

Attributed to Otto Dix, Portrait of Gentleman, oil.

The First World War left many of its participants with a lasting disdain for modern society and the nation-state, however, few created as significant a body of critical work as Otto Dix.

Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer a painting **Attributed to Otto Dix, Portrait of Gentleman, oil** (\$10/12,000) for sale in the "Chapter I" Vito Giallo Auction, held on Monday, June 17th.

This painting features a portrait of a man wearing a black three-piece suit with a bow tie, set against a rust-brown background. Pictured from the chest up, with his broad shoulders nearly filling the width of the canvas, the subject looks towards the viewer with a neutral gaze and pursed red lips. The

man has a receding hairline and styles his dark brown hair slicked across the top of his head, with a visible part on the right side. He wears small, thinly framed oval pince-nez glasses, which are unattached to his coat, and has a generally round face, with a large double chin. His jacket features a small red lapel pin, possibly a Légion d'Honneur rosette. The painting employs the limited use of the impasto technique,



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particularly on the face of the gentleman, while the rest of the work is more finely brushed.

Given the style of the work, it was likely made while he was attending or recently graduated from a vocational school in Dresden. This work was likely commissioned by the portrait sitter, further explaining its style, which features the employment of certain abstractions likely to be appreciated by the middle or upper classes, but abstaining from the truly avant-garde



style of the time, for example, Picasso's cubist "Portrait of Ambroise Vollard." This work was therefore likely created before the experience which would come to define Otto Dix's career, his service in the German Army during World War I, and necessarily lacks much of the critical disposition he would become much lauded for.

This work is an excellent example of Otto Dix's early portrait style, executed in a slightly more restrained stylized realism when compared to mature and best-known works. In this painting, we can see the beginnings of his characteristic abstraction, employed in a subtle manner that gives the composition a unique sophistication. For example, this work features the artist's preferred method of rendering faces with little time spent detailing naturalistic skin and hair textures, giving the face the impression of a mask.

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This is furthered by the use of largely flat lighting and general smoothing of surfaces. While this work largely abstains from the abstractions of the human form that would define his late paintings, its emphasis on the roundness of the portrait sitter's face is evidence of this inclination to be explored in future compositions.

(Wilhelm Heinrich) Otto Dix was born in December of 1891, the eldest son of an iron foundry worker and seamstress, in Gera, Germany. Growing up in a small town near the modern border with the Czech Republic, Dix was raised with a surprising amount of education in the arts and soon took up an apprenticeship with a local painter. Upon reaching nineteen years old, he enrolled in the Dresden Vocational School (now the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts), where he was taught by Richard Guhr, amongst others. At the

start of World War I, Dix volunteered for the German Army, serving as a non-commissioned officer in the Battle of the Somme, the Eastern Front, and Flanders, earning an Iron Cross. He was wounded to the neck in August of 1918, eventually being discharged in December of that year.

After the war, Otto Dix experimented with several different styles, including expressionism, Dada, and traditional tempera techniques. He began to paint scenes from war and critiques of modern German society, inspiring significant controversy throughout the 1920s before his work was labeled degenerate by the Nazi government. In 1939 he was arrested on fabricated charges of plotting to assassinate Adolf Hitler but was later released. He was conscripted into a German militia at the age of 53, eventually being captured by the French.

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After the end of World War II, Dix returned to Dresden where he remained until his death in 1969.

A work **Attributed to Otto Dix, Portrait of Gentleman, oil** (\$10/12,000) will be offered in Michaan's Auctions "Chapter I" Vito Giallo Auction on Monday, June 17th. This sale will present an initial selection from the vast estate of the notable New York artist and antiques dealer, Vito Giallo, who is finally offering the most treasured items from his Madison Avenue store, in a special auction preceding our Summer Fine Sale. This collection, titled "Chapter I" to commemorate the recent publishing of Vito Giallo's memoir, features exceptional pieces across every department, headlined by bronzes and painted works in the Fine Art Department, as well as impressive collections of Silver & Objects de Vertu.

Also included are important collectibles, quality decorations, and admirable pieces in glass.

Also on June 17th, Michaan's Auctions Summer Fine Sale. This auction features an incredible selection, full of the season's most esteemed items. The sale is headlined by historically important works in the Asian Art Department, exquisite jewelry in the desirable Art-Deco style, and important works from notable American and European modernist artists. Also featured are fine examples of Persian carpets, sterling silver dishware, and an extremely rare book by an icon of American poetry.

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