

Miranda Lichtenstein

ELIZABETH DEE GALLERY

Miranda Lichtenstein, *Everything Begins and Ends at Exactly the Right Time and Place*, 2007, still from a color video, 9 minutes, 4 seconds.



While several of the photographs in Miranda Lichtenstein's recent show build on the artist's interest in painterly still life and the frozen moment, a handful break with this pattern to introduce not just a sense of movement but a system of temporal flux. In the photographic diptych *Dream Machine*, 2007, the artist sits behind a stroboscope device that in the first image is still

and in the second is blurred by motion. And in another diptych, *Two Trees*, 2007, the image of a tree trunk appears to continue upward from one shot to another hung directly above it, over the gap between frames. Though one's eye wants the two images to cohere, the work's title insists on a stutter. The tree trunk in the diptych's lower half is slender and winding, its delicate, splayed branches dotted with green leaves that catch and filter the yellow light; the upper tree is shot through with stubby,

sharp branches that seem to spear the air, draining it of its color. As one reads this difference upward, the three-inch interruption between images becomes a space of radical yet unvoiced transformation: That the photographs are fundamentally different comes as a revelation; the disclosure, however, is so minimal that it is almost missed. Clearly, the doubling points to Lichtenstein's manipulation of perception, but, more significantly, it also underscores the moment of shift.

In the video *Everything Begins and Ends at Exactly the Right Time and Place*, 2007 (the artist's second work in this medium), Lichtenstein extends such pauses and emphasizes the doublings they demarcate in order to evoke the elusiveness of temporal—and thus perceptual—stability. The video was inspired by the 1975 film *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, the story of three turn-of-the-century schoolgirls who vanish while on an excursion at the titular outcropping. Lichtenstein, who shares her first name with one of the girls, mimics their slow walk through the woods, overlaying her own journey with music and dialogue from the film. As she disappears behind the mysterious rocks, the video loops back to the beginning, though the sound track continues unabated. The gap between photographs in *Two Trees* is here rendered both as the literal space between rocks into which Miranda disappears and as the very act of becoming absent, of a sudden elision in the landscape. The video's title is taken from a line of dialogue in the film spoken by the character Miranda. In *Picnic*, a story with a beginning and an ending (albeit an unresolved one), this statement translates to a kind of fatalism. But Lichtenstein's version, by doubling back on itself with different dialogue, proffers a parallel series of events in which nothing begins and ends at the right time or place.

—Nicole Rudick