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Photographer Miranda Lichtenstein lived at Monet's former Giverny home as part of a residency during the summer of 2002, exactly 75 years after the death of Claude Monet and 25 after Gérald Van Der Kemp undertook the decade-long task of recreating the grounds as they were during his life. She became fascinated with the behind-the-scenes labor necessary to sustain the intensely romanticized scenery. The resultant series, "Landmark" (2002-03), is on view at Elizabeth Dee Gallery.

Miranda Lichtenstein's use of artificial lighting embellishes the colors of the plant life with a ghostly breath.

To complicate things, Ms. Lichtenstein also photographed a re-creation of the Giverny garden constructed in the village of Kitagawa in Nahari in southern Japan. (An appropriate place, when you recall the aesthetic influence of Japanese prints on the Impressionists.) The viewer is given no indication as to which shots were taken where. Is this the site of Monet's inspiration? Or are we in Asia?

In "Coil" (2002), a pale yellow rubber hose sits in a clearing near a drain and two lopsided concrete paving stones. In the background you can see the tall, lush, green hedges on either side of the grassy path tourists are meant to travel along. At the edges of the photo, the viewer can make out the stubs of hundreds of small tree branches, crudely cut away for a gardener's station. "Japanese Bridge" (2002) is composed in the same way: in the foreground, a set of shoddy boats loaded with dirty white plastic buckets; in the background, weeping trees and a slim footbridge.

The artist's use of artificial lighting — her only concession to the romantic — embellishes the colors of the plant life with a ghostly breath. And Ms. Lichtenstein's work is as much about her palette as her concepts. In "Afternoon" (2002), a cross section of pale green, almost yellowed branches intertwine, their leaves waxy in the strange half-dusk.

Ms. Lichtenstein's series intends to call into question the authenticity of

our experiences in Giverny and other fetishized "natural" sites. But wasn't Monet himself creating something artificial, keeping his grounds pristine and in line with his aesthetic?



ELIZABETH DEE GALLERY

Miranda Lichtenstein, 'Coil' (2002).