

# Roy Lichtenstein Homage to Monet



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**Roy Lichtenstein**

**Homage to Monet**

**April 8th - May 1st, 2010**

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Essay: Julianne Fuller Coates

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# Roy Lichtenstein Homage to Monet

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BENRIMON CONTEMPORARY

In his *Haystack* and *Cathedral* series of 1969, and later in his *Water Lilies* series of 1992, Roy Lichtenstein expanded upon his tradition of taking recognizable imagery and transforming it into Pop Art. With this progression, he suggested that the work of Claude Monet is as iconographic as a Mickey Mouse cartoon; another entry in our cultural vocabulary of images. Lichtenstein employed his trademark use of color and form to rework Monet's legendary paintings. He absorbed and appropriated his predecessor's work, but with admiration and modern interpretation.

Lichtenstein created the *Haystack* and *Cathedral* series in collaboration with master printer Kenneth Tyler at Gemini G.E.L. These were his first serial prints. He produced both of these series after seeing the groundbreaking exhibition at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1968 entitled *Serial Imagery*, which was curated by John Coplans and included works by Claude Monet, Piet Mondrian, Frank Stella, and Andy Warhol.

Monet was one of many artists who Lichtenstein referenced throughout his career. He also created works in homage to other celebrated artists such as Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Willem de Kooning. Of these artistic references, Lichtenstein stated, "I had no programme; I always thought each one [parody] was the last. But then I'd see something like a way of doing a Monet through just dots that would look like a machine-made Impressionist painting."<sup>†</sup> His effort to tease out the cliché from these masterworks allowed Lichtenstein to achieve the reprinted aesthetic that he communicated with his own art.

Although Lichtenstein gave his work a mechanized and mass-produced quality, his hallmarks are instantly recognizable. Describing his technique, he said,

"Instead, say, of thick and thin paint which might be the European sensibility, I'm using flat areas of color as opposed to dotted areas which imitate Ben-Day dots in printing and become an industrialized texture rather than what we're familiar with as a paint texture."<sup>††</sup>

By replacing the sensuousness of a Monet with his own brand of "industrialized texture," Lichtenstein reinterpreted the impressionist master's work. *Water Lily*, of 1993, displays Lichtenstein's creation of this visual, rather than physical, texture. In this work, Lichtenstein portrayed Monet's dancing reflections and ripples of the water with diagonal blue lines juxtaposed against an area of blue dots. Observing this screenprint, the viewer understands that the two different patterns side by side are symbolic of movement without being illusory. While Monet's water lilies appear to float on the surface of the water, Lichtenstein erased this perspective. Instead, the forms are visually flattened and

layered one over the other so that the viewer perceives a meaningful, though unnatural, ordering of shapes.

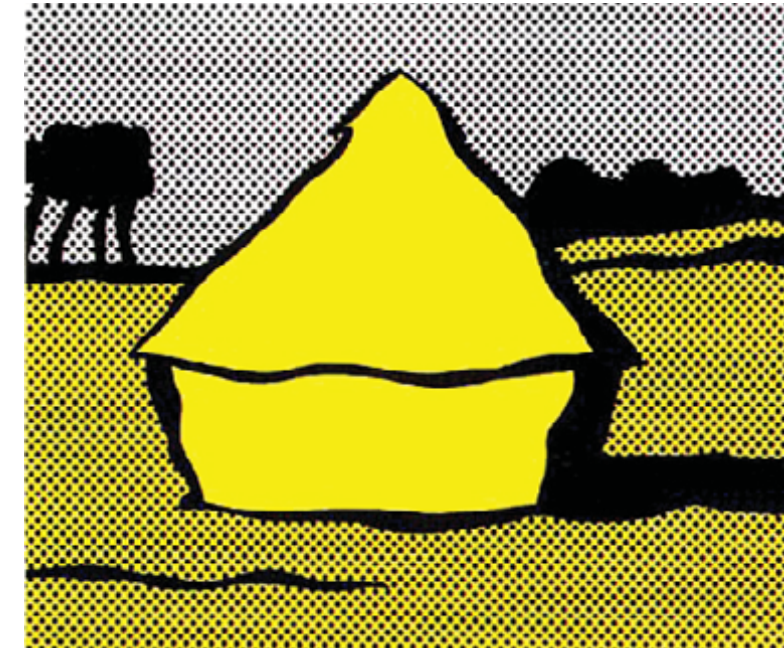
Though he undoubtedly held Monet's works in high esteem, Lichtenstein represented them in his impersonal, manufactured manner. Paradoxically, Lichtenstein's method of erasing his hand from his work was his mark. Of this detachment, Lichtenstein said,

"...all my subjects are always two-dimensional or at least they come from two-dimensional sources...the painting itself became an object, a thing, like a sculpture, in its own right, not an illusion of something else. And what I've been trying to say all this time is similar: that even if my work looks like it depicts something, it's essentially a flat two-dimensional image, an object."<sup>‡</sup>

For these works, Lichtenstein took Monet's two-dimensional paintings and rendered them even more flat and objective, yet undeniably his own. In *Haystack*, of 1969, for example, the viewer sees the black outline filled with solid yellow, while a nondescript black form suggests the shadow being thrown by an imperceptible light source. The form of the haystack stands out, unaffectedly, as a simple configuration. This work differs from the *Haystack* series, which do not use any solid areas of color and are composed entirely of Ben-Day dots. Lichtenstein also created the *Cathedral* images in this manner. In these lithographs, he used solid colors to distinguish between areas of shadow and light, from which the viewer recognizes the form of the cathedral. To complete the effect, Lichtenstein reinterpreted Monet's fervently rendered atmosphere as a veil of his trademark dots.

Known to have painted his canvasses upside-down and sideways in order to free himself from representation of the subject, Lichtenstein was concerned foremost with line and color. He wanted his works to look as though they were commercial products, and employed his commanding technique to give the images a restricted quality. Thus, once he decided upon his subject matter, Lichtenstein's interest lay in how it could be contrived to suit his own vision. Lichtenstein fully appropriated these seminal works, turning Impressionism into Pop Art.

-Julianne Fuller Coates



*Haystack*  
Screenprint on Paper

19 x 26 inches : 48.3 x 66 centimeters

<sup>†</sup>Sylvester, David. *Some Kind of Reality*. Anthony D'Offay Gallery, 1997.

<sup>††</sup>"Interview with Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol." Online video clip. Boingboing.net Accessed on 03/15/10.

<http://boingboing.net/2008/11/03/interview-with-roy-l.html>

<sup>‡</sup>Kimmelman, Michael. *PORTRAITS: Talking with Artists at the Met, The Modern, The Louvre and Elsewhere*. Random House, 1998.

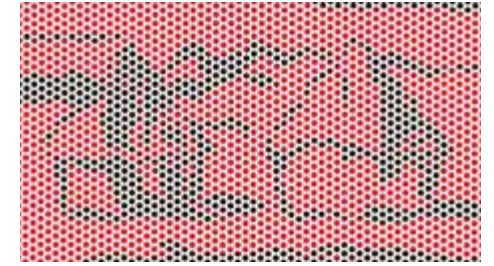
# Haystacks 1969

*Lithograph and Silk Screenprints on Paper*

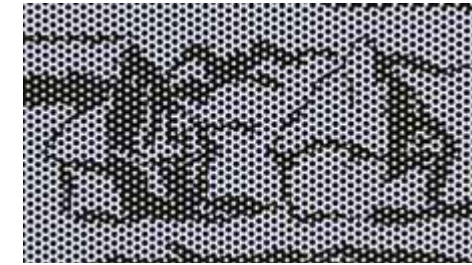
20 5/8 x 30 3/4 inches : 52.4 x 78.1 centimeters



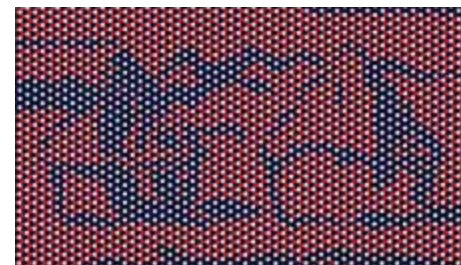
*Haystack #1*



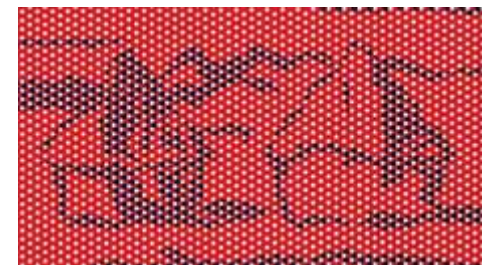
*Haystack #2*



*Haystack #3*

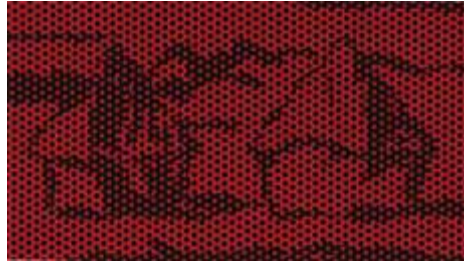


*Haystack #4*



*Haystack #5*

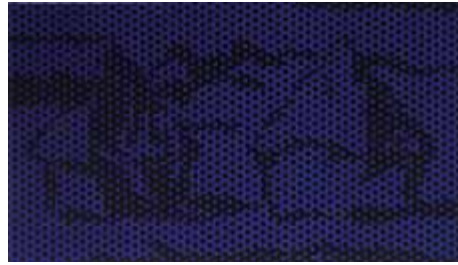




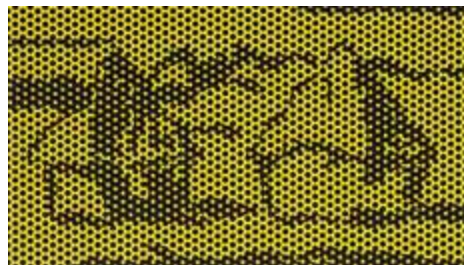
*Haystack #6*



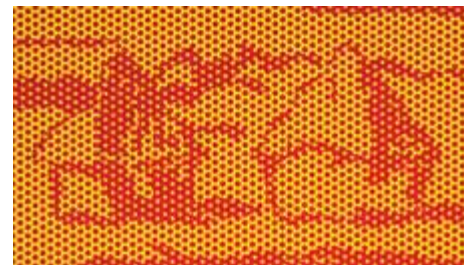
*Haystack #7*



*Haystack #6 State I*



*Haystack #6 State II*



*Haystack #6 State III*

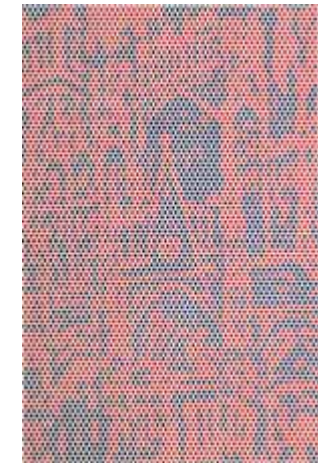
# Cathedrals 1969

*Lithograph and Silk Screenprint on Paper*

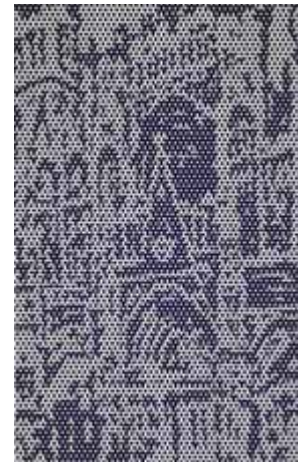
48 ½ x 32 ½ inches : 123.2 x 82.5 centimeters



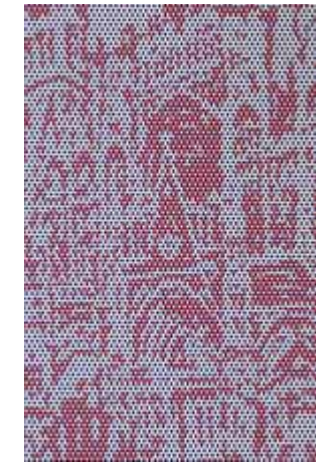
*Cathedral #1*



*Cathedral #2*

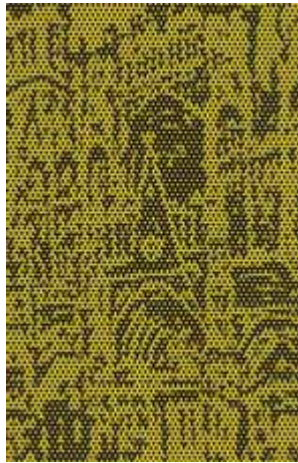


*Cathedral #3*



*Cathedral #4*





*Cathedral #5*



*Cathedral #6*



*Cathedral #6 State I*



*Cathedral #6 State II*



*Water Lily*  
Screenprint on Paper

18 ½ x 23 inches : 47 x 58.4 centimeters



# Water Lillies 1992



*Water Lilies, Pink Flower*

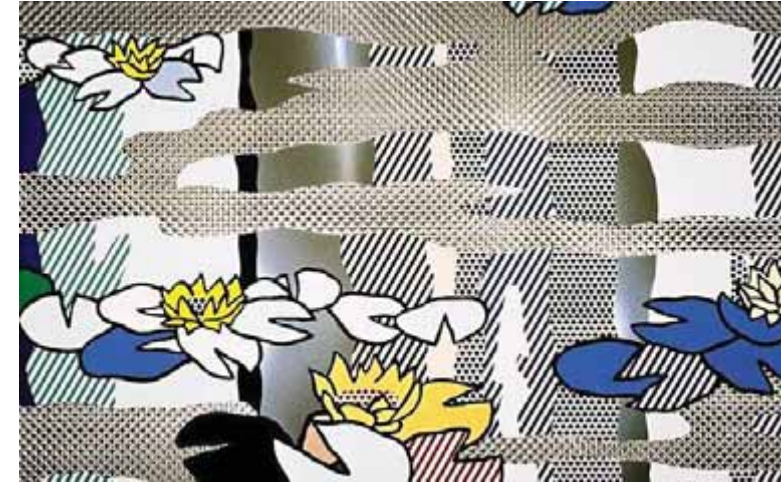


*Water Lilies, Blue Lily Pads*



*Water Lilies with Japanese Bridge*

88 x 58 inches : 211.6 x 147.3 centimeters



*Water Lily with Pond Reflections*

58 x 84 ½ inches : 147.3 x 214.6 centimeters



*Water Lilies with Willows*

58 x 104 inches : 147.3 x 264.7 centimeters





*Water Lilies with Clouds*

65 ½ x 44 ¾ inches : 166.4 x 113.8 centimeters



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