

REVIEWS MIRANDA LICHTENSTEIN

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ELIZABETH DEE, NEW YORK
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In Joan Lindsay's 1967 novel, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, a party of schoolchildren go on an outing on Valentine's Day, 1900. Three of them suddenly disappear; one returns, but has no memory of what happened to the other two. Originally Lindsay wrote a concluding chapter to the novel that resolved this mystery, but she took it out before publication, and her canny omission made the book a cult hit. It provoked years of hysterical speculation in fans, it inspired a film adaptation and now American artist Miranda Lichtenstein has taken a portion of the film's soundtrack and used it to accompany her first video, which is the linchpin of her involving new show.

Lindsay's novel was understandably irresistible to Lichtenstein, for not only has she long been interested in the paranormal, but one of the girls who disappears in the tale is called Miranda. Yet in her version of it, *Everything begins and ends at exactly the right time and place* (2007), we don't necessarily meet Miranda; we see only a woman in a long white dress clambering over mossy rocks in a verdant forest. The soundtrack uncorks the excited voices of the children, but they are nowhere to be seen, and while the sound continues without interruption, the action in the film loops, the woman twice falling asleep on a rock and twice disappearing behind a boulder.

Lichtenstein's film doesn't exactly propose a solution to the novel's mystery, but it hints at the shape of one, one which is equal parts formal, technological and chronological: it is as if she believes that the children slipped into a tear in the flow of time between one century and the next, dooming them forever to repeat their adventures around the same rocks. The exhibition has, it is true, many natural evocations of the uncanny: one photo-diptych, *After the Storm* (2006), presents a picture of a felled and knotted tree trunk alongside its red-tinted mirror image, such that the wood seems to double back into an emblem; and there is also a series of Lichtenstein's very covetable *Shadow* photographs, which comprise prints of the painted silhouettes of still-lives contrasted against a dusky backdrop. However, one is more encouraged to believe that she favours a technological solution by works like *Dream Machine* (2007), a photo-diptych that portrays the artist sitting behind a stroboscope that whirls a blur before her face as it revolves on a turntable; also by the exhibition's most memorable series of pictures, *9 planes, 5 unrealized* (2007), which appropriate a selection of the painted images of aeroplanes which used to entice travellers in those early, innocent days of mass air travel. Today those dreams look kitsch, presenting visions of rocket-fuelled double-decker jets blasting over sublime landscapes reminiscent of Turner. Finally, one must conclude that, for Lichtenstein, transcendence is rather like disappearance – it's all about getting lost in a futuristic dream and never waking up. *Morgan Falconer*

9 planes, 5 unrealized, 2007, 9 archival pigment prints, 152 x 191 cm. Courtesy the artist and Elizabeth Dee, New York

