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Otto Dix, *Self-portrait*

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Otto Dix (1891–1969)

born Untermhaus (present-day Gera), Germany;

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Museum purchase, [1961.0004](#)

In conjunction with KU's selection of *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway as its [Common Book](#) for the 2015–2016 academic year, the Spencer Museum of Art has selected a self-portrait by German artist Otto Dix as the accompanying Common Work of Art.

Otto Dix created some of the most incisive artworks about World War I from its initial stages through its aftermath. He painted three portraits of himself as a soldier in 1914. Whether he created the Spencer's self-portrait before or after the outbreak of war in August 1914 is unknown. Different guises make up this dark, complex rumination on war, including two helmeted figures near the central signature in red.

An early volunteer for service, Dix served first in a field artillery regiment, becoming a machine gunner and platoon commander by fall 1915 in France, Flanders, Poland, and Russia. At war's end in 1918 he was training as a pilot in Silesia. Dix witnessed some of the most harrowing chapters of World War I, and was a survivor of the Battle of the Somme, in which Allied and German forces each suffered more than 600,000 casualties.

In addition to this self-portrait, the Spencer Museum's collection also includes several works on paper created by Dix during and after World War I, along with some works associated with Ernest Hemingway.

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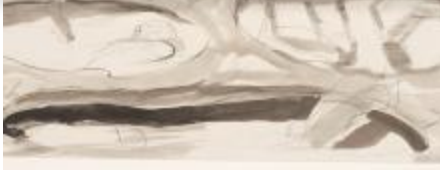
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