



Press release
September 2017

VERDUN MEMORIAL

VERDUN
MEMORIAL
BATTLEFIELD

Temporary exhibition
21 October – 22 December 2017

FROM LES ÉPARGES TO THE VERDUN MEMORIAL A Tribute to Maurice Genevoix

Photographs lest we forget
Fabrice Dekoninck and Sylvain Demange

On the fiftieth anniversary of the inauguration of the Verdun Memorial, the photographs of Fabrice Dekoninck and Sylvain Demange are being presented, together with extracts from *Ceux de 14* by Maurice Genevoix, at a temporary exhibition that pays tribute to the latter, who was a veteran of Les Éparges and a writer, member of the *Académie française* and founding president of the Verdun Memorial in 1967. The exhibition, entitled *From Les Éparges to the Verdun Memorial – a Tribute to Maurice Genevoix*, is being held at the Verdun Memorial from 21 October to 22 December 2017.

Passing on “what cannot be passed on”...

Throughout his life, within the veteran community, Maurice Genevoix was particularly committed to making sure that the memory of those who fought in the First World War and the importance of their sacrifice would be passed on and explained to future generations. For the Centenary, Fabrice Dekoninck and Sylvain Demange followed in Genevoix's footsteps by visiting Les Éparges to capture, with their lenses, the marks made by the fighting on the landscape and in the memory of residents. Through their images and the extracts from *Ceux de 14* that accompany them, they raise the issue of commemoration and passing information on. How is it now possible to pass on what Maurice Genevoix described as “what cannot be passed on”? Their photographic work, which spans a five-year period and is entitled “Comme on peut” [In Whatever Way We Can], provides a unique insight into this battle, which is still little known to the general public.

A year before the Battle of Verdun, between February and April 1915, 20,000 French and German fighters were killed, wounded or taken prisoner in a battle for possession of a small spur of land, Les Éparges, a strategic position dominating Woëvre Plain and measuring 1,800 metres wide by 800 metres deep. A century after the fighting, the bruised land of Hauts de Meuse still speaks and asks questions of visitors with its Dantean landscape of disproportionately large holes left by mines, moonlike craters left by shells, scars in trenches which mutilate the landscape of the Meuse forest, and so on.

“At Les Éparges, here more than anywhere else, the stunning beauty of the landscape is mingled with memories of the suffering of the men who fought there. These men, our *poilus*, ask questions of us with every step that we take across the battlefield, and irremediably confront us with the inconceivable. For these places still resound with the voice of the soldiers in *Ceux de 14*, which the writer Maurice Genevoix reproduces for us with emotion.”

Fabrice Dekoninck and Sylvain Demange, “Comme on peut” project

With their large-format photos and the texts that echo them, the exhibition *From Les Éparges to the Verdun Memorial* takes us on an immersive journey on the site of Les Éparges in which every photo takes us back with emotion to the battles that took place there, to the soldiers who fought in them and, through them, to one of them in particular, Maurice Genevoix, who became their spokesman by writing his major work *Ceux de 14*.





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In an encounter with history in the landscape of today, the five sequences of the exhibition reveal the different aspects of the life and work of Maurice Genevoix, an important witness to the First World War. Images, literature, personal belongings and manuscripts of his works which have been loaned by the writer's family, and witness accounts come together to tell us the story of Maurice Genevoix, and through him, recall *Ceux de 14*.

“What we have already done... In truth, it is more than could have been asked of men. And we have done it.”

Maurice Genevoix, *Ceux de 14*, Les Éparges, Chapter 1, “La paix” [Peace].



Le Trottoir National Necropolis, mound at Les Éparges, December 2012.
© “Comme on peut”, 2017



Easter commemorations at Les Éparges. The “poilus of the Marne”. Fresnes-en-Woëvre, April 2015.
© “Comme on peut”, 2017



Calonne Plateau viewed from Montgirmont. Les Éparges, July 2013.
© “Comme on peut”, 2017

Curators

Nicolas Czubak / Historian, history and geography teacher on secondment to the Education Department, member of the Scientific Steering Committee of the Verdun Memorial

Clotilde Bizot-Espiard / Cultural Development Officer of the Verdun Memorial

Scientific Committee

Julien Larere-Genevoix / Grandson of Maurice Genevoix and president of the “Je me souviens de *Ceux de 14*” association

Michel Bernard / Historian, writer and senior civil servant, specialist in the Great War as seen by its veteran-writers, including Maurice Genevoix

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

EPCC Verdun Memorial – Battlefield

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The museum is open daily:

– from 21 October to 5 November 2017 (All Saint's Day holidays): from 9:30am to 7pm daily

– from 6 November to 1 December 2017: from 9:30am to 5pm Monday to Friday; 9:30am to 6pm Saturdays and Sundays

– from 2 to 22 December 2017: from 9:30am to 5pm Monday to Friday; from 9:30am to 5pm Saturdays and Sundays

The museum will be closed from 23 December to 28 January 2018.

Full price €11 / Concessions €7 (including children aged 8-16)

Family pass €25 (2 adults and 1 child aged 8-16)

Temporary exhibition only: full price €5, concessions €2

Verdun Battlefield Pass (5 sites: Verdun Memorial, Douaumont Ossuary, Fort Douaumont, Fort Vaux, Verdun Underground Citadel):

Adult PASS (16 years and over): €25 (instead of €34)

Child PASS (8-16 years): €15

Free for those under the age of 8

For other prices and details, see: www.memorial-verdun.fr

Press relations

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