



ICI REPOSE LA GUERRE 1914-1918

RIP THE FIRST WORLD WAR

FERNANDO COSTA

TEXT BY JOHAN-FRÉDÉRIK HEL GUEDJ

A tribute to the *poilus*, the French First World War infantry whose nickname came from their often unkempt hair, bushy beards, and moustaches, and a general fascination with the greatest military conflict before the Second World War. These are the two themes that underlie Fernando Costa's art, which is illustrated in the pages of this book.

At its heart lies *Ceux de 14*, a large work (2.35 metres wide), which commemorates the 235 citizens of Sarlat in France who died for their country. Everything is symbolic: the helmets, the size of the painting, the colours, and the materials used. Even the artist's signature on the back is a sign of his respect for the young infantrymen.

The work is accompanied by thirty-two smaller paintings, all taking their cue in one way or another from the central theme of a helmet, to which the artist has added other details linking each work with the main panel.

The interplay between texts and images in the book is not based on Johan-Frédéric Hel Guedj's commentary alone, but makes ample use of the soldiers' letters home in which they express their innermost thoughts.

Fernando Costa is forty-five and lives and works near Sarlat, in the Périgord. He is a self-taught artist and his development has been highly unusual: in 1991, he was a steward on the *Queen Elizabeth II* and in 2015, his work was the subject of a solo exhibition in Biarritz. He has been collecting old road signs in France and elsewhere since 1998. He cuts them out, sands them down, engraves them, and assembles new compositions soldering the pieces onto metal panels, thus creating highly original works. In 2013, he became the eighteenth artist in the world to be chosen to contribute the Art Car for the 24-hour Le Mans race, following his august predecessors, who include Calder, Warhol, César, Arman, and Koons. 5 Continents Editions published the first monograph devoted to Costa in 2018.

Johan-Frédéric Hel Guedj is a journalist who has also published two novels (*Le traitement des cendres* and *L'amour grave*), a collection of short stories (*De mon vivant*), an account of a polar expedition (*Chercheurs d'éternité*), and an essay on Orson Welles (*La règle du faux*). Born in Paris, he now lives in Brussels, where he contributes to a column on contemporary art in the culture section of *L'Echo/De Tijd* daily newspaper.

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