

# Art in America

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Miranda Lichtenstein: *Untitled*, 1997-98, C-print, 20 by 24 inches; at Steffany Martz. (Review on p. 96.)



## Miranda Lichtenstein at Steffany Martz

Miranda Lichtenstein's New York debut exhibition, "Danbury Road," proffered nocturnal visions of rural Connecticut through nine lurid C-prints from 1997-98. All the images are high-contrast studies that are grounded in modernist formalism in their sense of compositional balance and spatial reductiveness. The colors are otherworldly, evoking infrared photography, digital manipulation or Fauvist vision. Due to the ambient light sources used by the photographer, primary colors dominate. Exacerbated by enlargement, the graininess of the film suggests a humid atmosphere that works well with the nighttime settings.

The roadside foliage of *Untitled* (#35) is bathed by red brake lights that make even the greenest leaves elicit a sense of emergency. The red lights seem to be those of a police car or a paramedic van piercing the country roadway's darkness; this locale could be Pollock's Fireplace Road or the scene of Warhol's *Saturday Disaster*. Rectangles of diffused house-

window lights loom in the distance, while a chemical blue sky mixes with the red leaves. *Untitled* (#36) shows a modest house replete with Neo-Classical articulations. In a setting otherwise enveloped in night, the building's walls, pediments and porches are revealed within cones of light emanating from garden spotlights. As if in a suburban variant of Albert Speer's "light architecture" of the 1930s, this exterior illumination makes the structure seem strangely dematerialized.

Lichtenstein's images attain an uncanny power by reminding us that photographic vision is not human vision. Another source of the uncanny is the compositional isolation of the houses that frequently appear in her works. Surrounded by thickets and darkness, these dwellings seem terribly vulnerable to surveillance or to voyeurs. Think *Rear Window* in the backwoods. — William V. Ganis