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ART & DESIGN

Claudio Parmiggiani at Bortolami Gallery

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Art in Review

By MARTHA
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The most interesting works in this show come from Claudio Parmiggiani's "Delocazione," or "de-location," series, inspired originally by the dust silhouettes left by objects leaning against a wall. For over 40 years, Mr. Parmiggiani has been creating his own versions of this effect, filling rooms with smoke from burning tires and capturing the outlines of objects with soot and smoke.

Several works here use that technique: books on a shelf, curtains in a window, or draperies outlined in hazy black and gray smoke on wood. The effect is similar to that of sculptors like Rachel Whiteread, who cast the negative spaces around objects, but also to photograms, in which the index or trace of an object is registered on light-sensitive paper.

Other works here reveal the influence of Arte Povera, the 1960s Italian movement that responded to a conservative artistic culture and society, for instance, by juxtaposing plaster casts of classical sculpture with garbage. Here are sculptural heads displayed with books, a butterfly and a bird's nest. A silenced bell hung upside down — in the entrance to the gallery — is another of Mr. Parmiggiani's signature motifs.



Claudio Parmiggiani's "Untitled," 2008, part of a show at Bortolami Gallery. Credit Courtesy of the artist and Genevieve Hanson/Bortolami Gallery New York.

His work feels at times kitschy and theatrical. Some of this is the problem of translation: It is art born in the political radicalism of the 1960s and responding particularly to recent Italian history, as well as to the stranglehold of vaunted ancient culture on younger artists.

There is a great sense of poetry and space in Mr. Parmiggianni's work, however, gained perhaps from spending long hours in Giorgio Morandi's studio in the 1950s. And despite its shortcomings, the show is a satisfying mini-survey of an artist little known in this country.

CLAUDIO PARMIGGIANI

Bortolami Gallery

520 West 20th Street, Chelsea

Through Nov. 15

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