

**PRESS RELEASE**

Isabel Bigelow

*Islands and Gardens*

October 28 – December 18, 2004

Sears-Peyton Gallery is pleased to announce our first solo exhibition of oil paintings by New York artist, Isabel Bigelow.

Before studying art, Bigelow was a comparative religion student at Harvard. Her scholarly exploration of spirituality continues in these works that capture the divine in nature. Their stark simplicity has a monastic quality; the landscapes have been stripped bare of indulgent details in order to promote a simple sense of reverence for the beauty of our earthly habitat.

Portals into a world of organic bliss, Bigelow's works transport us into a landscape that is at once familiar and ethereal, as if we are looking at our world through a sheer muslin veil that turns trees into illuminated shadows and the sky into a vaporous abyss.

The gossamer texture that permeates Bigelow's shadowy forms makes them buzz with enlightened energy. To create this surface quality, the artist begins by applying viscous gesso to the untreated panel in a crisscrossing series of strokes. The oil paint that she later layers over the gesso seeps and melts into every groove of the brushed surface, creating this diaphanous effect.

Bigelow's paintings are infused with a Japanese sensibility of perspective and composition. The use of silhouette derives from an interest in *shoji*, paper screens that filter light and reveal shadow. Bigelow adapts and overlaps scenes from Japanese genre screens, as well as from kimonos and Edo period woodblock prints, to create these mystical landscapes.

In "Clouds and Willows", the dark sky bleeds into milky clouds, igniting them with energy. Once energized, the clouds begin to glide before us and we sense that they are about to drift away. With this perspective in mind, we can separate the flattened planes into two sliding screens that have momentarily eclipsed and will soon continue on their transcendental routes.

In "Little Island", a mountainous form flows down like lava from the spout of a volcano. Manicured trees pop up on the mountain's slope and peak, anchoring the shape and keeping the flowing form from collapsing into a puddle. The positive and negative spaces are in a continually charged state as strands of energetic tension sprout from all sides, keeping this natural form active and alive.

In "Vines, Evening", tangled branches create a web of elegant lines. A strong gust of wind shakes up these delicate branches as they sway and stir under its pull. The heavy, drooping leaves that drip from their stems put them on the verge of snapping. Bigelow freezes this moment, and through her gossamer veil, we take a moment to appreciate the graceful dance of branches in the wind.

In our channel-flipping, fast-forwarding, cell phone-screaching world, we all, in some ways, yearn for a chance to return to the original Eden of harmony with nature and each other. By removing all of our modern clutter from her landscapes, Bigelow offers us this primordial retreat.