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THE BUCHNER BOXES

Photographs by Luigi Spina

Text by Luigi Spina, Costanza Gialanella, Davide Vargas, and Giovanni Fiorentino

The boxes Giorgio Buchner has carefully preserved record the undimmed allure of archaeology. His excavations on the island of Ischia over a period of fifty years have brought to light the history of the first Greek colony in the western Mediterranean. The wooden cases, measuring 40 x 45 cm, contain smaller grey cardboard boxes of various sizes, which fit inside as if made to measure. They hold teeth, bits of bone, skulls, and fragments of organic matter belonging to people and animals who lived on the island three thousand years ago. Then there are the objects accompanying them: fibulas, vases, hairpins, armlets, little rings, lead weights, fishing hooks, oil lamps, and a baby bottle. Finally, carefully sliced and catalogued clods of earth discoloured by time until they are almost grey. All these objects remained silent, piled up on metal shelves, for twenty years. Today, Luigi Spina has brought them to life. They are now able to pick up their tale again. It's a story of periods intermingling. Buchner wrapped every object in pages of newspapers that his community of German, English, and Italian archaeologists had ready to hand, *The Times*, *Il Mattino*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, fragments of news about the first men to walk on the moon, election campaigns, wars. But he also kept small teeth and fleshless fingers in illustrated matchboxes. Triangulations, threads drawing customs together, shreds of material, imagination, the dreams of yesterday, today, and those of Antiquity whispered in the dry soil.

Luigi Spina is a photographer and has published several collections of works. He has worked on the Farnese collection of classical sculpture in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples in 2002 and took part in the *Antinoo, il fascino della bellezza* exhibition held in Villa Adriana in 2012. He was present at the Rome Festival of Photography and at MIAFAIR in 2013.

Giovanni Fiorentino teaches at Tuscia University and works as a journalist for *Il Messaggero* and *Il Mattino* as well as being an author. He runs the Centro Meridionale di Educazione Ambientale in Sorrento.

Costanza Gialanella is on the staff of the Naples Archaeological Heritage Department. She has directed several archaeological excavations, such as the exploration of Rione Terra in Pozzuoli and the Pithecusae necropolis with Giorgio Buchner.

Davide Vargas is an architect and writer. He has taken part in numerous editions of the Venice Biennale and has published a number of books, including *Racconti di qui and Racconti di architettura* (Tullio Pironti, 2010 and 2012), *La città della poesia* (Letteraventidue, 2012), *Alberi* (Ilfilodipartenope, 2012).