

PETER HEBEISEN

By Aline Smithson | October 19, 2011

If you are lucky and happen to be in San Francisco before November 5th, Swiss photographer [Peter Hebeisen](#) has an epic project, *Metamorphosis and Myth: 20th Century European Battlefields*, on exhibition at [Gallery 291](#), where Ed Carey is showcasing 20 of the 50 images from this series. These large scale masterfully conceived photographs are stunning as landscape photographs, but layered with the historical significance of the location, they are charged with meaning, depth, and a haunting remembrance.

In the aftermath of the conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia, after having been confronted on a daily basis with harrowing images of heinous acts, genocide and indescribable grief conveyed to him via mass media, Peter Hebeisen took it upon himself to visit the European battlefields of the twentieth century in an act of remembrance and compassion. Having done extensive research on each of the battles and prompted by artistic and historical associations, Hebeisen focused his lens on the epicenter of each drama. Over seven years he covered over 40,000 kilometers by car. His approach was strategic and scientific carrying military maps with him to each location. He found nature in many cases had vanquished tragedy with beauty and a sense of peace.

Installation image of the exhibition



These former battlefields convey a haunting sense of stillness after the storm. Some works are reminiscent of the works of Martin Johnson Heade, an American Luminist painter or the German painter David Caspar Friedrich. In these sweeping often idyllic landscapes with their razor sharpness and utter stillness history is very nearly erased yet are eerily haunted emphasizing Hebeisen's notion of the "theater of war." These former battlefields carry an aura of stillness after the storm, where everything seems as before, but nothing can ever be the same.

Images from *Metamorphosis and Myth: 20th Century European Battlefields*



Battle of Gallipoli, Anzac, Turkey, 1915-1916



Battle of Verdun II, La Meuse, France 1916



Battle of Vittorio Veneto, Italy 1918



Battle of Jutland, Denmark 1916



Bombing of Guernica, Spain 1937



Siege of Leningrad, Russia 1941-1944



Battle of Kursk, Prokhorovka, Soviet Union 1943



Siege of Sevastopol, Crimean Peninsula 1941-1942



Battle of Moscow, Khimki, Russia 1941-1942



Battle of Britain, Dover Coast, United Kingdom 1940



Battle of Monte Cassino, Italy 1944



Operation Overlord, Ohama Beach, France 1944



Battle of Halbe, Germany 1945



Siege of Sarajevo, Bosnia 1992-1996