ARTFORUM

Claudio Parmiggiani

BORTOLAMI
520 West 20th Street
October 9–November 15

A severe silence sets the tone for Claudio Parmiggiani's first solo exhibition in the United States in three decades: In *Untitled*, 2014, a sixteenth-century ecclesiastical bronze bell, is gagged and gibbeted by its tongue above the entryway to this gallery—a portent that announces a puissant presentation of Parmiggiani's oeuvre. And yet it tolls for no one. In the next room, a three-dimensional iron stake pierces an untitled photographic print of the artist's palm—a self-inflicted stigmata that undermines the artist's own authorial taction. Transversely installed is *Che mangia questo pane vivrà in eterno (Giovanni 6,58)* (Whoever eats this bread will live forever (Gospel of St. John, 6, 58)), 1997, which offers 365 loaves of bread cast in bronze and piled in a corner of the gallery—ironclad dogma in the guise of spiritual nourishment.

Negation and the transfiguration of absence remain central themes throughout Parmiggiani's fifty-year career: *Delocazione* (Delocation), 2014, is the fuliginous remains of a once-existent frame hung on wood manifest in an image of a painting now destitute of materiality. Here, the volatility of fire and fume have transubstantiated into palpable pigment, evoking perennial visions. In *Il Sogno di Marcellino* (The Dream of Marcellinus), 1977, a pile of books placed on the floor supports a horizontal plaster cast of a classical visage; it's topped by a model sailing ship in an oneiric lamentation on the status of the contemporary artist. Parmiggiani's long employment of a classical Catholic symbolic tradition

Claudio Parmiggiani, *Il Sogno di Marcellino* **(The Dream of Marcellinus), 1977,** boat model, plaster cast, books, rope, 43 1/4 x 17 3/4 x 11".

illustrates the paradox of all who, like Marcellinus, undergo the creation of their own narrative: free to navigate the unknown waters of their time yet anchored by the weight and authority of a historiography that precedes them.

— *Julian Elias Bronner*