

## REVIEWS

fashion. Indeed, his translation of Surrealism could be seen in the monumental curtain tassels that make up the three sculptures respectively titled *Are*, *Ere*, and *Ire*. A similar intention is visible in six pillows painted with figurative motifs (including *Can't Talk* and *In a Meeting*) and in the black-and-white *Curtain #20* (*Are, Ere, Ire*). These evoke behavioral practices expressed by neo-avant-garde movements in the 1960s, particularly body art, which came to life in *Ara, Era, Ira*, a performance in which young people moved about among the cushions variously painted or made of faux black leather or fake fur and colored ropes that made up three large sculptures, also titled *Ara, Era*, and *Ira*. The performance had a vaguely fetishistic air: Over the course of their slow, calibrated movements, the performers passed the time by virtually reworking their own images using the Morfo application ("Turn a photo of your friend's face into a talking, dancing, crazy 3-D character!") on iPads that they carried with them. Their action, dynamically explicated a theme that traversed the entire exhibition like a connecting thread: the concept of identity and the continuous mutation to which it can be subjected. Di Massimo seems to be concentrating on this, offering an astonishing anthology of visual and intellectual interpretations of his theme.

—Pier Paolo Pancotto

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

## BOLOGNA, ITALY

### Alessandra Spranzi

P420

Those familiar with the trajectory of Alessandra Spranzi's practice might recognize her series "*Obsoleto*" (Obsolete), 2013–, as a culmination of several ongoing investigations; those unfamiliar with her oeuvre might simply be affected by the series' evocative power. These conceptually complex but aesthetically cogent photomontages, which were the focal point of "*Maraviglia*," Spranzi's recent exhibition at P420, are each composed of two images: The first—a page pulled from a book or magazine on a subject such as geography, astronomy, or botany—serves as a background or frame for the second, a Polaroid taken by the artist of found images and objects arranged on a table. Spranzi's Polaroids seem to be suspended in space and time in these

collages. In *Obsoleto* #23, 2013–14, for example, a small square has been excised from a black-and-white image of what appears to be the pocked topography of a lunar crater to reveal a photo of two mundane lightbulbs. In *Obsoleto* #40, 2013–14, a Polaroid, sitting centrally in a vintage image of a constellation, features a chrome-plated bicycle light placed next to a white plastic tube in such a way that the two objects together mimic the form of a comet. Like all of Spranzi's work, these compositions read as though they are semantic puzzles to be solved by the viewer. The code for deciphering her mysterious propositions seems within reach, but ultimately is attainable only by some epiphany—through renewed consideration of the pictured signs.

Alessandra Spranzi,  
*Obsoleto* #40  
(*Obsoleto* #40),  
2013–14, Polaroid,  
book page, 10¾ ×  
7⅞". From the series  
"*Obsoleto*," 2013–.



While Spranzi originally intended to present just the “*Obsoleto*” series here, her inclusion of works dating back to 1992 rendered the exhibition a sort of retrospective. Able to trace sympathies and similarities over more than twenty years of production, viewers saw the artist’s investigation into the indexical limits of photography as she appropriates, rephotographs, cuts, crops, and enlarges both found and original pictures. The title of the exhibition, “*Maraviglia*,” is an obsolete spelling of the Italian *meraviglia*, meaning “wonder.” The term reappears in the work *Maraviglia, dizionario moderno*, 2014, a color photograph on aluminum that pictures an excerpt from a copy of the *Dizionario Moderno*—a supplement to the *Dizionari Italiani* (1927) by Alfredo Panzini—found by the artist at a flea market. The previous owner of the supplement had glued definitions snipped from other dictionaries to the pages, and a clipped entry for *maraviglia* inexplicably obscures Panzini’s addendum to the definition of *maratona* (marathon). Spranzi, intrigued by this layering, photographed the page, thus introducing yet another frame.

It seems that for Spranzi, the concept of multiplicity is inseparable from the concept of wonder. This idea is exemplified in her video *Ogni mattina* (Every Morning), 2006, which played on a monitor at the beginning of the exhibition. In it, an elderly woman greets an out-of-frame passerby from her balcony, which is directly across from the artist’s home. Spranzi told me she witnessed this action every morning, but she never knew to whom the greeting was addressed. At a certain point, the artist decided to document the event, recognizing its enigmatic and powerful potential.

—Marco Tagliaferro

*Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.*