

October 26, 2002

Invoice 1999

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## INVOICE

**Eileen Neff**, (American born 1931)  
***Almost (#3)***, 2001  
pigmented ink jet print, edition 3 of 5  
56 x 41 1/2 inches  
(#EN115.3-01)

Exhibited  
Philadelphia, Locks Gallery, *Eileen Neff: Moving Still*, November 16 -  
December 22, 2001, (exhibition catalogue rep.)

	\$	6,000.00
Total	\$	6,000.00

**Thank you.**



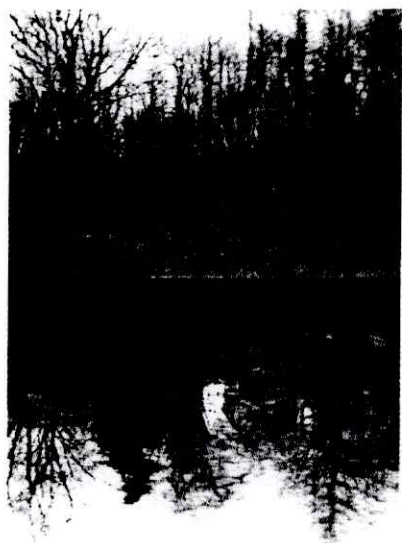
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# Artforum

March 2002

review by Donald Kuspit



Eileen Neff, *Almost (November 21, 2000)*, 2001, color ink-jet print, 57 x 42 1/2".

PHILADELPHIA

EILEEN NEFF

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Ostensibly shot from a moving train, Eileen Neff's blurry, digitally altered photographs are less about the passing landscape than about the blur itself. They concern the inadequacy of perception to its object, which can never be brought into lasting focus. It's the old lesson of Impressionism, made an absolute by Cézanne and now a cliché. But in bespeaking the object's ephemerality, the blur also acknowledges the transience of perception, pointing to what has been called the specious present—exactly what photography is uniquely equipped to reify. The blur, which Neff always juxtaposes with in-focus sections of landscape, confirms the speciousness of the present that the medium engages and subverts the fleeting presence it establishes. Thus Neff restores to photography the dimension that is missing from the traditional photograph: time.

But Neff's counter-photographs, as they might be called, are not simply object lessons in epistemology. They are in fact rather beautiful images that challenge painting,

particularly abstract painting, suggesting not only that it is less autonomous than it looks but that its atmospheric and textural effects are not unique to the medium. The blur that spreads across *Evening Comes*, 2001, has a palpability that gets under one's skin, fraught as it is with the poignancy and anxiety—and ironically, the intangibility—of memory. Partially obscuring the landscape behind it, the blur becomes a gestural surface—a representation of process painting, as it were—as well as a mental image. It dematerializes the landscape and reinstates it as formless fluidity. Neff's work is alchemical: The *prima materia* of landscape becomes the *ultima materia* of atmosphere, with movement as the *via media* of the transformation. Ironically, the more tangible the image, the more remote it seems, and vice versa.

Neff structures her photographs like abstract paintings, blocking them into geometric sections that go against the grain of the blur. Each part becomes a kind of figure that can stand out against the others; focusing on one changes the figure-ground relationship. In some works the blur becomes the atmospheric background for the landscape, in others the reverse occurs. Sometimes landscape and blur achieve perceptual parity, as in *Hedging*, 2000, and *Newton's Field*, 2001. If the blur represents unconscious feeling and the landscape self-conscious reflection, then Neff is struggling to overcome the split between reason and feeling, which T.S. Eliot called the curse of modernity. *Anecdote of the Tree*, 2000, is particularly striking in this regard. In one half of the image, wispy blur and grainy tree form a common plane; in the other, a distant,

relatively focused landscape serves as the tree's background. The tree acts as a linchpin for the discrepant perspectives without reconciling them. The work is a subtle formal triumph, discreetly minimal and sober, especially in comparison to the lavish green of the landscape in other images.

*Almost (November 21, 2000)*, 2001, involves a perceptual trick: The house and trees reflected in the water don't exist in the landscape, suggesting that the scene is a memory or perhaps a kind of afterimage. *Narcissus*, 2001, involves a similar illusion, hinting at the duplicity inherent in appearances. But Neff's photographs don't play games; her images are ultimately about the elusiveness of beauty in the passing scene. She insists that, however accidental it may be, beauty abides, if only in the mind's eye.

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# Art in America

May 2002

## Eileen Neff at Locks

Those are real blurs you see in the 12 large-scale photographic images of "Moving / Still." Eileen Neff's minimal after-the-fact digital manipulations of the original shots, made from moving trains over a few years, have yielded arresting works whose dislocations lodge deeply within the viewer.

On one level, these mostly autumnal landscapes recall and induce a kind of train-ride reverie, lulling and reassuring with their views of forest, meadow and river. But the interplay of focus and blur, stillness and motion, is joined by other doublings. Several works are vertical diptychs, with an upside-down

read as a scene reflected in water is, in every case, slightly off from the upper view. *Night Falls*, the show's most painterly image, contrasts a twilight woods scene above with an amber smear of sun-glare below, manifestly from a different time of day. (Like all the works, this one took on an individual size and shape—here a narrow quadrilateral over 9 feet long—that felt informed by Neff's years of calibrating photos and objects in her installation works.)

In *Almost (November 21, 2000)*, the lower, "reflected" woods scene reveals a half-hidden, upside-down white house where there is none above. The paired tree-scales in *Almost (No. 3)*, heavily streaked and flanked above and below by sky, feel entirely untethered, a fast-moving, flying island. The loss of

definition here recalls Gerhard Richter—both his blurred, photograph-based paintings and his squeegeed abstractions—but the resemblance only goes so far. Where Richter's work seems to be about some cultural loss of focus, Neff's half-veiled images feel like elegies to lost stability, or essays on the anxiety of motion. In contrast to the exhilaration in speed of, say, some of Nam June Paik's video work, here a condition of pervasive acceleration is soberly contemplated. The apparitional, upside-down house becomes an icon for the loss of grounding this experience engenders.

*Newton's Field* offers this awareness in a compositionally stark, though visually rich equation. A stand of deep-green bushes in a field of grass, crisp with a pre-storm, ozone-saturated anticipation, is backed by a slur of speed-beared tree forms. More Einsteinian than Newtonian, this thought-experiment of a picture seems to lay bare the gap between quantum realities and our desire for ordinary material perception.

The mural-sized, green and azure *Spring Seen* dares to be pretty, and with its clouds of scumbled green, advances a kind of nostalgia for prettiness. In fact, many of these works are beautiful, and in the midst of their destabilizing effects, quietly assert the power of landscape to move us still.

—Miriam Seidel

Eileen Neff: *Newton's Field*, 2001, C-print, 44 by 64 1/2 inches; at Locks.



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# New York Magazine

July 29 - August 5, 2002

Talent

## The Power of Myth

Myths and fairy tales have always provided fodder for artists, whether referenced directly or as starting points for flights of fantasy. **Into the Woods**, the summer show at Julie Saul Gallery, looks at both approaches in photographs, paintings, drawings, and sculptures by dream weavers of all stripes, from Alyson Shotz's *Still Life*, an installation of "techno trees" suspended above mirror "puddles," to K. K. Kozik's painting *Magic Castle* to Eileen Neff's mysterious *Almost (November 21, 2000)* (2001, pictured), a color inkjet print from a digitally manipulated photograph. (Through August 16; see "Galleries: Group Shows.")





# The Philadelphia Inquirer

December 7, 2001

**Still, in motion.** In her large landscape photographs at Locks Gallery, Eileen Neff creates some intriguing perceptual puzzles. All the images are landscapes photographed from moving trains, then computer-manipulated and



"Newton's Field" is among the landscape photographs at Locks Gallery by Eileen Neff. She plays with focus and reflection in the images.

combined to produce startling anomalies.

For the viewer, the anomalies aren't blatant. They involve distinguishing what one might expect to see from what the artist has recorded, and guessing what might be concealed.

Neff asks us to consider whether absolute reality exists in such circumstances, or whether imagination, memory and individual idiosyncracies always alter the scene.

The anomalies generally involve focus and reflection. Most of the images contain some blurring; in the most intriguing pictures, the blurring is selective. In *Newton's Field*, for instance, we see the foreground in sharp focus and the background as a yellowish-green smudge.

Similar incongruities occur with reflection. In *Almost (No. 1)*, for instance, the top half appears to be reflected in a body of water that constitutes the bottom half, but the halves don't correlate.

Neff makes her photographs with a conventional camera, then scans the images into a computer for editing. She finishes them as conventional color prints that range in size from roughly 3½ feet by nearly 5 feet to a wall mural 12 by 17 feet.

Her method produces many surreal dislocations. They range from the startling realism of *Almost (November 21, 2000)*, two contrasting scenes butted together as if one were a reflection of the other, to the near-complete abstraction of *This and That*, wavy vertical threads of pure color.

Neff's pictures reminded me of the Belgian surrealist René Magritte, whose paintings posed similar contradictions.

Because the photographic manipulations are more ambiguous and subtle, they're more effective in persuading the viewer to accept what he or she sees as plausible — that what we see might not be rational but it is theoretically possible.

Locks Gallery, 600 Washington Square South. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Through Dec. 22. 215-629-1000 or [www.locksgallery.com](http://www.locksgallery.com).

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■ The Art listings begin on Page 35.