

## LA MOSAIQUE D'ALEXANDRE

The second volume in the **Hidden Treasures** series launched in 2018 with the **Farnese Cup** examines another undoubted masterpiece: “The Alexander Mosaic.” It is certainly one of the great attractions for visitors who every day through the rooms of the National Archaeological Museum in Naples.

The mosaic is made up of over one and a half million tesserae, arranged asymmetrically using the **opus vermiculatum** technique, which allows the figures to be outlined so as to make them stand out against the background.

The mosaic is thought to have been made in the second century BC and is known to some as the “Battle of Issus.” While the scene depicted remains a matter of debate, it is nonetheless true that the two main figures have been universally identified as Alexander and Darius. The work was discovered in Pompeii in 1831, where it was part of the floor of the famous House of the Faun. Luigi Spina gets his camera in close to the crush of men and animals to bring out all the stunning detail in the expressions, gestures, and poses that the viewer often overlooks when taking in the scene as a whole. Eyes wide open and alert, loose reins, flying whips, but also unwonted finery: sumptuous fabrics, precious ornaments, and elaborately coiffed manes.

Essays by Valeria Sampaolo and Fausto Zevi close the book, placing the floor mosaic in its context and highlighting its extraordinary nature within the panorama of ancient art.

Luigi Spina is a photographer. His work depicts amphitheatres and the civic dimension of the sacred and explores the links between art and faith, the search for ancient cultural roots, and the physical impact of classical sculpture. His works published by 5 Continents Editions include **The Buchner Boxes** (2014), **Hemba** (2017), **Mythical Diary** (2017), **Sing Sing. Pompeii's Body** (2020), and the first volume in the **Canova. Four Tempos** series. Spina has also collaborated with Valeria Sampaolo and 5 Continents Editions to create the series **Oggetti rari e preziosi al Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli**, whose titles to date are **Memorie del Vaso blu** (2016), **Amazzonomachia** (2017), **Centauri** (2017), **Sette sapienti**, **Zefiro e Clori**, and **Satiro Ebbro** (2018). He launched the **Hidden Treasures** series with **The Farnese Cup**, which is now joined by the second in the series, **The Alexander Mosaic**. He has also published **The Dancers at the Villa of the Papyri** for 5 Continents Editions' **Tailormade** series.

Paolo Giulierini is an archaeologist specializing in the Etruscans. He is a former director of Museo dell'Accademia Etrusca in Cortona and is at present director of the National Archaeological Museum in Naples.

Valeria Sampaolo has been conservator of the National Archaeological Museum of Naples. The author of several publications, she focuses on research of early excavations in the Vesuvius area and on establishing the provenance of the Museum's frescoes, whose new display arrangement she curated.

Fausto Zevi is an archaeologist and art historian specializing in Italian art. He is a former pupil of Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli and has taken a particular interest in ancient Rome, especially topics associated with Roman Hellenism, as well as topographic and town planning problems in Pompeii, Ostia, and Rome. Fausto Zevi is a member of Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Istituto archeologico germanico, and an honorary member of the British School in Rome.