

## **After Monet's Garden**

Aperture spoke with Miranda Lichtenstein about her upcoming exhibit of Polaroids on view at the Gallery at Hermès.



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Starting tomorrow, April 11, **Miranda Lichtenstein** presents a career-spanning exhibit of her Polaroids at the Gallery at Hermès. Culled from eleven years of residencies all over the world, Lichtenstein's photographs in the show are reflective of her surroundings, capturing the light and shadows of each locale using the serialized format of the Polaroid camera. Aperture caught up with the artist to discuss the editing process, and the self-discovery that resulted from considering a decade's worth of images.

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**Aperture:** *How did this exhibition and collaboration with Hermès begin?*

**Miranda Lichtenstein:** The exhibition was put together by Cory Jacobs, whom I've know for years. I had been to a number of the shows she has curated at the Hermès gallery. She approached me about doing a show a year ago; she had seen some of my Polaroids at the Hammer Museum in 2006. I thought Cory's idea to look back at my Polaroid work over the past eleven years would be a great opportunity, and I was also interested to show in a space that is dedicated to photography, a new context for me. We decided that I would go through my work from the very beginning, when I first start

shooting with a 4-by-5 Polaroid back, up until the present.

**A:** *What prompted you to first use the Polaroid camera in your work?*

**ML:** It began with a residency at Giverny, which was the first time I shot 4-by-5 film. Roe Ethridge gave me his 4-by-5 with a Polaroid back to take with me to France. I shot with that to learn how to shoot 4-by-5 film, as a test. The more I shot, the more I became interested in considering the Polaroid as the final object.

**A:** *This exhibit is a departure from the non-indexical photographs you made for last solo exhibit at Elizabeth Dee in 2010. How do the Polaroids in this show relate to the rest of your work?*

**ML:** There are a few images in the show that are Polaroid versions of the suites I showed at Elizabeth's. However, that exhibition does differ; it was a great mix of scale and genre. I was exploring different strategies of image making, which involved distorting or refracting the images. I would say that approach is in play now as well; all the images deal with shadow play, refracted light, and elements of misrepresentation.



Miranda Lichtenstein, *Civitella #5*, 2009

**A:** *The photos in the exhibit are from your travels and residencies over the years—are they a response to those different environments?*

**ML:** Yes, it has a great impact. There is a clearer formal thread as the photographs are all still lifes, but I am definitely responding to the environment. I use the light in each place, and shoot using what's around me. In Giverny, where the whole project began, I was pulling the clipped plants and flowers the gardeners cut at the end of the day and bringing them into the studio. In Japan, I discovered washi paper, and used it to make the paper screens I shot my compositions through.



**A:** *It must have been a long editing process, going over eleven years of work. What is it like to see all this work in one place?*

**ML:** It's exciting. When I looked at the work from 2006, I realized both how much it's had evolved and what consistencies exist throughout. The first Polaroids that I shot in Monet's Garden were made thinking about how to photograph those ubiquitously photographed things in a different way. The newest works are entirely abstract and don't deal with place at all in the same way. But it's been interesting to see how I have worked with light and shadows throughout. I hadn't considered it all together before. My own trajectory is much more clear to me now.

**A:** *You mentioned there is new work in this show, can you describe it to us?*

**ML:** The new work for the show is made from the screen-shadow photographs that I have been shooting for the past few years. I used the Polaroid to photograph my current digitally shot work, making a one-of-a-kind image of something out of something infinitely reproducible.