

FINAL DAYS
Machine in a Void
World War One & the Graphic Arts
On view through May 23, 2010 / Kress Gallery



Please note that curator Stephen Goddard will give an in-depth gallery talk on Thursday, May 13 at Noon

MEDIA CONTACT

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PUBLICITY IMAGES AVAILABLE (300 PPI JPG)

LAWRENCE—Next Thursday, May 13, at 12 PM, curator Stephen Goddard will give an in-depth gallery talk on the Spencer Museum of Art's major spring exhibition [***Machine in a Void: World War I & the Graphic Arts***](#), which presents more than 200 works of graphic art made during the years of the First World War (1914-1918), with a post-script

on the art of the decade following the war. Goddard will speak on the exhibition in total, giving special attention to the art of Otto Dix, who is currently the subject of a major exhibition at New York's [Neue Galerie](#). *Machine in a Void* represents a major scholarly undertaking, and is drawn almost entirely from the Spencer's permanent collection.

Five years in the making, the exhibition invokes the perspective of primarily European artists, focusing attention on the substantial roles played by the graphic arts during WWI (1914–1918) as a tool for official propaganda and as means of voicing individual responses to the war ranging from documentation to dissent.

Goddard, senior curator and curator of prints & drawings, organized the exhibition following a sabbatical spent primarily in Germany and a fellowship at the Wolfsonian-Florida International University—one of the world's great repositories for WWI-era material culture. Goddard was assisted by curatorial interns Rachel Voorhies and Olena Chervonik, with additional help from Lorie Vanchena and Andrea Weis. A catalogue is planned.

Machine in a Void is made possible by the generous support of the Breidenthal-Snyder Foundation. Research toward the exhibition was supported by the Franklin D. Murphy Travel Fund, KU International Programs/International Travel, and a Wolfsonian-Florida International University Fellowship.

The exhibition's genesis stems from the Spencer's 2005 acquisition of a rare and extensive treatment of the war by Belgian artist Henry de Groux in the form of nearly 50 etchings. These proofs and trial prints were preparatory to a portfolio, *Le Visage de la Victoire (The Face of Victory)*. In his introduction to the printed series, de Groux wrote of the war as an "undeniable and colossal absurdity, like a machine functioning in a void," an "opulent excess of perfect horror." The Spencer's exhibition derives its title from de Groux's evocative expression. The central goal of the exhibition is to identify and give voice to those artists who, through their work during and shortly after WWI, renounced specific national concerns to articulate a more transcendent vision. These uncommon voices will be exhibited along with mainstream nationalistic and propagandistic works.

Machine in a Void draws principally from the permanent collection of the Spencer Museum of Art, and includes material that may provoke discussions of the rise of ironic and ambivalent attitudes toward war, the defenselessness of innocents in the face of modern war machines, the use of the graphic arts to promote official government

attitudes, and the role of mechanized warfare within the dystopian idea of the Machine Age.

The Spencer's collections are strong in German, French, and Belgian material concerning the War, but less extensive in British and American works. For this reason, ***Machine in a Void*** does not offer a comprehensive overview of art and the War, but does introduce many key themes, which are loosely organized according to five sections:

- *Introduction* (mechanized war and several comprehensive portfolios)
- *Machine in a Void* (Henry de Groux's *Face of Victory* portfolio)
- *Dissent and Loss*
- *Propaganda*
- *The "Machine Age" – Art in the Wake of War*

Exhibited artists include [Otto Dix](#), [Kerr Eby](#), [George Grosz](#), [Jules de Bruycker](#), [Henry de Groux](#), [André Devambez](#), [Erich Heckel](#), [Henri Ibels](#), [Jean-Emile Laboureur](#), [Karl Maes](#), [Maxime Maufra](#), [Ludwig Meidner](#), [Robert Michel](#), [Johannes Molzahn](#), [Karl Schmidt-Rotluff](#), [Georg Scholz](#), [Max Slevogt](#), [Edmond van Dooren](#), and [Jean Veber](#).

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Spencer Museum of Art
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GALLERY HOURS
Closed Monday
10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday
10 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday
Noon-4 p.m. Sunday

Admission to the Spencer Museum of Art is always free; donations are welcome.