

# Beautiful Lies at Giverny: Vibrant Polaroids by Miranda Lichtenstein

Richard Conway · April 10, 2014 4:00 AM EDT



Untitled #8 (flower) Miranda Lichtenstein

At first glance, Miranda Lichtenstein's Polaroids may seem to be simply vibrant studies of flowers. But look a little closer, and they get just a little less bright – and even more interesting.

Taken in 2002 while she was on a residency at Monet's gardens at Giverny, these are not just beautiful pictures: they each form part of a rigorously constructed tableau, one that speaks of disharmony, half-truths and even failure.

It's all in the shadows: While Lichtenstein was at Giverny she would pass through a garden shed every day, one that had shadow-like tool outlines painted on the walls to indicate where, say, the rake should be hung, or a garden fork should be kept.

But, "almost all the time," Lichtenstein tells TIME, "the tools were put in the wrong place, on the wrong shadow." This seemed to her to be a noble — but totally failed — system, and she replicated this in her Polaroids.

She took to painting bold, angular shadows on paper behind the colorful flowers — what we see is not the actual shadow cast by the flower. Her pieces had become beautiful lies, wonderfully constructed misrepresentations. Indeed, as her work progressed, the shadows, at times, became more and more prominent.

"They look like they are a reflection of the flower, or that they come from it," she says. "But I stage the object — the flower — in front the paper backdrop, and then I photograph it."

Now, a show at Hermès in New York presents 46 of her works produced between 2002 and 2013, and aims to show how her style has evolved. We see her polaroids from Japan using Washi paper — which seem to be *entirely* about shadows — and there's her work from Italy, which seems to be a rigorously constructed take on bucolic Tuscany. And then there's also her most recent work — architecture-like photographic studies taken in New York (which are actually close-up shots of earlier work hanging on the wall of her studio).

"In a sense, I'm always photographing where I am," Lichtenstein says. "It's not necessarily going out on the street and shooting there — but I'm certainly pulling from the environment."

**Miranda Lichtenstein** is an artist who works in photography and video. Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at venues such as the UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles and the Whitney Museum of American Art. An exhibition of her work at The Gallery at Hermès in New York will run from April 11, 2014 – June 4, 2014.

**Richard Conway** is Reporter/Producer for TIME LightBox. Follow him on



Steep Rock #5Miranda Lichtenstein



Untitled #1 (plant)Miranda Lichtenstein



Untitled #15Miranda Lichtenstein





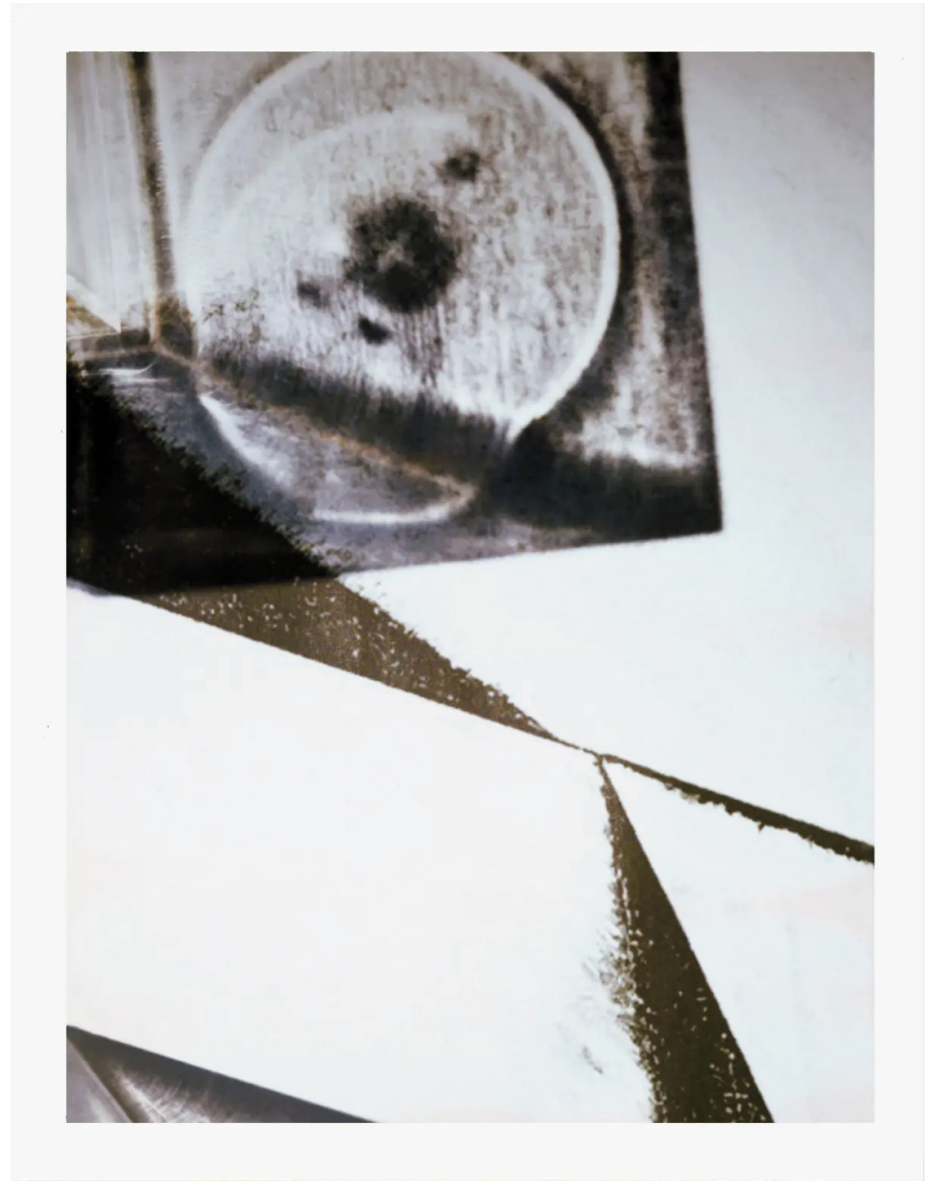
Steep Rock #3 Miranda Lichtenstein



Steep Rock #2 Miranda Lichtenstein

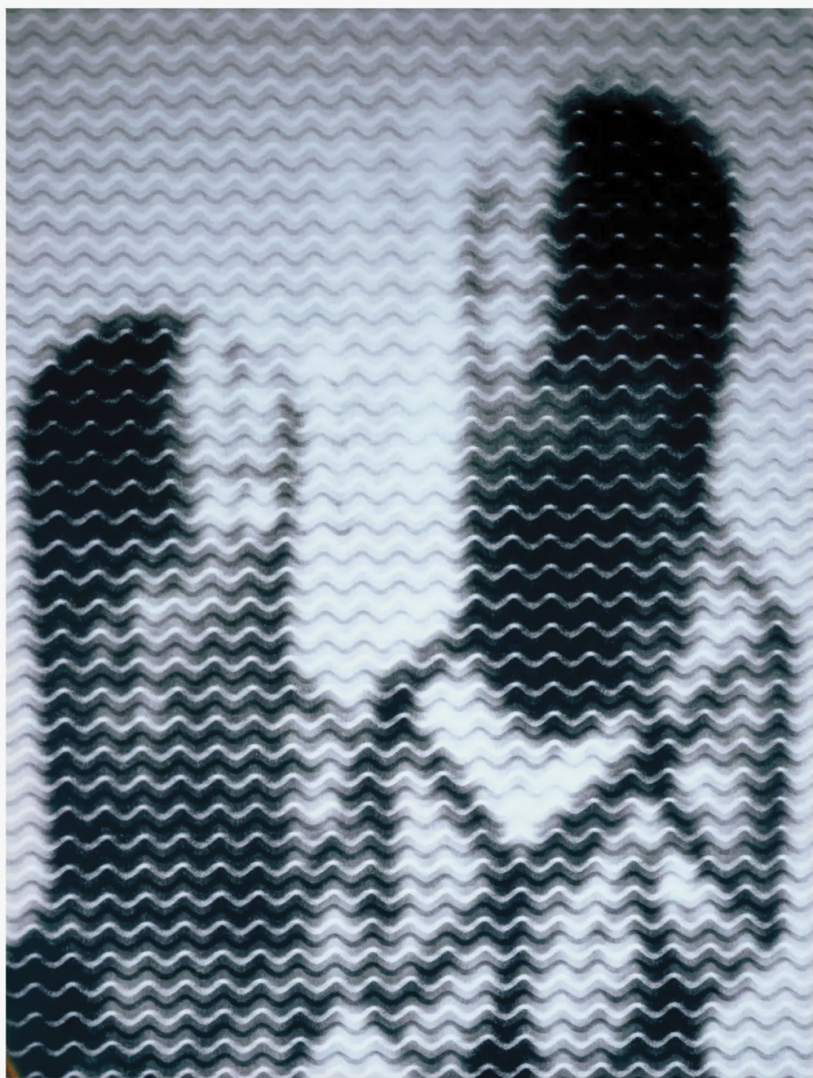


Steep Rock #4 Miranda Lichtenstein



New York #8 Miranda Lichtenstein





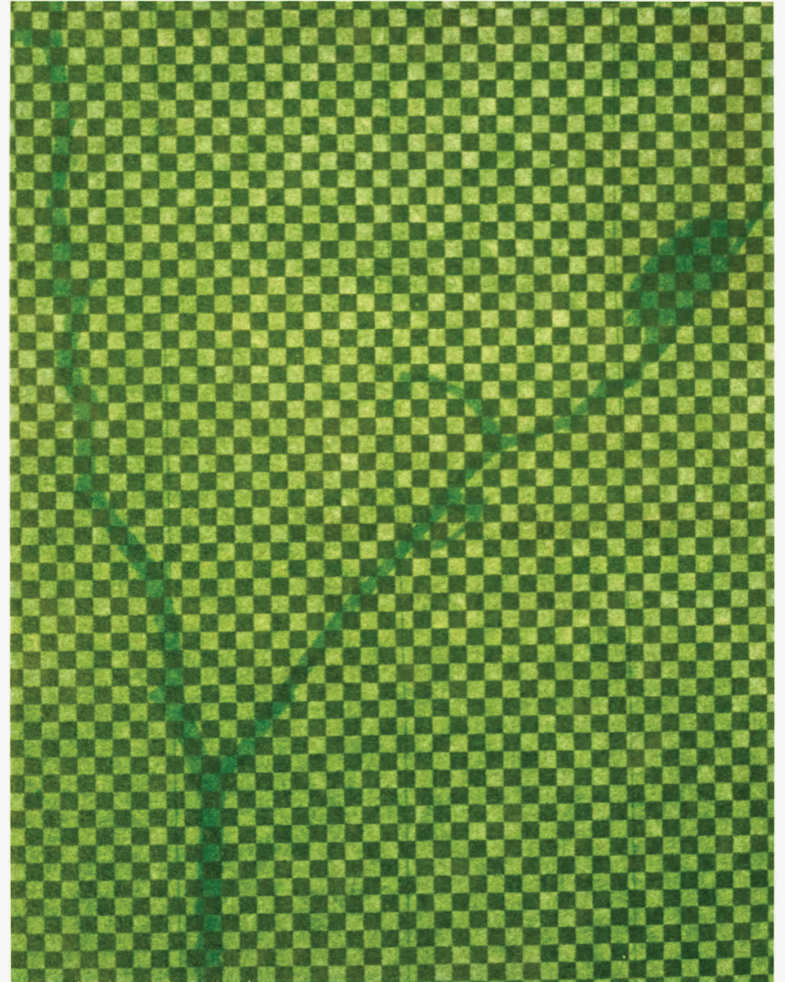
New York #7 Miranda Lichtenstein



New York #4 Miranda Lichtenstein



Civitella #8 Miranda Lichtenstein



Ito #4 Miranda Lichtenstein





Steep Rock #6 Miranda Lichtenstein



Untitled #8 (flower) Miranda Lichtenstein



Ito #2Miranda Lichtenstein



Ito #3Miranda Lichtenstein





Steep Rock #1 Miranda Lichtenstein



Civitella #4 Miranda Lichtenstein



New York #1 Miranda Lichtenstein



New York #5 Miranda Lichtenstein