

**Features**

**#5**

Donna

Huanca

**March**

**2022**

**Your work draws attention to the corporeal and in particular, the skin. I always found it fascinating that the skin is the largest organ of the human body. Could you tell me a bit about your live ‘skin paintings’?**

They are ephemeral paintings done on the body, reacting to the specificities of each individual. The skin paintings are normally part of the performances in an exhibition, and the documentation of those performances are collaged and printed on canvas and reused in my paintings. I like to layer these different temporalities, the ephemeral is extended through the paintings, and the ephemeral lends a deciduous quality to the paintings.

**I can still recall the hallucinating experience of your 2016 show “Scar Cymbals” at the Zabłudowicz Collection in London, which included powerful tableaux vivants interacting with the architecture. What are the main challenges in working with performers within art institutions?**

Thank you! In my work with institutions, the process always begins with a consideration of the architecture of the space. I want to reflect on the relationship we have to these types of institutions, and intervene in that sacrosanct, withholding ecosystem. My exhibitions often track movement, and leave traces of bodily presence, in spaces where the body is often erased and neglected. In terms of working with performers within those institutions, their safety and wellbeing is always my highest priority.

**And how about the interaction with visitors? In which ways do you consider the audience when producing new work?**

I feel that my installations are a journey that I am guiding the audience through, so I always consider the viewer first. In composing an installation I am always thinking about how the audience will move through the space, what they encounter on the way and how they interact with my sculptures and paintings. My exhibitions are immersive, I compose the smell which is connected to memory or ritualistic forms, how the soundscape washes over the audience as they move throughout the space, the light and how bright spaces can feel revealing and disorienting, while darkness can be a more solitary experience, these are all considerations and decisions that make up the process.

**Let's talk about clothes; you once said that garments evoke bodies and carry their form and spirit. Charlie Porter recently published a sort of manual / manifesto on 'What Artists Wear'. Which are your favourite clothing items?**

The characteristic technique of my practice is collage, and I have always collected textures that I reuse throughout my works. With textiles as well, I have assembled them throughout performances and sculptures in a similar way. When thinking about clothing, I am interested in how we protect ourselves, elaborate ourselves, and communicate ourselves.

**"CUEVA DE COPAL" is the title of the site-specific installation you are currently presenting at Arnolfini in Bristol until May 2022. What is it about?**

Yes, I am very excited to open "CUEVA DE COPAL" this February. This exhibition embraces darkness as a space for private reflection and healing. Since the pandemic, we've had to shift our lives, isolate ourselves for the protection of ourselves and others. For this exhibition, the performance happens behind the scenes, and the emphasis is on the audience's solitary meditative journey through the space of the Arnolfini.

**I am very interested in the transformative and meditative aspects of your practice. How can creativity become a healing force?**

I think that creativity, and aesthetic experiences can be a source of disruption that help us to appreciate our surroundings, especially now as we negotiate proximity to each other, as we learn to connect through virtual means and human touch become more dangerous.

*Special thanks: Peres Projects, Berlin.*

CUEVA DE COPAL  
2021, Arnolfini, Bristol  
Courtesy of Peres Projects, Berlin



OBSIDIAN MIRROR  
2021, Peres Projects, Berlin  
Courtesy of Peres Projects, Berlin  
Photo: Matthias Kolb





CELL ECHO  
2018, Yuz Museum, Shanghai  
Courtesy of Peres Projects, Berlin



OBSIDIAN LADDER  
2019, Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles  
Courtesy of Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles and Peres Projects, Berlin  
Photo: Elsa Kostic





CARNIVALESCA - WHAT PAINTING MIGHT BE  
2021, Kunstverein in Hamburg, Hamburg  
Courtesy of Peres Projects, Berlin  
Photo: Fred Dott





LENGUA LLORONA  
2019, Copenhagen Contemporary, Copenhagen  
Courtesy of Peres Projects, Berlin  
Photo: Elsa Kostic



PIEDRA QUEMADA  
2019, Belvedere Museum, Vienna  
Courtesy of Peres Projects, Berlin  
Photo: Johannes Stoll & Elsa Kostic



ESPEJO QUEMADA  
2021, Ballroom Marfa, Marfa  
Courtesy of the artist and Ballroom Marfa, Marfa  
Photo: Makenzie Goodman





## Donna Huanca

Donna Huanca (1980, Chicago) studied at Städelschule, Frankfurt and was the recipient of the DAAD Artist Frankfurt and a Fulbright research grant. The body and skin are ongoing points of focus in her work, where she employs them as both surface and material. The painted performers, who populate the immersive environments composed of her studio works, dissimulate amongst the various elements, joining and extending them. This oscillation in and out of sentience composes an allegory to the fragmentation of identity. She has had solo exhibitions at Ballroom Marfa, Marciano Art Foundation, Copenhagen Contemporary, Belvedere Museum, Yuz Museum Shanghai, and Peres Projects.



Photo by Tobias Willmann



Features is an interview series that explores inspiring artistic and research stories in contemporary culture. Invited artists and practitioners from all over the world — acting within a multitude of initiatives, spaces and contexts — share their creative processes with curator Nicolas Vamvouklis.

*The opinions expressed in the interviews are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Foundation.*

Nicolas Vamvouklis  
vamvouklisn@aegean.gr

Fondazione Imago Mundi  
Piazza del Duomo 20 — 31100 Treviso Tv, Italy  
[www.fondazioneimagomundi.org](http://www.fondazioneimagomundi.org)

