

SOPHIE BENSON

THE SPACE BETWEEN

8 – 30 September 2006

Private View:

Thursday 7, 6.30 – 8.30 pm

gallery opening times:

Tues – Fri 10 – 5.30 + Sat 10 – 1.30



Sophie Benson paints onto large sheets of watercolour paper which she stretches over wooden frames with Japanese tissue and, just as a canvas would be constructed. This gives her work the solidity of a canvas and the delicacy of paper. There is a jolt when you get close up and realise that such a large surface (often two metres square) is paper, tinted but not covered by paint, and that this fragile surface which is usually protected by glass, is exposed to the air.

That sense of fragility is central to the artist's paintings. They are subtle objects, created by staining the paper with repeated washes of pigment solutions. A tracery of graphite hatching is visible. The white paper glows through the leached colours, so that the images shimmer, dissolve and re-assert themselves.

The subject matter – trees and lakes in one series of works, and icebergs in another – is suggestive of the almost imperceptible flow of nature. The flatness and translucency of the 'watercolour' technique makes it seem, on first encounter, that you are watching a moving projection, as if the iceberg would drift out of the frame or the trees might sway in a breeze were you to stay for long enough.

All paintings record the passage of time, if inadvertently – but with Sophie Benson time is a far more decisive collaborator. In the same way that damp stains a wall or sunlight bleaches, these paintings act as evidence of time's slow elapse – both in subject matter and technique – and in so doing they carry a stillness and a quiet force.

In 2003 Sophie Benson had a solo show – *Present Perfect* – at the Gallerie im Heppacher, Esslingen, Germany. In 2000 she won a *Year of the Artist* award which supported an artist residency at Harewood House. In the same year she was awarded a Special Project Grant by the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation. *The Space Between* is the artist's second solo exhibition at Long & Ryle.

Please contact Sarah Long or Tom Juneau at the gallery

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