

BOLOGNA, ITALY

## Alessandra Spranzi

P420

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



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.

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.