

PRESS RELEASE

Carlo Valsecchi
Bellum

1 May – 31 July 2022



The 2022 Fotografia Europea festival is dedicated to the theme of “an invincible summer”: a quote from Albert Camus’s *Return to Tipasa*, which celebrates the capacity to weather adversity and respond with new reflections on human existence. In conjunction, Collezione Maramotti will be presenting *Bellum*, a new commissioned project by artist Carlo Valsecchi.

The forty-four large-scale photographs in this series – all of which can be seen in the book accompanying the exhibition, and about twenty of them in the show itself – tell the story of the ancestral conflict between man and nature and man and man; nature used as a defence from others, and nature as something to defend ourselves from. The Alps are a symbol of all this, as nature at its most extreme, yet also the site of the last war of position. The project therefore explores the territories and fortifications of northeast Italy connected to World War I, one of the last times when human fate and experience were directly linked to the laws, conditions and control of nature. What is left of that landscape from a century ago? What traces remain of the pact humanity had struck with nature at that point in history?

In three years of work, Valsecchi roamed these mountains with his view camera from winter until spring. Listening closely to what each place had to say, he peered into the abyss of a blind conflict and captured its harsh reality, in a form that is often abstract, intimately aesthetic, and absolute. The images in *Bellum* are

sudden glimpses, portals of light and composition that hover in an endless time between loneliness, isolation and waiting.

Narrow passageways and tunnels, trenches inhabited by vanished bodies and reborn vegetation, gaps and rents, hollows in the rock, internal and interior lacerations; the remains of forts, caught between the dense whiteness of snow and the dazzling whiteness of light, boundaries separating the present from an undefinable elsewhere, an unattainable horizon; primal refuges and places of death, artillery platforms, metal domes, caves and walls scorched by hundreds of explosions, reclaimed by moss and by organic and mineral concretions, traced by moisture; evanescent woods veiled by fog or by snow-laden air, screens of tangled branches hiding the landscape beyond; puddles and pools of clouded, steely water that mirror the sky over the mountains. In this series of photographs by Valsecchi, brimming with visual and conceptual analogies, nature sometimes becomes architectural or anthropomorphic, while the built environment merges with the natural one in a process of reciprocal exchange and imitation. Silently resonating within it are the cycles of nature and the flow of time – the slow mutation and erasure of humanity's passage and of its inexorably ephemeral traces on the earth.

The book published in conjunction with the exhibition, and bearing the same title, will feature essays by Florian Ebner, chief curator of the Cabinet of Photography at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and Yehuda E. Safran, art and architecture critic and professor at the Pratt Institute in New York.

Private view, by invitation only: 30 April 2022

1 May – 31 July 2022

Free admission during the opening hours of the permanent collection.

Thursday and Friday, 2.30 pm – 6.30 pm

Saturday and Sunday, 10.30 am – 6.30 pm

Opening of the permanent collection and the exhibition is subject to variation due to government health measures.

To visit Collezione Maramotti you will need to wear a surgical or FFP2 mask.

Info

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Artist Bio

Carlo Valsecchi (b. 1965 in Brescia) lives and works in Milan. After being selected for the Venice Biennale of Architecture in 1992, his work has been shown in art institutions around the world. His most recent exhibitions include: The Open Box, Milan (2019); Salone degli Incamminati, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna (2019); Ex Ospedale dei Bastardini, Biennale di Fotografia dell'Industria e del Lavoro, Bologna (2017); Galerie Walter Keller, Zürich (2013); Mart, Rovereto (2011); Galleria Carla Sozzani, Milan (2011); Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne (2009). He has also participated in many group shows, including: MMCA Seoul (2018); Fondazione MAST, Bologna (2016, 2015); Palazzo Da Mosto, Festival di Fotografia Europea, Reggio Emilia (2015); Museo della Merda, Piacenza (2015); Somerset House, London (2013); Ivorypress, Madrid (2012).