

Susan Eley  
Fine Art

***Landscapes of Transcendence***  
***An Exhibition in Two Parts***

**Part I: *Magical Realism***  
**December 14, 2023 - January 28, 2024**

**Part II: *Scenes of Ethereality***  
**February 1 - March 24, 2024**  
**Opening Reception: February 3, 4-6PM**

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Susan Eley Fine Art, Hudson

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*“Be Clearly Aware of the Stars and Infinity on High”*  
*–Vincent Van Gogh*

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Since time immemorial artists have depicted their environs through a myriad of lenses: a realistic approach, recording as objectively as possible what is perceived; to an imaginative approach, using a real scene as a catalyst for the artist’s intuitive expression of place. In *Landscapes of Transcendence*, SEFA explores the latter, more subjective interpretations of place in a two-part exhibition at our Hudson Gallery, showcasing a variety of styles and techniques.

Part I, entitled *Magical Realism*, featured paintings that evoke surrealism and fantasy. Experienced together, these scenes depict lush, at times overgrown, flora and fauna; hyperreal, saturated colors and otherworldly narratives; and impossible architecture, defying laws of gravity and physics. The artists included in this exhibition were Karin Bruckner, Jim Denney, Katharine Dufault, Laurie Fader, Allison Green, Kentaro Hiramatsu, James Isherwood, Rachelle Krieger, April Dawn Parker, Lily Prince and Ulla Scheinemann.

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Part II, entitled *Scenes of Ethereality*, features photographs that evoke surrealism and fantasy. The artists included in this exhibition are Heather Boose Weiss, Carolyn Monastra and Leah Oates. *Scenes of Ethereality* is on view at SEFA Hudson from February 1 to March 24, 2024. SEFA will host an opening reception on Saturday, February 3 from 4 to 6 PM.

Their photographs depict lush flora and fauna; hyperreal and otherworldly natural narratives; and seemingly impossible environments, defying laws of gravity and physics. In this melange of images, everything is visually recognizable. Yet, these creators elevate their aesthetics to fulfill their fantasies. Indeed, ethereality is defined as “the quality or state of being light, airy, weightless, delicate or otherworldly.”<sup>1</sup>

The three artists have worked with SFEA for many years, and this exhibition is the introduction of the photographic medium to our Hudson space. This show will highlight photographs characterized by a poetic and romantic aura. On one end of the spectrum are landscapes composed with *sfumato* effects—a soft transition between light and dark tones. These works have gauze like surfaces, often created through multiple exposures. Other featured photographs are rendered with a single prolonged exposure that results in rich detail and hyper-clarity.

The practices of Boose Weiss, Monastra and Oates stem from the lineage of Pictorialism which emerged in the late 19th century and was defined by Alfred Stieglitz with his hazy cityscapes. The Pictorialists sought to elevate photography from documentation to art—a means of personal expression on par with painting. In *Scenes of Ethereality*, the double exposures evoke the window reflections of Parisian storefronts shot by Eugène Atget and the quirky, mysterious shadows shot by André Kertész. The black and white images of nature reference the sprawling landscapes of the later American photographer Ansel Adams.

*Scenes of Ethereality* is arranged to allow each artist her space to sing. Heather Boose Weiss presents a striking display of black and white images. They are encased in black frames, creating a dramatic effect hung along the Gallery’s white wall. Her images are often sourced from nature—from the ghostly abstraction of *Navajo Sand* to the crisp lines of the Yosemite

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford English Dictionary

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mountains in *Hanging Valley*. Boose Weiss also plays with her own shadow in the landscape. In *Untitled (Sedona)*, she captures her silhouette on the grounds of the Southwest, playing a flute like Euterpe, the Greek Muse of lyrical poetry. In addition to her monochrome palette, Boose Weiss prefers a single exposure when shooting.

Carolyn Monastra instead prefers to shoot with color film. She often uses a large format camera and favors the technique of long exposures. This allows her to create a shift between the foreground and background. She can capture the cusps between daylight and twilight and the strange shifts of color that occur in the landscapes over time. Monastra aims to depict the woods and forests in a mythical manner, capturing their beauty and secrets—alluding to stories like Hansel and Gretel. On view in this exhibition, her “lovely, dark and deep” series is hung in salon style. The series title is from a Robert Frost poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, and the poem encapsulates how Monastra wants to also embrace the fear of the unknown.

In *Scenes of Ethereality*, Leah Oates exhibits her “Transitory Space” series. The photographs are displayed in a horizontal sequence that demonstrates the variation and richness of the shifting colors within her landscapes. Mossy ponds and tree leaves pop with green hues, while blue skies and white clouds float within her exterior scenes. Also employing multiple exposures as her technique, Oates sculpts landscapes by distorting them. She presents viewers with in-between worlds by capturing impressions of both natural and urban locations. Her process allows for an attention to the passage of time and the resulting changes in the surrounding vistas. In her “Transitory Space” series, nature is contrasted by other works such as those taken in Prospect Park in Brooklyn, NY. Dots and flecks of light reflect on the water; they illuminate the composition and transform the image into the ethereality for which this exhibition is named.

Text by Liz Lorenz, Susan Eley Fine Art, Assistant Director

## HEATHER BOOSE WEISS

### Artist Biography:

Riding on a wavelength off of the Light and Space Movement of 1960s California—Heather Boose Weiss approaches a continuity of form, presence, space, light and movement through still photography. Depicting both natural and supernatural moments in time and space, her works often break the formal foreground/background relationship. She invites the audience to float in space, to follow the water's path or witness a beam of light. The integrative soulful renderings breathe fresh life into the classic medium of black and white film photography captured through a Hasselblad camera.

Boose Weiss builds collective meditations through energetic interactions with nature. Her works offer subtle and often mystical perceptions of our environment. Her earlier self-portrait works eventually broke free of their own narrative and expanded into a full dialogue with elemental being, nature itself, movement and light. They reveal and also command that we not only see but maintain an intimacy with nature, guarding the spirit that dwells in the natural heritage we are all a part of on earth.

Heather Boose Weiss studied photography at Cornell University and received a BFA in photography from the School of Visual Arts in 2005. She launched and taught a photography program at a Harlem Charter Day School in 2004. Boose Weiss has exhibited with Susan Eley Fine Art in multiple exhibitions since 2007. She currently lives and works in Washington, USA.

### Artist Statement:

I have selected images for this exhibition that represent the last ten years of growing my visual language. All the imagery was made in camera with a Hasselblad and ISO400 film. There has been no post production digital manipulation.

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## CAROLYN MONASTRA

### Artist Biography:

Carolyn Monastra is an artist, activist and educator. Her work is driven by a deep-rooted connection to the natural world. She uses photography, video, sound, public art and community-engagement to address environmental issues and examine humans' relationship with our ecosystems.

Monastra earned a BA in English Literature from Fordham University and an MFA from Yale School of Art. As a Climate Reality Project Leader, Carolyn has given dozens of presentations to diverse audiences. Awards include grants from the Puffin Foundation and BRIC Arts Media, along with residencies at Ucross, LMCC Arts Center, Djerassi, Blue Mountain Center, NYC Audubon and Skafteill Visual Arts in Iceland. Her artwork is in the Marguiles and Johnson & Johnson collections and has been exhibited in venues in the United States, China, Ireland and England.

Monastra lives in Brooklyn, New York and is currently working on her conceptual eco-art project, *Divergence of Birds*. She has exhibited with Susan Eley Fine Art in both its New York City and Upstate venues.

### Artist Statement:

For the series “lovely, dark and deep,” I draw from the fragmentary space of dreams and my experiences with the environment to discover and create mystery in the natural world. Whereas most landscape photographers seek out grand sweeping vistas—with this project, I am interested in the smaller, sometimes disquieting worlds that exist off the beaten path. It is a darker, enigmatic beauty to which I am drawn: that of the shadowy forests of Hansel and Gretel, not the pristine views of Ansel Adams.

These long twilight exposures are taken with a large format film camera. They exemplify both the seduction and apprehension the woods hold for me during the blue hour. As dusk falls, objects become hazy and sounds amplified. In these dense lush images, punctuated by overlapping areas of clarity and haziness, the world is a more mystifying but still alluring place.

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## LEAH OATES

### Artist Biography:

Leah Oates has a B.F.A. from the Rhode Island School of Design and a M.F.A. from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is a Fulbright Fellow for graduate study at Edinburgh College of Art in Scotland.

Oates has had solo shows in the NYC area at Susan Eley Fine Art, The MTA Lightbox Project at 42nd Street, The Arsenal Gallery in Central Park, The Open Center, The Center for Book Arts and The Brooklyn Public Library Main Branch. She has had solo shows nationally and internationally at Black Cat Artspace in Toronto, Real Art Ways in Connecticut, Sara Nightingale Gallery in Long Island, Artemisia Gallery in Chicago and at Galerie Joella in Turku, Finland. Oates had press and been featured in numerous publications including Art Toronto, Al-Tiba9 Contemporary Art Magazine, Junto Magazine, Magazine 43, Underexposed Magazine, Ruminant Journal, Mud Season Review, dArt Magazine, The Tulane Review, The Six Hundred Journal, Blue Mesa Review, Friends of the Artist, GASHER Journal, Flumes Literary Journal and the 805 Lit + Art Journal.

### 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.

Humans leave traces and artifacts of our consciousness everywhere in our environment. Contradictory realities can be found co-existing wherever we look. They’re in what we choose to think; what we choose to believe; and, how we choose to act. And, they can be found in what we choose to observe. When I look back on a moment it’s full of impressions and multiple exposures capture this. I make multiple exposures on specific frames in camera which allows me to display a more complete correlation of experiences that a single exposure just misses.

Every moment captured on film is over as soon as the shutter clicks, recording the ephemeral. Yet, in reality, there is always a visual cacophony of experience.

We are always living in many realities at once. Multiple exposures express the way we experience the world more accurately. 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.