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AMAZZONOMACHIA

Photograph by Luigi Spina
Texts by Valeria Sampaolo

The *Oggetti rari e preziosi* collection at the Museo Archeologico di Napoli has been further enhanced by the addition of another masterpiece: a volute-krater (inv. 81672) decorated with a scene of Greeks fighting Amazons, which was discovered in Ruvo by a priest and a pharmacist, both collectors of antiquities, in the early nineteenth century. The piece reached the Museo di Napoli in 1838 and is at present awaiting the completion of the new Magna Graecia display, along with most of the vase collection. It is distinguished among the many red-figure vases by the scale of the fiercely struggling warriors painted over its entire surface, in a sequence that seems to derive from the decorations on stone friezes or temple pediments. The scene is by the Niobid Painter, one of the most famous of the Attic ceramic artists of the second quarter of the fifth century BC, who was likely inspired by the wonderful paintings of Mikon or Polygnotus, none of which has survived. Still, we have a sense of these paintings precisely through these vases, in which figurative poses and expressions invest each scene with a dramatic vitality.

The rich detailing of Greek and Amazon faces, bodies, clothing, and weapons is highlighted by Luigi Spina's photographs, which reveal features that could otherwise be easily missed.

Luigi Spina is a photographer who is particularly interested in amphitheaters, expressions of the sacred in ancient cities, the links between art and faith, ancient cultural identities, the body as depicted by classical sculpture, the sea in all its moods, and boxes of archaeological finds. His publications include *L'Ora Incerta* (2014), *The Buchner Boxes* (2014), and, most recently, *Le Danzatrici della Villa dei Papiri*, the first volume in the Tailormade series by 5 Continents Editions.

Valeria Sampaolo is head conservator of the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli and the author of several publications. Her research investigates early excavations in the area around Vesuvius and tries to establish the exact provenance of the museum's frescoes, whose new display she personally curated.