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CENTAURI

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The *Oggetti rari e preziosi* collection at the Museo Archeologico di Napoli contains a number of masterpieces that share two things: their year of discovery, 1835, and the fact that for various reasons they have never been exhibited.

This pair of silver skyphoi (inv. 25376, 25377) was found in house VI.7.23 in Pompei, together with twelve other silver objects, leading this building to be called the *casa dell'argenteria* (house of silverware). Of all the vessels in the museum displaying this type of repoussé decoration, these two are the best preserved. The little scenes of centaurs, centaureesses, and cupids in a Dionysian setting suggested by plane trees and statues of the god are purely decorative; every tiny detail has been rendered with a precision that photographic enlargements reveal far more clearly than can be seen by the naked eye. Owing to their fragility—silver foil reacts to even the slightest variation in temperature—the pieces are kept in climate-controlled storage. This book is thus a way of celebrating these works until such time that they can be presented to the public under ideal conservation conditions.

Luigi Spina, photographer. Subjects of his work are amphitheatres and the civic sense of the sacred, the links between art and faith, ancient cultural identities, the physicality of classical sculpture, the many aspects of the sea, and the contents of the drawers of the archaeologist-dreamer Giorgio Buchner. He has published *L'Ora Incerta* (2014), *The Buchner Boxes* (2014) and, most recently, *Le Danzatrici della Villa dei Papiri*, published by 5 Continents Editions in its Tailormade series.

Valeria Sampaolo is Head Curator of the collections in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples and the author of numerous articles and books. Her primary interest is the early excavations carried out in the area around Mount Vesuvius and the reconstruction of the settings illustrated in the frescoes in the museum, of which she has curated the new exhibition.