

Victoria Miro Gallery

Press Release

Inka Essenhigh

27 April to 28 May 2005

Private View 6.00pm to 8.00pm, Tuesday 26 April

Victoria Miro Gallery presents new paintings and works on paper by New York-based Inka Essenhigh, all of which advance the artist's highly stylized investigation of narrative, universal experience and everyday life. Widely known for her fluid, dynamic imagery and inventive figures, with these works Essenhigh has furthered her move from the flatness and line of her earlier enamel paintings towards an almost sculptural three-dimensionality that places these images in the realm of an imagined real.

Essenhigh's paintings explore a diverse range of subjects and indulge in subtly complex narratives. 'Shopping,' for example, presents a wholly *du jour* scene of women in tracksuits examining round steaks in a vast supermarket, their excessively curved physiques fueling a sense of movement. In 'Brush with Death,' a vaguely human apparition escapes the clutches of the grim reaper, while 'Brand New Camel' offers a vision of an artificial, arid land – a surreal desert state both vulnerable and dangerous. A sea-dweller anchored to the ocean floor stretches through a wave towards morning sun in 'Sleep.'

Working directly on canvas with no preparatory drawing, Essenhigh's imagery is often triggered by random associations to find the most 'convenient' narrative, with entire paintings emerging from the mere hint of a shape. Inspired by the functional, ergonomic designs of street clothing, trainers and sports gear, the textures and contours in the works reflect the artist's interest in a fusion of the synthetic with the organic, and in design as a means of control over nature. In contrast to the graphic, cartoon-like quality of Essenhigh's early works, the illusory depth of these paintings infuses the figures with a plausibility, yet the works remain true to the sweeping strokes and amorphous forms that have defined Essenhigh's visual vocabulary.

Inka Essenhigh was born in 1969 and lives and works in New York. In June, she will present a major solo show at Domus Artium 2 (DA2), Salamanca, Spain. Most recently, Essenhigh was featured in the SITE Santa Fe 5th International Biennial and in the 2004 São Paulo Bienal, and has had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, Il Capricorno, Venice, 303 Gallery, New York, and the Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo. The artist has also participated in major exhibitions at Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, the Des Moines Art Center, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, Tate Gallery Liverpool, SMAK Stedelijk Museum voor Aktuelle Kunst, Ghent, and P.S.1 Contemporary Arts Center, New York.

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