

DONNA HUANCA

(Chicago, USA. 1980)

As shown in her latest solo exhibition *Lengua de Bartolina Sisa* (2017) at *Travesía Cuatro* in Madrid, in recent years, Huanca's work has stood out for its understanding of the body, and of the skin in particular, as a territory where surface and matter converse with architecture, space, and the world. Through paintings, sculptures, and performances, the artist creates disturbing futuristic-prehistoric scenarios where identity shatters into a sort of schizodynamic production of knowledge. In her performances, a set of actions is carried out by regular collaborators, producing slow-paced choreographies that conjure private rituals and meditations in the gallery space, confronting the viewer with a scenario equal parts uncomfortable and suggestive.

Her performances generate a space where bodies, materials, and forms gather to establish an architecture of presence. The titles of the paintings, through which matter emerges as something between the natural and the artificial, and in which blue predominates over skin tones and earthy colours, allude to different types of rocks, minerals, and natural processes. The totemic sculptures, on the other hand, combine a variety of materials that relate to the body and which stand out for their tactile qualities, such as clothes, skin, silicone body imprints, natural and synthetic textiles, or re-contextualized cultural artefacts. Collaborators' bodies are painted from head to toe, resembling figures halfway between a shaman and a futuristic raver. As they move through the space in a trance, following an icy choreography, they switch positions, climb up and down stairs and props that are scattered throughout the gallery, and engage with paintings and sculptures in a wordless dialogue.

Huanca's practice questions systems of knowledge such as biology, ecology, geology, or anthropology. Surrounded by the silent matter of the paintings and sculptures, one can almost feel the constant danger of life in relation to nonlife. The indigenous imaginary and the uncanny but vital collaborators' movements actualize the animist insistence on the fact that all forms of existence have within them a vital affecting force. All the elements—both bodies and objects—are impregnated with cosmetic pigments, unifying and stabilizing the animate with the inanimate, the human with the mineral, the organic with the synthetic. The bodies' coloration—like a virus—confuses and levels the difference between life and nonlife, and operates as an instrument of transformation, setting up a model for the fragmentation of cultural, gender, and national identities and the dissolution of the false dichotomy of nature and culture.

Donna Huanca (b. 1980, Chicago, USA) studied at the Städelschule, Frankfurt as well as the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and has been the recipient of the DAAD grant and a Fulbright scholarship to live and work in Mexico City (2012). Recent exhibitions include *Jaguar and electric Eels*, Julia Stoschek Collection, Berlin; *Scar Cymbals*, Zabłudowicz Collection, London; *Surrogate Painteen*, Peres Project, Berlin; *Ice Chrysocholla*, Cabaret der Künstler – Zunfthaus Voltaire, Manifesta 11, Zurich; *Poly Styrene's Braces*, curated by Anne Barlow, Art in General, New York; in collaboration with *kim?*, Contemporary Art Centre, Riga, Latvia and *Sade Room* (formerly *reclusive*), Moma PS1, New York.