

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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To Have and Not to Hold

Painter Vivian Kahra and Photographer Leah Oates
Landscapes as Ephemeral and Fleeting as Time



November 10 – December 31, 2016

Opening Reception: Thursday, November 10, 6-8pm

We are pleased to announce the opening of *To Have and Not to Hold*, a two-person exhibition featuring paintings by Vivian Kahra and photography by Leah Oates. This is Kahra's First major exhibition with SEFA, following her participation in our recent summer group show, *Two X Five*, and in art fairs in Miami and Toronto. Oates first exhibited with SEFA in a two-person show with Maria Passarotti (2012) and with our group show *Caught on Film* (2015).

Leah Oates is represented by work from her ongoing series "Transitory Space," for which she has traveled extensively to China, Canada, Finland and the US. This exhibition includes trees and waterscapes photographed in Nova Scotia, Canada and Prospect Park, Brooklyn (2012-2015). Oates employs a double and sometimes triple exposure, which creates halos of light, dappled, misty surfaces and gauzy effects in muted greens and blues.

Oates questions the notion of stasis in the natural and even man-made worlds. Challenging the proverbial idea that a click of the camera freezes a moment, Oates offers us stunning, lyrical landscapes in constant flux, shifting and becoming. As time never stands still, neither do the scenes and subject matter through which we experience the march of the clock.

Oates finds transient beauty on the shoreline of McNabs Island, Canada and on the sun-speckled surfaces of various ponds in Prospect Park and Nova Scotia, rendering her experiences as fleeting moments on a continuum of space and time. Oates spends a great deal of time in Prospect Park, her backyard in Brooklyn, where her ongoing fascination with the balletic shapes of trees and the sway of their recalcitrant branches never cease to amaze and inspire her in every season and in various light.

In most of the nine paintings chosen for "To Have and Not to Hold," **Vivian Kahra** features a central figure, as in *Boy Balancing*, *Man Standing*, *Fail* and *Connecting*. Whether in motion or still, the figures underline the idea that the world is in constant movement, shifting, swaying and recalibrating, as we, as its inhabitants, do what we can to keep up and match the planet's energy.

Figures are drawn in activities favored by the artist—rowing, skateboarding, skiing, or sometimes standing still in contemplation. Kahra, an avid athlete, moves through her small town of Nyack, NY on foot, by bike or in her kayak on the Hudson River.

Vivian renders these seductive, lyrical paintings with a unique mixture of oil paint and watercolor, applied with careful deliberation in subtle hues of green, off white and blue, not unlike the tones of Oates' photography. While reaching, bending, stepping or sitting, the movement of the figures parallels the rhythms of the linear patterns, stripes and gentle curves in paint. With their softness and feathery quality, these paintings seem to offer dreamscapes of memory recalled, rather than landscape renderings.

LEAH OATES BIO

Leah Oates has a B.F.A. from the Rhode Island School of Design, an M.F.A. from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is a Fulbright Fellow for study at Edinburgh College of Art in Scotland. Oates has had numerous solo shows at venues including The Central Park Arsenal Gallery, The Center for Book Arts, Artemisia Gallery, Sara Nightingale Gallery, The Brooklyn Public Library and Susan Eley Fine Art.

Her work was recently installed as part of the MTA Arts & Design Light Box series at 42nd Street at 6th Avenue in Bryant Park, NYC. Oates has been part of group shows in NYC at The Pen and Brush Gallery, Peer Gallery, 440 Gallery, Metaphor Contemporary Art, NYOC Gallery, Pierogi Gallery, Nurture Art, Momenta Art, Associated Gallery, Susan Eley Fine Art and Denise Bibro Fine Art.

Works on paper by Oates are in numerous public collections including the Harvard University Libraries, The Brooklyn Museum Artists' Book Collection, The Walker Art Center Libraries, The Smithsonian Libraries and the Franklin Furnace Archive at MoMA, NYC. Oates lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

ARTIST STATEMENT

The *Transitory Space* series deals with urban and natural locations that are transforming due to the passage of time, altered natural conditions and a continual human imprint. In everyone and in everything there are daily changes and this series articulates fluctuation in the photographic image and captures movement through time and space.

Transitory spaces have a messy human energy that is perpetually in the present yet continually altering. They are endlessly interesting, alive places where there is a great deal of beauty and fragility. They are temporary monuments to the ephemeral nature of existence.

Time is layered and not frozen into one single moment. Photography is directly connected to time as the camera shoots in fractions of a second. Time is always slipping and fracturing from the present, past and future. We are often living in all these levels at once. But when we're not, we experience flow—or an absence of time. Multiple exposures are close to the experience of "flow." When I look at a moment in time I "feel" more than can be recorded with a simple click of the shutter. I use multiple exposures on film to record a more accurate picture of how we can recall time transpiring.

VIVIAN KAHRA BIO

Vivian Kahra was born in Braunschweig, Germany and studied painting and drawing at the Hochschule fuer bildende Kuenste, Braunschweig and Muthesius Kunsthochschule Kiel, Germany. In 2004 she received her Diploma in Painting from Muthesius Kunsthochschule, Kiel.

Kahra has traveled throughout Europe during her years at the Art Academy and lived for four months on Australia's west coast. In 2005 she moved to Nyack, NY. She spends a lot of time in nature, exploring it through biking, hiking, skiing, surfing and kayaking. Through her journeys and her general interest in movement, her painting continues to explore different ways to approach and perceive momentariness – the state of impermanence and continuity. Kahra's work has been exhibited in Europe and in galleries in NYC, Westchester county with Kenise Barnes Fine Art, and in Rockland County. The artist lives in Nyack, NY.

VIVIAN KAHRA ARTIST STATEMENT

Over the last 15 years, my painting has explored different ways to approach and perceive momentariness – the state of impermanence and continuity. When I am in nature I move through space and time, but I also transcend movement as I come to settle, with stillness, and exist within time. Walking through the woods, I slow down, I pay attention, I come into my body, observant, and suspended. I pause, with my memories, my inner thoughts, and I come to recognize my own walk, the way my hand moves--movements become once again my own, I am strong. At the same time, Nature swings me back and forth within its transcendent rhythm, and I am a tiny part of a continuum, a succession of movements, lives, and perceptions. I am both powerful and quickly extinguished, and in this place of grandeur and impermanence I find joy.

When I paint I am capturing the process of the natural world transforming into architecture of memory, feelings and inner motion. The process of painting for me is like being in nature. I recognize and am immersed in each moment, from the very beginning of the sketch to the finished painting. I am slow. I sit in front of the painting for a long time looking at the canvas before applying the next layer of paint. This slow approach is as important to me as the representational scene.

I begin by stretching the canvas myself, which is an important step in getting to know the new painting. I apply Gesso to the raw canvas in one or two thin layers to allow the watercolor to be absorbed by the canvas. Thin layers of paint that stay open until the painting is finished let the painting "breathe", like a membrane or skin. One can still see and feel the gessoed canvas, like solid ground below. Finally, I apply oil color, which closes the pores of the canvas and fixes the painting, holding it in memory, lengthening the moment while physically moving on. The floating shapes and lines, and the composition of my paintings, represent motion. The wide fields of raw gessoed canvas illustrate the accumulation of moments that have quickly passed, the fleeting nature of experiences we can barely discern, and the volatility of both life and emptiness.