



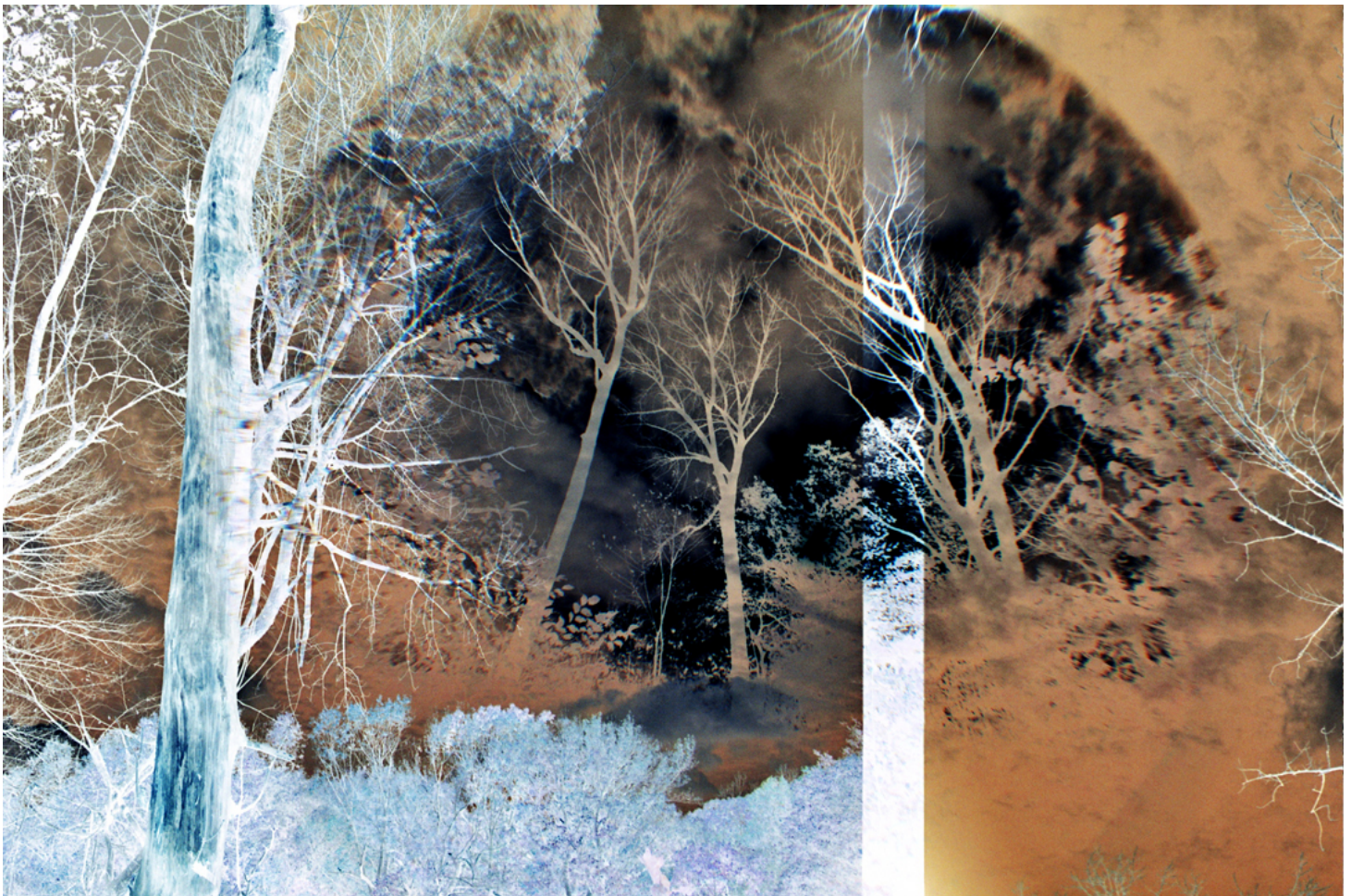
- [About Us](#)
- [Archives »](#)
- [Briefs Blog](#)
- [Special Issue: Spry Lit x The Poetry of Science »](#)
- [Submissions Guidelines](#)

Spry Literary Journal



# Art Feature: Transitory Space, Brooklyn, The Bronx and Queens, NYC

Posted by [editors](#) on Jul 31, 2015 in [Uncategorized](#) | [0 comments](#)



**Transitory Space, Brooklyn, The Bronx and Queens, NYC** by Leah Oates



**Leah Oates** has a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and MFA 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 shown in NYC at Pierogi Gallery, Nurture Art, Momenta Art, Associated Gallery, Susan Eley Fine Art, The Central Park Arsenal Gallery and The Center for Book Arts. Oates' works on paper are in many 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.

**Question 1: This piece is truly an experience. When I look at it, I feel movement through space as well as time, almost like I'm in this same patch of forest through each of the four seasons at once. The use of negative and sepia tones throughout help speak to that. I'd really like to hear your thoughts on this piece. What inspired it, and what's the story behind it? What does it mean to you?**

I think your impression of this work are accurate and great. I also see lots of movement and a ghost image of this location almost as if its being lost or fading.

I think of this like how our memory works, or what may happen if we don't take care of nature and our green spaces. This image to me is both beautiful and poignant as it represents something that is here now, but may not be tomorrow.

The use of a two tones (i.e. sepia tone or duotone) looks more like an x-ray so it gives the impression of looking under the surface into another layer of reality and going deeper into something hidden which comes into view.

**Q 2: What is the process that goes into creating a piece like this? How do you take an idea from its inception to creation, and how do you know when it is complete?**

I work with 35mm and medium format film in cameras. I expose the film multiple times and play with lenses, exposure times, and light leaks.

In my studio practice it's a mix of focused work and loose play. All work all the time can get dull—so play is really important for me. When my negatives are processed I have them scanned too, and I play with these images with color, tweak them, and work on artists' books and pigment prints in studio.

Sometimes I'll just know a work is done; other times, it's never done. I think of this work as being part of a body of work that speaks to a focus on shifting nature and the environment, and that is part of a whole series of images that create a dialogue and narrative rhythm together.

**Q 3: How has your artwork evolved over time? What have been the most challenging obstacles to overcome in your work as an artist, and how did you overcome them?**

I started as a painter, printmaker, and bookmaker, and evolved into a photographer over time. This was partly due to allergies to chemicals associated with painting and printmaking and also a shift in my interests as an artist and what I wanted the work to say and see in my work.

In terms of challenges, it's always the same thing with any creative person: the inner dance between time and money, or money and time. The only other barrier for me as an artist has been my own inner critic and inertia at times and a desire to not be in studio on a beautiful, sunny day.

When you're a pro you get to work in studio despite these things. To overcome these obstacles I now do take breaks when needed and get outside on a sunny day if the sun is beckoning. I'm more selective of what I get involve with, too. Taking short breaks I find helps a lot as I have more energy when I am working.

**Q 4: As writers, our readers and staff members do a lot of drafting until a piece is complete, trying out forms, scrapping, repeating. What goes into your creative process, and is there a drafting equivalent? What do you do to ensure your subject or scene is portrayed in exactly the way you want?**

My shooting process is pretty fluid and the creativity is in the framing and selection process of what I end up shooting. It's all then in the editing, selection, and sequencing of images and in the details where the creativity comes into play.

**Q 5: What artists and/or photographers have been the most influential on your work? Why are these people and their works so important to you?**

I have so many favorite artists.

I love the paintings of Turner as they are mysteriously beautiful and leave information out and have only what is needed to convey the place being depicted.

I love the works of Yoko Ono and Sophie Calle for their poetic, generous, and playful sensibilities.

I love the work of Ann Hamilton for her very refined specificity, ambition, and ability to create magical work from seemingly ordinary, everyday material.

I love the work of Jean-Michael Basquiat as his works touches me and I feel he is right there on the surface of his works, and that his work has a unique vitality to it.

I love the works of Rembrandt, Toulous Lautrec, Klimt, Frans Hals, Goya, Velasquez, El Greco, Holbein, Vermeer, Cezanne, Monet, Matisse, and Carivaggio as the works they created have a presence that only great work has that is hard to define. The places and people they depict leap off the surfaces of their works and speak directly back at the viewer. It unnerves me but I like that it does this, as these works make me more aware of being human, wake me up and in turn give me joy to see.

**Q 6: I've never asked anyone this question before, but I find myself wondering: Does music play any role in your work? Do you find yourself listening to a particular genre while you create, or when you're seeking inspiration?**

I used to listen to music, NPR, or Air America Radio when in studio. Now I crave stillness and quiet, as life can get busy in NYC—and I juggle family, studio, and a business I run, so I don't listen to music or radio so much now. Also NYC can get really noisy.

My favorite music is by TV On The Radio, Spoon, MGMT, Blondie, David Bowie, The Pretenders, LDC Soundsystem, The Pixies, The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Public Enemy, The Clash, and The Sex Pistols, amongst others.

**Q 7: Who is your favorite author or poet (or, if you don't have one, what's your favorite book or collection)? Why?**

So hard to pick a favorite author or poet. I can't really answer why I respond to these writers, except to say that their work made me feel more deeply about what it means to be human, and it inspires me in different ways.

My favorite authors are Margurite Duras, Truman Capote, Cormac McCarthy, Jane Smiley, Wally Lamb, Peter Mattisen, Russell Banks, Joyce Carrol Oates, and Leslie Marmon Silko.

For poets I like Maya Angelou, Adrienne Rich, William Blake, Emily Dickinson, and T.S.Eliot.

**Q 8: Are you working on any projects currently that you'd like to share with our readers?**

I'm about to head off to Halifax and Chester, Nova Scotia, Canada for six weeks to explore and photograph, and to spend time with family. So I will be making new work as a continuation of the Transitory Space series.

I'm currently planning a pop-up solo show of my work for Spring 2017 in NYC.

I also have shows up now in NYC this summer. Here's more info on those:

[Transitory Space, Prospect Park, Brooklyn & Beyond](#) by Leah Oates

June 11, 2015 – September 25, 2015

Central Library, 2nd floor Balcony Cases

[Caught on Film: Finding the Extraordinary](#)

Susan Eley Fine Art

June 10 – September 4, 2015

[THERE IS NO ROOM FOR US HERE](#)

NYOC Gallery, NY Open Center

On view through August 4th.

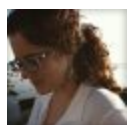
### Q 9: If you could turn the world onto one artist, who would it be?

Matisse or Monet would be my first choices! The color, joy and beauty in their work would transform the world and bring universal peace or at least a really good and joyous party would ensue right away.

### Q 10: Is there anything else you'd like to share with our readers?

If you're a creative person keep working and be in studio as much as you can. Through the work things happen that one cannot anticipate. Just be there and be present and your half way there already.

Also to those out there that want to have kids—do it! Having my son is the best thing I've ever done, and it's had only positive effects on me and my work. I'm a better person due to my son and I've kept working. If your will and love of your work is there you will continue to do so. If you're a female artist, tune out the sexist nonsense—and if faced with sexists nonsense reply that recent studies show that kids of working moms do just fine and that there are benefits to kids. Girls are more likely to pursue their passions in their work and boys are more likely to pitch in and support their wives and girlfriends who work. Seems like an improvement to me.



Linsey Jayne is a wave-headed poet with a penchant for jazz who received her MFA in creative writing at Fairfield University. Her writing has been published in such publications as *The Standard-Times*, *The Dartmouth-Westport Chronicle*, and *exactly.what*. She has served as the chief poetry editor for *Mason's Road*, as well as the student editor for the *Bryant Literary Review* and the opinion section editor of *The Archway*. Linsey is currently at work on her first collection of poetry, entitled *Idle Jive*.

## 0 Comments

## Trackbacks/Pingbacks

1. [THERE IS NO ROOM FOR US HERE: Monique Luchetti, Elena Lyakir & Leah Oates](#) - [...] Press Spry Literary Journal on Leah Oates [...]
2. [Leah Oates: Multiple Exposures | The Woven Tale Press](#) - [...] temporality, Oates's photographs can serve as political commentary on the environmental. In a recent interview, Oates describes the fading...
3. [Leah Oates: Multiple Exposures | The Woven Tale Press blog](#) - [...] temporality, Oates's photographs can serve as political commentary on the environmental. In a recent interview, Oates describes the fading...

## Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked \*

Comment \*

Name \*

Email \*

Website



### About Briefs

We are happy to introduce Briefs, Spry's blog feature, built with the intention of driving conversations, introducing writing and writers, and bringing engaging content to the forefront of the literary journal-reading community. We are always looking for contributing writers and interviewers; please visit our [Submission Guidelines](#) for more information. Enjoy!

### Subscribe to Blog via Email

Enter your email address to subscribe to this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.

### Blog Archives

Select Month

[Spry Literary Journal](#)



Spry Liter ...  
3.3K followers

Follow Page



## Top Posts & Pages

- [How to Commit Arson and Not Get Caught](#)
- [Submissions Guidelines](#)
- [Issue 15](#)
- [With a Face Like This](#)
- [In Love, In Grief, In Literature: A Literacy Memoir](#)
- [ABCs of Poetry: O is for Ode](#)
- [ABC's of Fiction Writing: T is for Triangulation](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [The Salt Gift](#)
- [Summerseeds and Winterash](#)

## [My Tweets](#)