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CANOVA QUATRE TEMPS VOL. I

The full-size plaster models that represented the passage from a preliminary designing phase to the actual production of the marble sculpture were of great significance to Antonio Canova's creative process. As the photographer Spina puts it, "[...] in the artist's act of conception, plaster is the fragile, variable moment in which he perceives the body of his sculpture." The plaster forms are not the finished works, and however they contain all their power and potential. The tiny bronze nails (*repères*) guide the photographer in tracing an unprecedented visual atlas and allow readers to lose themselves in unexplored landscapes of expressions and gestures, hairdos and drapery.

The close-up photo sequences expose the plaster surfaces and make it possible for the reader's gaze to once again appreciate the bond between light and the pliability of matter that is one of the key features of Luigi Spina's work.

As the subtitle emphasizes, the dimension of time proves to be one of the pivotal elements of the photographer's research — working alone in the halls of the gipsothèque in Possagno. These "four tempos" are not a mere gimmick used to organize Spina's visual musings throughout the four years in which Canova will be commemorated (2019-2022). The temporal dimension holds an unparalleled importance in the neoclassic sculptor's creative and productive phases: the plaster artifact posits a before and an after. Before comes the preparatory study; after is the finished work. Plaster stands in between, it is central. Thus, this volume aims to introduce the general public to such a meaningful and simultaneously little-known phase in the creative process of Antonio Canova, one of the greatest sculptors of all time.

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 published works include *L'Orca incerta* (2014), *The Buchner Boxes* (2014), *Hemba* (2017), and *Mythical Diary* (2017). Spina has 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* (2018), and *Zefiro e Clori* (2018), as well as the Hidden Treasures series, which now includes *The Farnese Cup*. He has also published *The Dancers at the Villa of the Papyri* for 5 Continents Editions' Tailormade series.

Vittorio Sgarbi is an art critic, the curator of exhibitions with international relevance, a refined collector, and the author of several popular volumes on the importance of culture and art. Among his most recent publications, *Dall'ombra alla luce. Da Caravaggio a Tiepolo*; *Dal mito alla favola bella. Da Canaletto a Boldini* (La Nave di Teseo, 2019), installments of the "Treasures of Italy" series. He is also a politician and an independent free thinker.