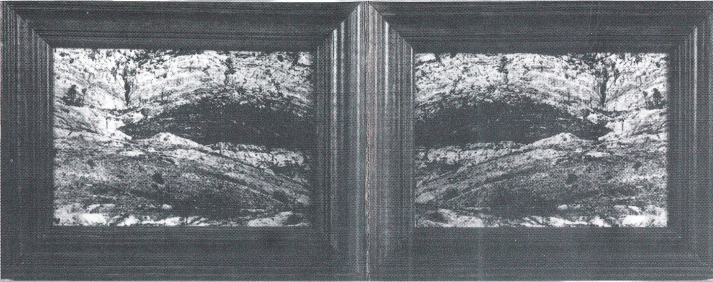


Artists Space is pleased to present *THE MOUNTAIN A BED AND A CHAIR* by Eileen Neff. This work is part of *Cézanne's Dream*, a new installation by the artist recently produced, in its entirety, at the Fabric Workshop in Philadelphia. Neff's installation, comprised of multiple layers of meaning and constantly shifting perspectives, provides the viewer with interesting glimpses of one artist's obsessive observation (Neff's) of another artist's (*Cézanne's*) perceptual obsession — in this case, Mont Sainte-Victoire. The duality of the profound, yet tenuous, relationship which Neff presents us with is underscored by her use of multiple dimensions and shifting perspectives. These, in turn, come together to create a rich visual panorama, one that alludes to the majesty of *Cézanne's* vision, and Neff's recognition of that vision as integral to her work.

Over the last few years Artists Space has invited colleagues from across the country to select artists in their area to develop projects for our galleries. Our thanks go to Judith Tannenbaum, Associate Director/Curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, for choosing Eileen Neff, and for her provocatively considered essay. I also would like to thank Eileen Neff for a challenging and insightful installation. As with any project of this magnitude, many individuals besides the artist, who creates the work, are responsible for ensuring its proper presentation. In this regard I am indebted to Charles A. Wright, Jr., Artists Space's Programs Coordinator for masterfully guiding all aspects of the project to fruition; to Robert Younger for a sensitively designed brochure and to Ken Buhler and his crew, Steven Ford and Tony Petracea, for installing the work.

This project has been made possible, in part, with generous support from the Museums Program at the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal Agency.

Carlos Gutierrez-Solana  
Executive Director



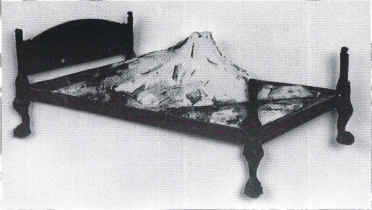
Eileen Neff, *Cézanne's Eyes* (1992).

Artists Space programs are made possible, in part, with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, The National Endowment for the Arts (a federal agency), the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the department of Sanitation. Additional assistance for Artists Space programs and activities is generously provided by the following: American Express Company, Art Dealers Association of America, AT&T Foundation, Inc., The David Berenbaum Foundation, Chase Manhattan Bank, Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc., The Cowles Charitable Trust, The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, The Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, Inc., Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, The Greenwall Foundation, The Jerome Foundation, The Dorothea L. Leonhardt Foundation, Inc., The Joe and Emily Lowe Foundation, Inc., The Menemsha Fund, Joyce Mertz-Gilmore Foundation, Morgan Guaranty Trust Company of New York, Philip Morris Companies, Inc., Betty Parsons Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, The Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc., The Tassap Trust, U.S. Trust Company of New York, U.S. Trust Company of New York, and the Andy Warhol Foundation of the Visual Arts, Inc.; as well as galleries in support of Artists Space, members and numerous friends.

Artists Space is a member of the National Association of Artists Organizations (NAAO) and the National Alliance of Media Arts Centers (NAMAC) and Media Alliance.

Front cover photo: Eileen Neff, *Cézanne's Dream*, (1992) and *Cézanne's Chair* (1992).  
Design: Robert Younger  
Printer: Tower Press

# THE MOUNTAIN



# A BED



# AND A CHAIR



## The Mountain ± 100 Years

Most artists working today are steeped in the achievements of their art-historical ancestors. Influences run the gamut from classical to Renaissance to modern masters as well as non-European sources. But being highly educated about and respecting the importance of earlier art forms and particular artists is not the same as truly "discovering" or understanding the obsessions of another artist. As a direct result of a residency at La Napoule, near Provence, in the winter of 1991, Eileen Neff was moved by and became connected to Cézanne in a way she had not experienced before.

Neff had studied Cézanne's paintings and even taught his work to her students, but it was the reality of seeing Cézanne's mountain — Mont Sainte-Victoire — in the flesh that prompted the artist to immerse herself in his work and, ultimately, to refer to it directly in her own. In the installation for Artists Space, entitled *A MOUNTAIN A BED AND A CHAIR*, Neff focuses on Cézanne's obsessive need to represent (and re-present) Mont Sainte-Victoire, and she underscores Cézanne's use of perspective to control the shape of objects — an idea explored in her own work for a number of years. The look, form, and intention of Neff's pieces, however, differ significantly from that of the Postimpressionist master working one hundred years earlier.

The installation features several discrete parts that are linked by their direct references to the life and work of Cézanne. Frequently, Neff anthropomorphizes Cézanne's mountain; it may rise like a body in the middle of a lifesize bed (*Cézanne's Dream*) or stare down at us from the wall when close-up, mirror-image details are transformed into eyes. The bed embodies

Cézanne's obsession with Mont Sainte-Victoire, in particular, as well as playfully epitomizing the artmaking process: in general.

In *Cézanne's Dream*, the mountain, which is contained by the bed frame (rather than a picture frame), symbolizes the artist's dreams and fantasies, and suggests that his subject, the mountain, fully occupies his sleeping hours as well as his conscious thoughts. Projecting forward from the wall at the top of the bed is a faux-wood chest; it is out of perspective and only looks "right" from one specific angle. A sequence of cotton sheets, featuring screened images of the mountain peak, drapes over the edge of the chest.

By overlapping and repeating flat images and by shifting perspectives, Neff plays with two and three-dimensional space — moving back and forth between reality and illusion. Here, as in previous furniture pieces, Neff uses two-dimensional photographs of three-dimensional objects to create new two-dimensional objects. Similarly, she combines images of nature (the mountain) with manufactured or constructed objects (the bed and chest) and juxtaposes interior domestic space with the experience of the outdoor landscape.

In another section of the room, a decrepit armchair faces a lightbox on the gray-green wall — staring unflinchingly at overlapping, transparent images of Mont Sainte-Victoire. In this piece, *Cézanne's Chair*, Neff captures the artist's complete absorption in his subject matter as well as the lifelong process of self-examination and intense scrutiny of specific subjects that transforms them and generates broader ideas. Cézanne is no longer present in the world as a physical

being, yet his empty chair exists like a body whose skeletal structure remains even though its flesh has disintegrated.

**T**HE MOUNTAIN A BED AND A CHAIR incorporates a number of other smaller elements that link the artist's life and art: an actual skull (another of Cézanne's painting subjects), which sits on a partial shelf; a reproduction of *Le Lever*, a painting of a standing female nude by Delacroix, which Cézanne kept in his studio; a detail of a late-Cézanne still life and another from his painting *Old Woman with a Rosary* (1895-96); a framed oval photograph that Neff found in France and has titled *Anne Cézanne: The Artist's Mother*; a horizontal photograph of cypress trees that grow in front of the mountain; and a child's chair with drawings of the mountain, which Neff uses to carry back Cézanne's obsession with Mont Sainte-Victoire to his boyhood.

There is no question that Cézanne continues to exist through his work — and Mont Sainte-Victoire, the embodiment of his obsession, exists for the ages. Here we are at the end of the next century, still studying his work intensively — being moved by it yet never understanding it fully. Neff, moreover, has used her personal confrontation with Cézanne's mountain as an opportunity to rethink his work and to extend her own. Cézanne was restless, yet he struggled successfully to bring back structure to painting after the loosening up of Impressionism — and in so doing, he stimulated the formal inventions of Cubism and subsequent developments that still concern us today.

From Paul Cézanne's *Old Woman with a Rosary*, (1895-1896).



Neff's attitude toward Cézanne and the problems he poses is

respectful but, at the same time, playful. It is her understanding of the power — both psychological and aesthetic — of Cézanne's obsession with the process of artmaking itself and the conflicts which the process involves that seems most profound. By visually shaping that recognition and experience in her own work, she gives this project its particular resonance. With both wit and empathy, *THE MOUNTAIN A BED AND A CHAIR* integrates the realm of domestic experience and mundane rituals with the more universal and transcendent dimensions of art.

Judith Tannenbaum  
Associate Director/Curator  
Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia

### Works in the Exhibition

Dimensions are in inches; height precedes width precedes depth.

*Cézanne's Dream*, 1992  
98 x 122 x 28

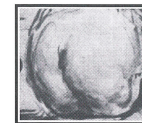
Black and white photographs, photosilkscreen on fiberboard and cotton percale, wood, French soil, and human skull

*Cézanne's Chair*, 1992  
98 x 48 x 72  
Wooden chair frame, picture frames, and lightbox

*Early Views*, 1992  
31 x 36 x 24  
Child's chair and drawings, French soil, and limestone rocks

*Cézanne's Eyes*, 1992  
29 x 81  
Black and white photograph on wood construction

Paul Cézanne. *Still Life: Apples, Pears and Pot (The Kitchen Table)*, 1900-1904, (detail).



**E**ileen Neff was educated at Tyler School of Art (M.F.A., Painting), Philadelphia College of Art (B.F.A., Painting), and Temple University (B.A., English Literature).

Her work is informed by a poetic impulse that moves between two- and three-dimensional concerns, between photographic, painting, and sculptural forms. Her first installation of this hybrid practice was *Furniture Music: An Illusion in Scale* at P.S. 1 in Long Island City, New York (1981). Since then she has had several site-specific installations including *Three River Touch* at the Carnegie Mellon Art Gallery in Pittsburgh, and *The Midway* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Eileen Neff has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation. In 1991, she was awarded a Pew Charitable Trust residency grant for a six-week stay at La Napoule Art Foundation in the south of France. It was during that time that she traveled to Mont Sainte-Victoire and became involved with Cézanne and his obsessive relationship with the mountain. Part of the work generated by that experience is exhibited at Artists Space. The piece entitled *Cézanne's Dream* was produced at The Fabric Workshop in Philadelphia, where she recently completed a residency.

Eileen Neff teaches at Drexel University and the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. She has been writing art criticism since 1988 and contributes regularly to Artforum.

Eileen Neff lives and works in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.