Social Condition of Germany: Otto Dix's 1920 Painting Prager Strasse

Through this essay, I will be exploring and expanding on Otto Dix's 1920 painting Prager Strasse. Decrypting it and the horrifying imagery of the effects of war and its correlation to the war-torn society. Its response and how it adapted and evolved to the after-effects of the war and to the people mainly war disabled veterans and the reaction to affected by and its relation to the Art as a whole in the Weimar Republic.

This painting could be seen as a crucial piece of work as it's the first time Dix's shift to more political subject matters after the political chaos that the first world war and the implementation of Versailles treaty on Germany in January of that year and the divided views that it brought with it and the rise of the Nazi order that is credited with it. Prager Strasse, which depicts a view of a disabled man begging for attention and money on and the busy life revolving around him. Prague street an important street at the time in Dresden city where Dix's resided located at east German near the border of the Czech Republic. A view on the social condition of Germany at that time.

In this context, it is important to understand where Dix comes from Otto Dix voluntarily joined the German army beginning of the First World War and was a machine-gunner experienced artillery bombardment and hand-to-hand fighting in the trenches. volunteering for the first world war Dix had an up-close relation and feel for the horrors of war and the complicated scenario bought about by it this greatly influenced the way he perceived art as can be seen in his later work display the harsh truth of the battlefield through renaissance type display of diptych or triptych in a senses glorifying It making it a thing of godly affairs. During his service in the war, he captures the perplexing and petrifying scenes of death and rotting flesh and soldiers through sketches. The shook, trauma and the horrors he would experience at the frontline would later mark radical shift in the way he dealt and what his subject matter that he dealt with After the end of the war his surroundings of the Weimar society reflected the effects of the war as the standards of standard of living depleted industrial power had sunk by about two third years.

There is a clear artistic change as a direct result of the war to Dix's approach to painting from the more commercial and plastic portrait paintings to the more brutal realistic truth of the society, war, and his experiences that he portrayed. The dramatic and shifted perspective influenced by his other European peers is one of the key noticeable features that gives the characters and the subject matter in the painting a sense of movement and chaos, for example, the lady in the pink dress on the right hand of the painting there is a sense of disgust and it can clearly be seen that she is trying to dodge away from the beggar. The other really key feature of the painting the cryptic messages that play a major role in the mindset of Otto during for example as ------ observed by collaged beneath the figure on the trolley with the heading ‘Juden raus' Jews out, highlighting the socio-political tension of Germany at the time this time to show a sense of political demise and divide in the society and the slow change the way the government was moving onto a more fascist and dictatorial path. The shop display in the background carrying prosthetic limbs that only the upper-class could afford. To make up for the loss of life during the war contraceptives and abortions were banned, this is shown by the false foot resting on a collage of advertisement of condoms, while the small girl with rickets is pointing

at an advertisement for gynecological surgical tools, used to perform abortions, symbolically collaged beneath the other male foot. Serving as somewhat of a criticism of the situation dix trying to warn the masses for the chaos to follow.

'...everyone had a 'breaking point': weak or strong, courageous or cowardly - war frightened everyone witless...' Arthur Hubbard. First world war no doubt had a great impact on the world but had a widely diverse cultural and social impact effect and completely crippled the German economy. As they had to take the complete toll of the war and the treaty of Versailles held Germany responsible for the war and the destruction that was caused by it. Reactions to the Treaty in Germany were very negative There were protests in the German Reichstag (Parliament) and out on the streets. Sparking support and up rise for the far-right view and divide in the country planting the seed for catastrophes to follow. It is not hard to see why Germans were outraged, Germany lost 10% of its land, all its overseas colonies, 12.5% of its population, 16% of its coal and 48% of its iron industry.

- Alsace-Lorraine went to France
- Eupen, Moresnet and Malmedy went to Belgium
- North Schleswig went to Denmark (after a vote by the population)
- West Prussia and Posen went to Poland
- Danzig became a free city controlled by the League of Nations (giving Poland a seaport)
- Memel went to Lithuania
- Saar was controlled by the League of Nations (with a vote by the population to be held on the matter after 15 years)
- German colonies became mandates under the control of the League of Nations (in practice this usually meant Britain and France)
- Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania became independent states (Germany had taken these states from Russia in 1918
- The German army was limited to 100,000 men.
- Conscription (forced army service) was banned; soldiers had to be volunteers.
- Germany was not allowed armoured vehicles, submarines or aircraft.
- The navy could build only six battleships.
- The Rhineland became a demilitarised zone
- This meant that no German troops were allowed into that area

These were humiliating terms, which made Germany accept guilt for the war, limiting their armed forces and forcing them to pay reparations. This crippled and divided the society as a whole the reflection of this is quite prevalent in Dix's work the war left half of the younger population cripple and half of them dead. in total are 1,796,000 killed or missing in action and died of wounds. The official German medical war history listed 2,036,897 military war dead. Including confirmed military dead from all causes: Army 1,900,876. The higher-class population did not care for or pay attention to the crippled and the people that were damaged by the war they were considered.

Effect of these was clearly not only in the works of Dix, the brilliant expressionist painter Ernst Ludwig Kirchner joined up in 1914, but his mental health soon collapsed. In his 1915 painting Self-Portrait as a Soldier, he gives visual form to shell shock a drastic shift from his pre-war sensual subject matter. With his 1915 self-portrait as a soldier in his studio with a nude model in the background, without his hand which he did not really loose but a metaphor to how he could not deal with the same subject matter anymore. Max Beckmann another war veteran painted his

grotesque vision of a world gone mad in his 1919 painting Die, Nacht, a chaotic composition showing the horrors of the common people during the war. These conditions also gave up the rise to another art movement of which later works of Dix are a part of Dadaism, the first conceptual art movement making a mockery of the modern word and the rules that it abides by. Dada thrived on chaos and anarchy they created new forms of ways to express this chaos. invented photomontage which in many ways was a reflection of the crippled and shattered souls that the war had left behind. Dadaist creations had no logical form or rules: they were intended to shock or confuse. Dada artists made extensive use of collage and montage. This was the same time the radical school of arts Bauhaus was conceived in Weimar with the main motive to bring harmony between art and design to modern life and mass production. Through the pressure, the art and culture really prevailed and flourished bringing radical change in what art could and should mean and pushing it forward to a new modern world. Other fields of practice like science and sociology also flourished during the Weimar Republic.

To summarize, Otto Dix himself portrayed war and its horrors its reality faced by soldiers and the common people involved through its most pure and brutal form, informed by the socio-political tension building up and the knowledge of his experience Otto through his painting tries to criticised and inform the masses about the harsh reality faced on a day to day basis in a divided yet artistically and intellectually flourishing country there is a clear pattern to this subject matter against war and the consequences in Germany during this time artists like Otto Dix' trying to warn through the harsh depiction of reality.