Interview



ARTIST DONNA HUANCA'S TRANSCENDENT INSTALLATIONS VALUE REAL LIFE OVER LIKES

By CAROLINE BUSTA
Photography Richie Shazam

Paint-splattered canvases, tattered garments, ambiguous steel objects, wax, hair, and even coffee grounds — these are just a few of the many materials that Donna Huanca incorporates into her kaleidoscopic installations. And yet, says the American-born, Berlin-based artist, the process always begins with people. "When I was in high school I would take acid with anyone I wanted to get to know," says Huanca, whose pigment-covered models appear, like members of the clergy in a psychedelic healing ritual, at the center of her built environments. This month, her "traveling gang" of mostly fellow artists and musicians will arrive in Denmark for Huanca's ambitious exhibition at Copenhagen Contemporary, a museum housed in a former ship hangar.

Although they owe a debt to the happenings of Carolee Schneemann and Robert Morris, Huanca's works are born from the nightclubs of her adoptive home of Berlin. A decade-long veteran of the noise music scene, producing music under the moniker Rua Minx, she has an innate sense of how bodies and architecture reverberate against one another to create emotional static. In person, this feeling belies the photographs of Huanca's work, whose vibrant colors make them incredibly Instagram-ready. The striking presence of her performers acts as an anti-screen surface, one that pulls its audience into the lived reality of the room they inhabit. "I'm grateful that the works are photogenic," says Huanca — and indeed they are — "but I want you, as you're walking through the space, to feel like you're at the center of a universe, at the center of a complex, self-generating, living thing."

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Sittings Editor: Briana Andalore.