed*  
“A very different side to his talent is revealed in the enormous *Gassed* (1918—1919)  
which he painted as an official war artist. It has remarkable tragic power  
and is one of the greatest pictures inspired by the First World War.”

As artists, we begin as seeds planted in the earth of our times  
to grow into the trees of our maturity and the autumns of old age.

Dulce et Decorum est.

21 (1)

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through  
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,  
And towards our distant rest began the trudge.  
Now ~~Some~~ marched asleep. ~~Many~~ had lost their boots  
But limped on, blood-shed. All went lame; all  
Deaf even Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
Of ~~kind-outstripped~~ ~~Five~~ ~~dropping~~ ~~gas shells~~ ~~softly~~

Then somewhere near in front; Whew... fop, fop, fop  
Gas-shells? Or duds? We loosened masks in case, -  
Far ~~we~~ ~~remourning~~ of Krupp.

~~was but his in the face.~~  
Boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling,  
helmets just in time;  
was yelling out and stumbling,  
like a man in fire or lime...  
misty panes and thick green light,  
sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,  
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.



**Dulce et Decorum est**

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,  
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,  
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind;  
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! An ecstasy of fumbling,  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
And floundering like a man in fire or lime.  
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,  
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.  
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,  
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,  
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est  
Pro patria mori.

■ Wilfred Owen (1917)



As artists, we begin as seeds planted in the earth of our times  
to grow into the trees of our maturity and the autumns of old age.



First Exhibition of *Gassed*, Crystal Palace, London, 1919.

And in old age painted *Gassed*.

“A very different side to his talent is revealed in the enormous *Gassed* (1918—1919) which he painted as an official war artist. It has remarkable tragic power and is one of the greatest pictures inspired by the First World War.”

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**Max Beckmann, b. Leipzig 1886, d. New York City 1950**

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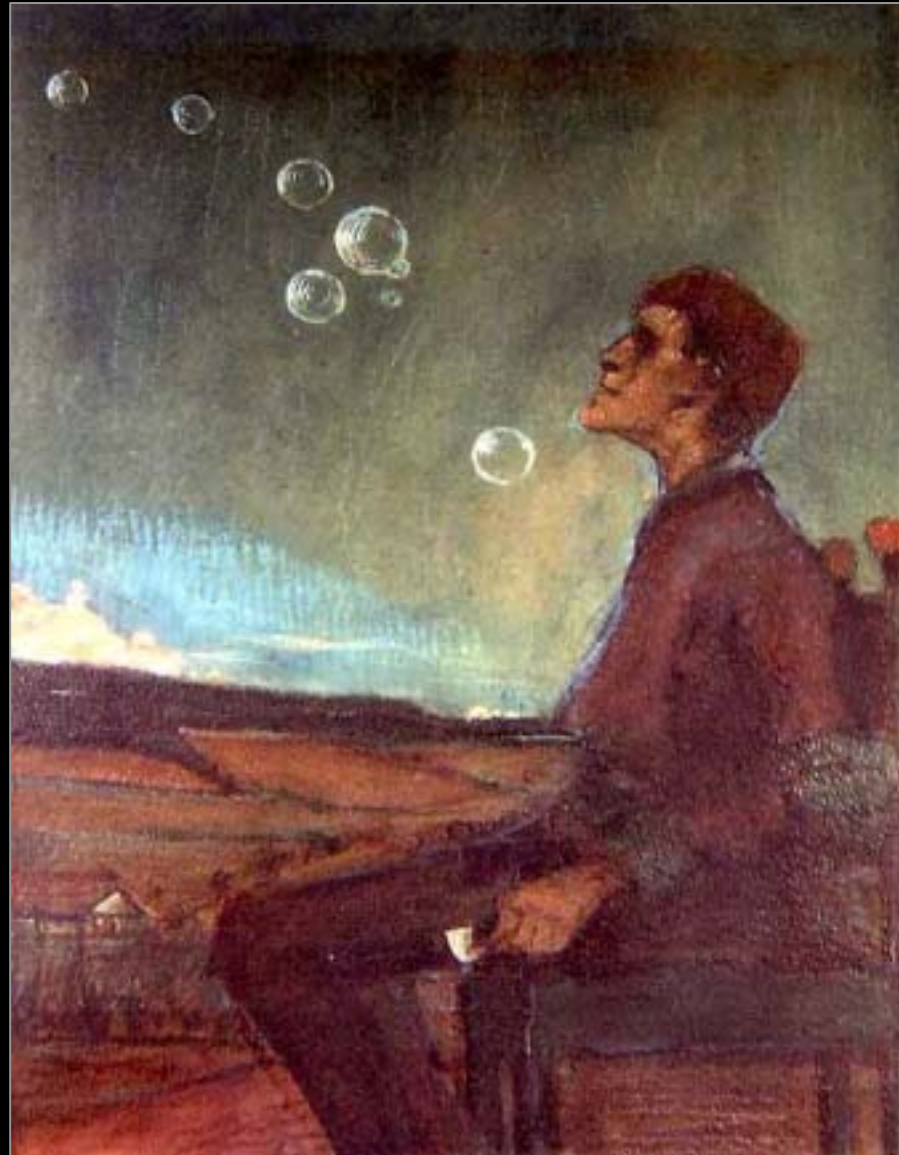
*Self-Portrait, 1900. Beckmann is 16.*

As artists, we begin as seeds planted in the earth of our times  
to grow into the trees of our maturity and the autumns of old age.

*Self-Portrait*, 1900. Beckmann is 16.

August 14, 1903. Beckmann is 19, living in.  
Lower Saxony, Germany.

“I sometimes think that I have no feelings at all,  
that I am only acting the part of an artist, and  
that my contempt for all the people and things  
that seem petty and stupid to me, is just  
something I need to keep me playing my  
superior artist role. “



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*Self-Portrait*, 1901.  
Beckmann is 17.

February 2nd,  
1904. Paris.  
My heart longs for  
human beings who  
suffer as I do.  
Because I suffer all  
the time. If I can  
really get it clear.  
What else is this  
eternal unrest for?



As artists, we begin as seeds planted in the earth of our times  
to grow into the trees of our maturity and the autumns of old age.

**Early Maturity... figure out and  
prepare for a place in the world**

“He painted in a conservative more  
or less Impressionistic style with  
which he made a good living.”

Self-Portrait, Florence.  
1907.

Beckmann is 23.

I hanker after the mastery of  
everything imaginable. Perhaps the  
urge is nothing but ambition. The  
urge to dominate. But first I want  
to know everything so that I might  
later outlive myself.





As artists, we begin as seeds planted in the earth of our times  
to grow into the trees of our maturity and the autumns of old age.

**Maturity... build and maintain your place in the world (career)**



*The Sinking of the Titanic, 1912.*

Beckmann is 28.

As artists, we begin as seeds planted in the earth of our times  
to grow into the trees of our maturity and the autumns of old age.

*A photo in the studio, with Sinking of the Titanic, 1912.  
Beckmann is 28.*



*February, 1914. Berlin.*

My program is brief.

All the program I have, if any, is this:  
that all theory and all matters of principle in painting are hateful to me.

I love the sublime and ridiculous and every form of life  
because my ardent desire is to produce something living.

So maybe I have a program after all.



As artists, we begin as seeds planted in the earth of our times  
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**Germany declares war on Russia, August 1, 1914.**  
**Germany declares war on France, August 3, 1914**  
**Britain declares war on Germany, August 4, 1914.**

**World War I begins.**

*Self-Portrait*, Drypoint, 1914. Beckmann is 30.

September 14th, 1914.

The die is cast. I am a volunteer medical orderly and will stay here. Hope to go along to Russia in about 14 days. I hope still to be able to experience a lot and am happy.

In the hospital...

with no sign of emotion the doctors courteously showed me the most horrible. The sharp smell of putrefaction hovered over everything, despite good ventilation and well lit rooms. I was able to take it for about an hour and half, then I had to go out into the open landscape. There, of course, everything is less somber, in spite of many destroyed houses. The worst is already over, and in the potato fields everywhere along the road there are oblong mounds that have wooden crosses stuck in them. A few crosses have helmets on top. Huge shell fragments still are scattered throughout the field. The landscape is truly marvelous.

September 24, 1914

Something very difficult for a civilian to understand is the wild and wonderful life I'm living right now. Where else has the unspeakable contradiction of life been more obvious to me?



*The Grenade*, Drypoint, 1914.  
Beckmann is 30.

October 11th, 1914

Outside the wonderfully grand sound of battle. I went out past hordes of wounded and exhausted soldiers that came from the battlefield, and I listened to the unique and horribly grand music of the cannons. It's as if the gates to eternity are being ripped open when one of these great salvos echoes toward you. Everything suggests space, distance, infinity to you. I wish I could paint that sound. Oh, this immensity and terribly beautiful profundity! Hordes of people (soldiers, that is) moved in constant columns toward the center of this melody, moved toward the determination of their fates.



*Self-Portrait while Drawing., 1915.*

Beckmann is 31.

April 20th, 1915.

Below in the hospital many of the wounded from the past few days were stretched out. One had just come in and lay there dying; a huge bandage around his head was already dark with blood although it was changed just half an hour earlier. His face was still young. Delicate. Horrible, the way you could suddenly look right to his face somewhere near the left eye as if looking into a broken porcelain pitcher. He was unconscious and moaned loudly and moved his hands restlessly back and forth. He's lying in a sort of wooden box just like the typhus infected patients.

April 26th, 1915.

The man I wrote about yesterday died this afternoon. The cannons are silent today. Large numbers of new wounded arrived who were hurt during the horrible tumult last night, and I received many totally direct impressions.



Right now I'm often amused by my own so stupidly tough will for life and art.

I care for myself like a loving mother.

I spit, choke, shove and push; I want to live and I must live.

I've never bowed down before God or anything like that in order to achieve success,  
but I would drag myself through all the sewers of the world,  
through every conceivable humiliation and abuse in order to paint.

That I have to do. All the forms I imagine and that live within me  
must be wrung out of me to the last drop,  
only then will I be glad to be rid of this damned torture.

*April 28th, 1915.*

Today I was actually at the front line for the first time.

That fatal hissing of the rifle bullets and the roar of the big guns.

A strange sound is made by the air as it is torn apart with the firing of one of the big guns. It squeaks like a pig that's being butchered.



Dead soldiers were carried past us. I sketched a Frenchman who stuck out partially from his grave. A grenade explosion had disturbed his rest.

I really wasn't very scared. A strange, fatalistic feeling of safety surrounded me, so that I was able to draw, but not too far from me sulfur grenades hit and the poisonous yellow and green clouds slowly wafted by .

All of that is really not essential for what I want to do.  
Many of these actual details will be useless for me,  
but slowly the atmosphere does trickle into my blood and provides the confidence  
to make those images that I already saw earlier in spirit.

I want to work through all this internally in order later to be able to produce these  
things in almost timeless manner—  
that black human visage gazing out of the gray  
and the silent corpses that come toward me are the dark greetings of eternity,  
and it's as such that I want to paint after this is over.

**Beckmann suffered a mental breakdown in  
1915.**

**He did not begin to draw or paint again  
until 1917.**



*Self-Portrait*, 1917.  
Beckmann is 33.



*Self-Portrait*, 1917. Beckmann is 33.

It is not as if I were participating in this business as a historian, but rather it is that I feel my way into this thing which is in and of itself a manifestation of life, like sickness, love, or lust. And just as I consciously and unconsciously pursue the terror of sickness and lust, love and hate to their fullest extent—so I am trying to do now with this war. Everything is life, wondrously changing and overly abundant in invention. Everywhere I discover deep lines of beauty in the suffering and endurance of this terrible fate.

From "Creative Credo," 1918

I paint and I'm satisfied to let it go at that, since I am by nature tongue-tied and only a terrific interest in something can squeeze a few words out of me.



**World War I ended with the Armistice proclaimed 11 am, November 11, 1918.**

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## **Maturity**

But his experiences as a medical orderly in the First World War completely changed his outlook and his style. Although he rarely depicted scenes from the war, his work became full of horrifying imagery, and his forms were expressively distorted in the manner that reflected the influence of German Gothic art.

His paintings were intended as depictions of lust, sadism, cruelty, etc. rather than illustrations of specific instances of those qualities at work, and he ceased to regard painting as a purely aesthetic matter, thought of it as an ethical necessity...

“His work forms one of the most potent artistic commentaries on the disorientation of the modern world.”



*Night.* 1918-19. Beckmann was 35.

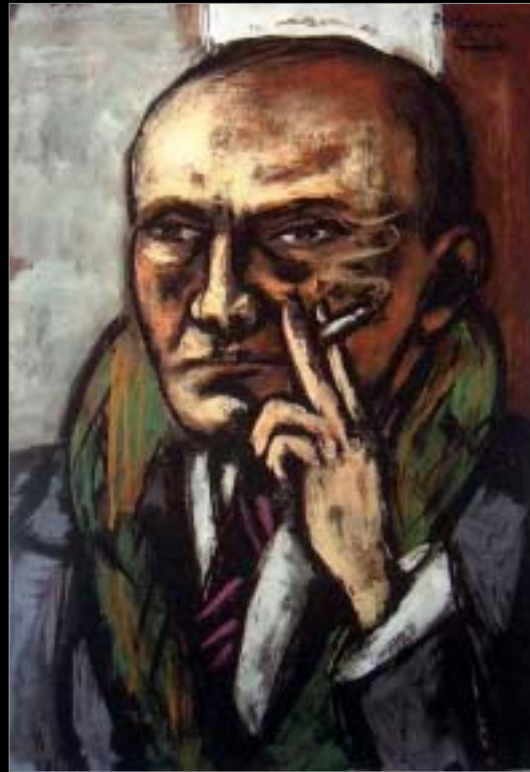


*The Degenerate Art Show, Munich, 1937.*

Bekman was 47. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, there were some 600 paintings by Max Beckmann in German museums. After this exhibition, there were none.



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Amid the events of our worlds we grow into the trees of our maturity  
and then into the autumns of old age



Max Beckman, Self Portrait, 1947



As artists, we begin as seeds  
planted in the earth of our times...

**Otto Dix, German, b. 1891, d. 1969**



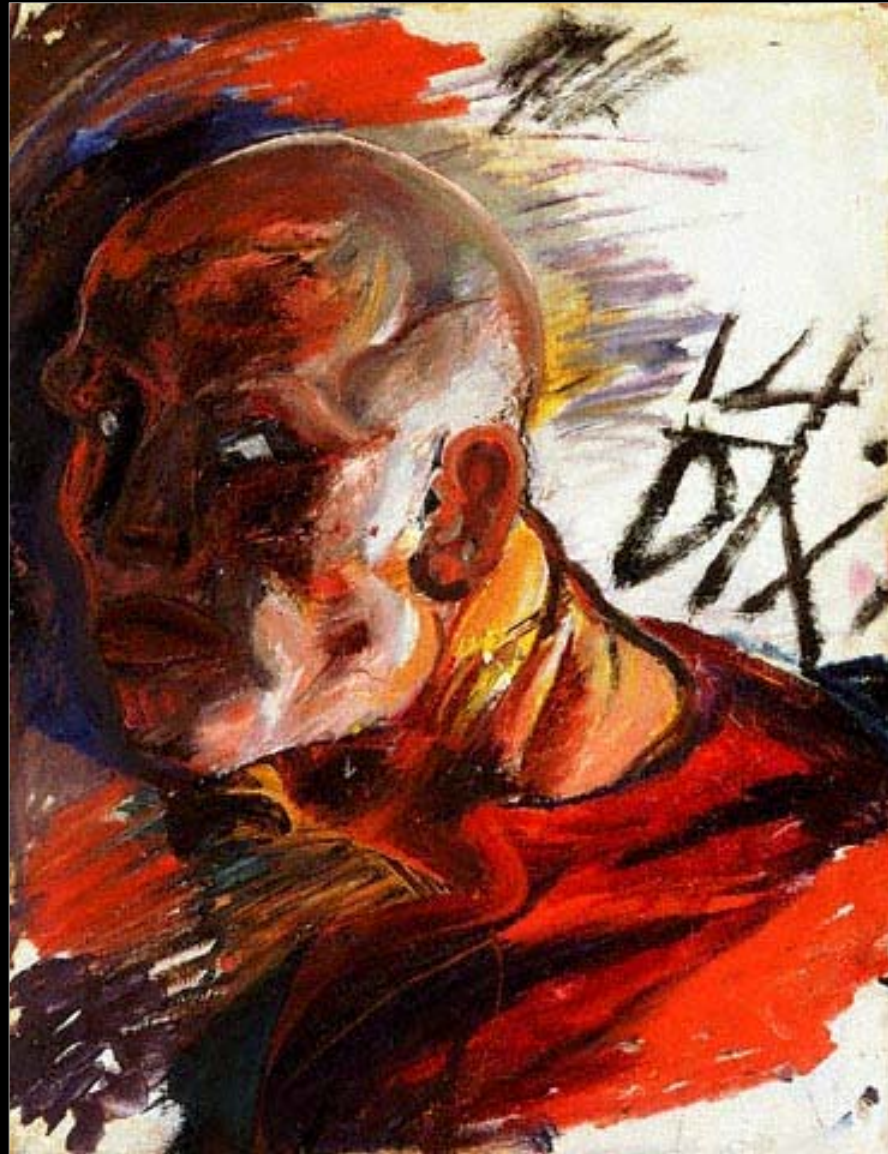
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55

**Machine-Gun Squad Advances (Somme, November 1916)**

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29

**Mealtime in the Trench (Loretto Heights)**



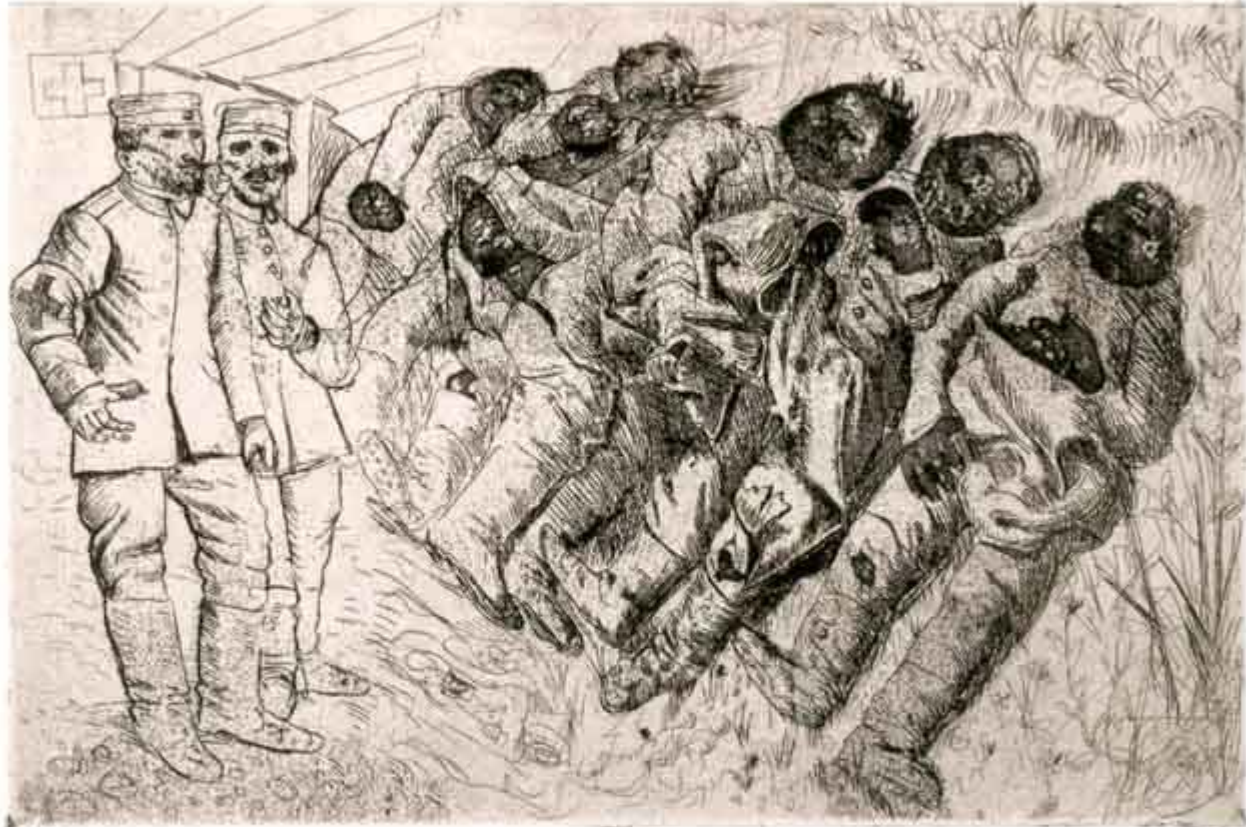
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28

**Shock Troops Advance under Gas**

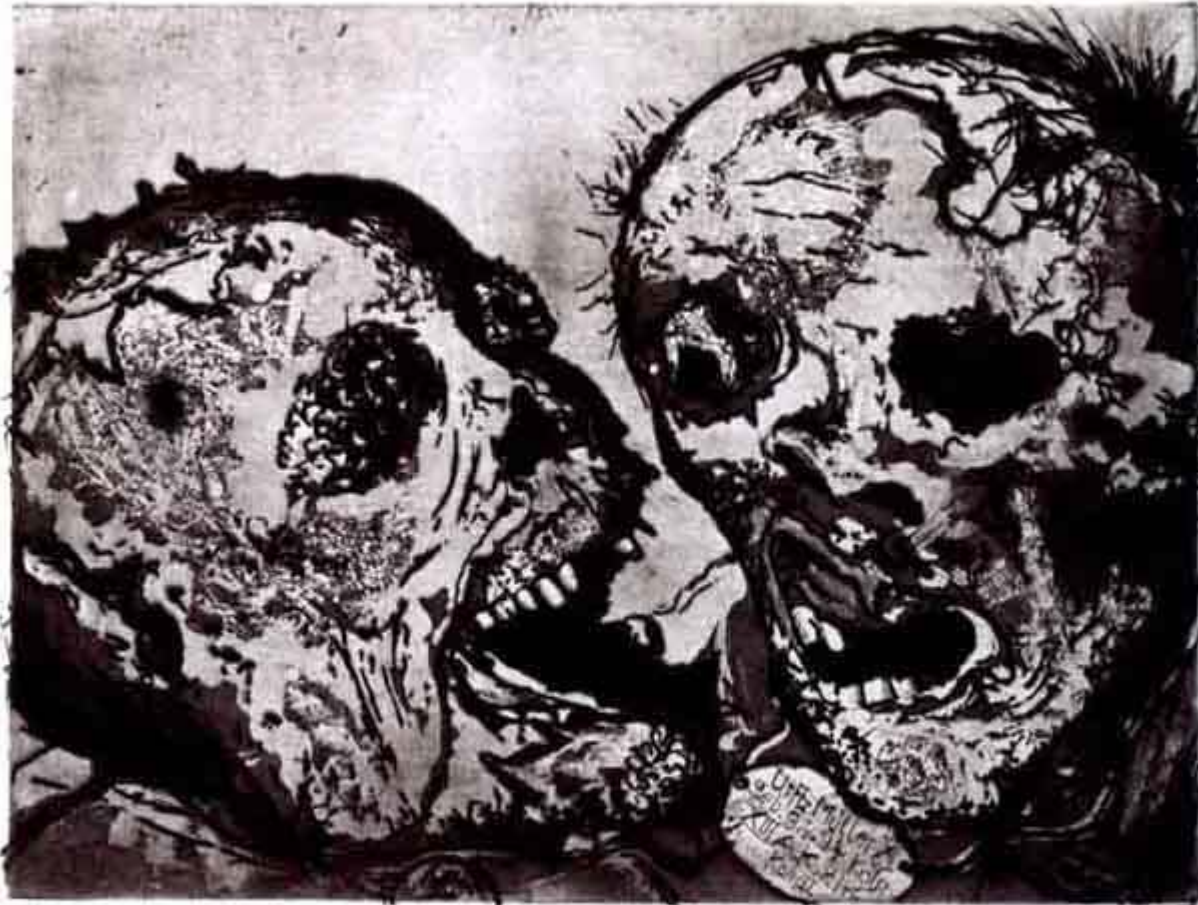
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19

**Gas Victims (Templeux-La Fosse, August 1916)**

As artists, we begin as seeds planted in the earth of our times  
to grow into the trees of our maturity and the autumns of old age.



66

**Dead Men before the Position near Tahure**



As artists, we begin as seeds planted in the earth of our times  
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47

Skull

As artists, we begin as seeds planted in the earth of our times  
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65

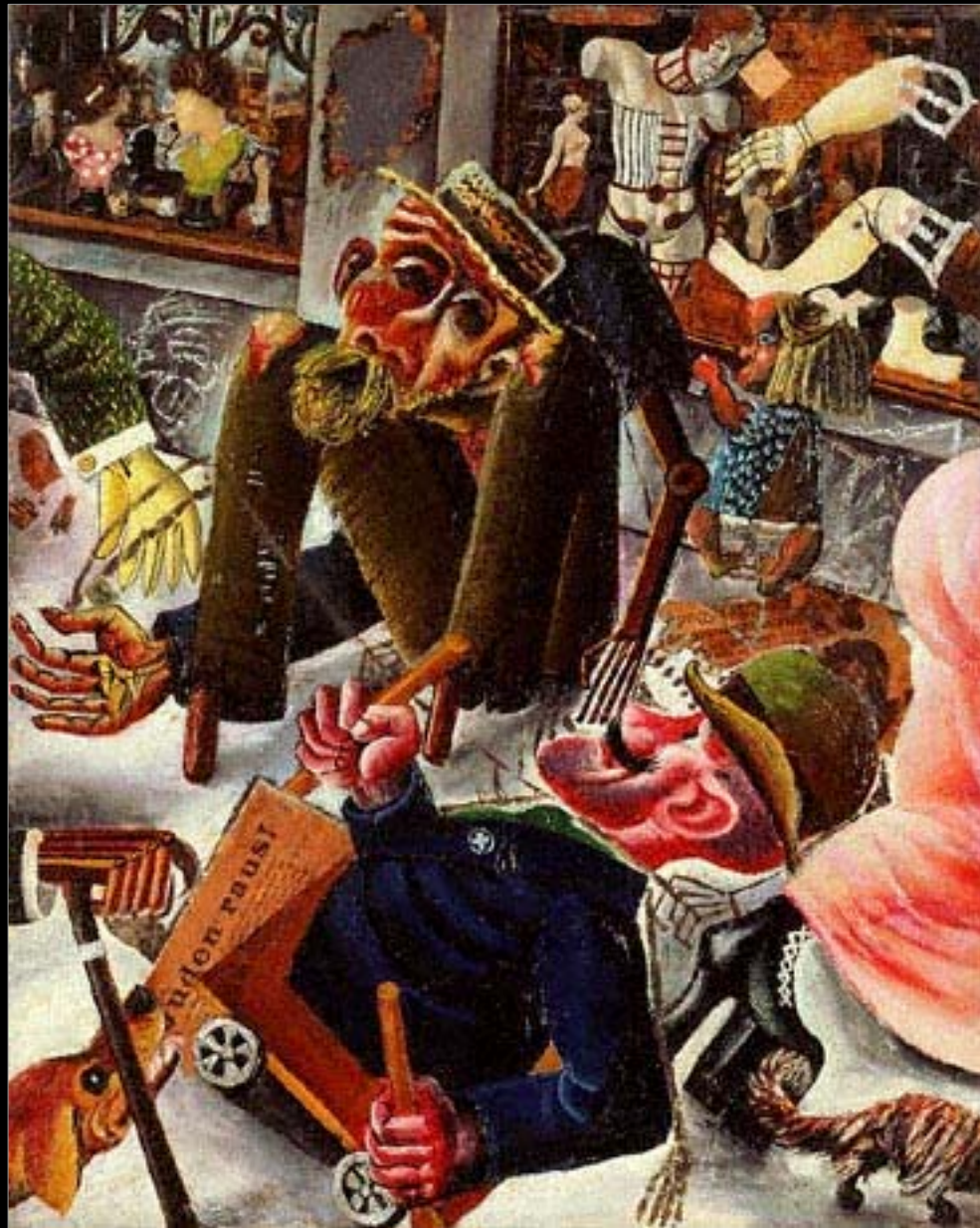
**Roll Call of Returning Troops**

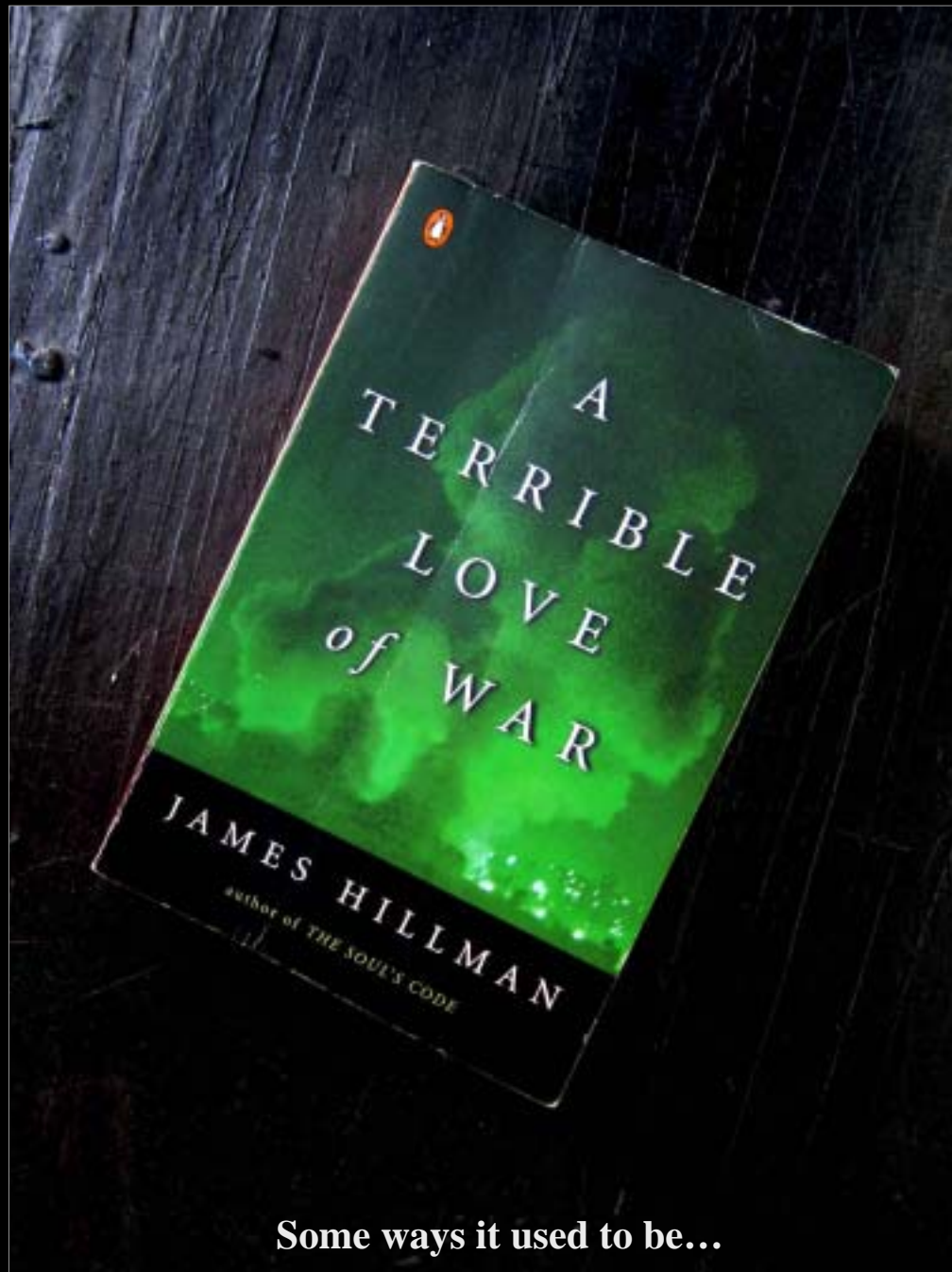
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Some ways it used to be...





**NEVER**



**ENDS**

**A TERRIBLE LOVE OF WAR**



