



FS Colour Series: Sphinx inspired by Inka Essenhighâs Emerald Green Aura

Description



Waves at midnight / 2002

[SPHINX linen](#) exotic jewel tone unfurls across Inka Essenhigh's evocative paintings, investing sublime oceanic depths or mysterious forests with a haunting, glowing aura. Fantastically surreal, her exquisitely detailed, atmospheric scenes collapse together natural and synthetic worlds, conveying lush, fervent landscapes populated by sprites and fairies, scenes painted with supernatural colours and the emanating light of the cinema screen. Twilight is her favourite time of day, often portrayed with glistening emerald greens to create the curious, enveloping mystery of dwindling daylight, as she explains, "In twilight things can emerge and disappear and

can be ambiguous.â

Born in 1969 in Pennsylvania, Essenhight was a creative child who knew early on where her calling was, remembering, âI always wanted to come to New York City to become an artist.â After studying fine art at the Columbus College of Art and Design, she moved on to earn a Master of Fine Arts from New Yorkâs School of Visual Arts.



FS SPHINX Softened Mid Weight 100% Linen

Finding her way in the 1990s, Essenhigh became one of a generation who sought figurative approaches to painting as a backlash against the prevalent styles of abstraction, along with Cecily Brown, Damian Loeb and Will Cotton. As a keen observer of visual culture, Essenhigh merged various art historical

references together, including Japanese woodblock prints, anime traditions and the myriad worlds of Bosch and Breughel, with popular culture, particularly the lyrical energy of early Disney animations and comic strips, a swirling, energised and mystical style that art critics defined as "Pop Surrealism."



Green Wave / 2002

In homage to the great Japanese printer Katsushika Hokusai, Esenhigh produced a series of paintings featuring a singular ferocious wave, as seen

in the dramatically lit *Green Wave*, 2002, where the water forms an arching, gaping mouth threatening to devour everything around it. Against a moody, ominous sky, the foreground water is enlivened and made magical through the glowering power of turquoise-green, which weaves in and out of the light, drawing us in to the murky depths of the great, wide unknown.



Minor Sea Gods of Maine / 2009

Blue-green twilight returns in *Setting Sun*, 2005, where curious, mystical

creatures leave wispy trails of ghostly, smoky movement across a darkened, emerald sky. This colour is made richer and more complex against the glowing golden greens in the foreground, where the otherworldly patterns of the night are just visible in the dwindling light, flickering in excited anticipation as if waiting for darkness to descend. The colour palette in *Minor Sea Gods of Maine*, 2009 is even more pared back and minimal, suggesting the sun has now set and night has begun. The eerie, glowing aura of dark, cold green sweeps across the sky and the moonlit water that laps like desperate claws over sharp, barren rocks, while on one rock, a cool, watery creature seems to perch like a night-time predator, waiting to pounce.



Forgotten Cemetery / 2016

Essenhig's more recent work has moved beyond the flattened, clean polish of her earlier work to a looser, more atmospheric style, a shift conveyed in the spookily atmospheric *Forgotten Cemetery*, 2016. Here emerald and minty greens intermingle in the painterly foreground, suggesting the stiff

bristle of leaves and trees in the cold, white light of early morning, before falling into earthy tones below. Pale sky becomes the freezing fog of unspoken hours, a time when spectral white spirits, just visible in the background, swirl, swim and dance, before disappearing into the all-seeing oblivion of daylight.

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CATEGORY

1. TEXTILES

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