

Press Release: December 2021

DONNA HUANCA | CUEVA DE COPAL

Exhibition dates 5 February to 29 May 2022



Donna Huanca CUEVA DE COPAL #1-4 2021
In four parts, each: 255 x 173cm (100 x 68in)
Overall 255 x 692cm (100 x 272in) Installation View
Courtesy Peres Projects, Berlin

Arnolfini are excited to present a new and immersive site-specific installation by **Donna Huanca**. Huanca's interdisciplinary practice encompasses painting, sculpture, performance, choreography, video and sensory interventions, all based around her exploration of the human body.

Huanca builds her experiential installations around the history and architecture of **each new site, enhancing the sensory elements of visitors' interactions using sound, scent, and texture**. Her CUEVA DE COPAL presentation at Arnolfini plunges the viewer into a cocoon-like space, encouraging viewers to separate their experience from the world around them. Previous installations have seen the artist transform the **Copenhagen Contemporary's** industrial space of the former B&W welding hall, the early 18th century palace of the Belvedere Museum, Vienna, as well as engage the high desert landscape surrounding the Ballroom Marfa, Texas.

Huanca notes that: **“The way that I set up an exhibition environment is a very intuitive process. The materials are important cultural references and traces – tools we use as humans to camouflage, express and explore the complexity of our ever disintegrating bodies, along with natural materials drawn from our ecosystems.”**

Huanca’s work continuously builds on past remnants of her practice, ‘excavating’ and layering her own work, and transforming her live ‘skin’ paintings into new multi-layered and hybrid forms that sit somewhere between performance, painting and photography.

Moving away from the live body as a key element in her work, new sculptures produced for the exhibition develop ideas first seen in the reflective sculptures shown in *ESPEJO QUEMADA* (meaning burnt mirror) at Ballroom Marfa, Texas. Here, Huanca incorporates mirrored and metallic surfaces as part of the installation, inviting audiences to view their own reflection alongside glimpses of body, skin and human form in her monumental and multi-panelled paintings. Through this, Huanca’s sensory experiences immerse her audiences in intimate moments, encouraging us to explore our own body in relation to perceptions of space and time.

Donna Huanca is represented by Peres Projects, Travesia Cuatro, and Simon Lee Gallery.

The exhibition will be open Tuesday to Sunday each week, 11am to 6pm, entry is free and will be bookable in advance via arnolfini.org.uk.

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For further information please contact Sara Blair sara.blair@arnolfini.org.uk
Additional images are available <https://bit.ly/DonnaHuancaArnolfini>
Twitter / Facebook / Instagram / www.arnolfini.org.uk

LISTINGS

Donna Huanca | CUEVA DE COPAL

5 February to 29 May 2022

Arnolfini, 16 Narrow Quay, Bristol BS1 4QA 0117 917 2300 arnolfini.org.uk @ArnolfiniArts

Tuesday to Sunday, 11am to 6pm, bookable in advance. Free

A new and immersive, site-specific installation by Donna Huanca encompassing painting, sculpture, performance, choreography, video and sensory interventions, all based around her exploration of the human body.

arnolfini.org.uk/whatson/donnahuanca/

#DonnaHuanca #Arnolfini #CuevaDeCopal

Images here: <https://bit.ly/DonnaHuancaArnolfini>

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Donna Huanca

The interdisciplinary practice of Donna Huanca (born 1980, Chicago, USA) evolves across painting, sculpture, performance, choreography, video and sound, crafting a unique visual language based in collaboration and innovation. At the very heart of her work is an exploration of the human body and its relationship to space and identity.

Her live sculptural pieces, or in the artist's words, 'original paintings', work primarily with nude bodies, drawing particular attention to the skin as a complex surface via which we experience the world around us. Largely collaborative, the partnership between artist and model is imperative to Huanca's practice. By exposing the naked body, while at the same time concealing it beneath layers of paint, cosmetics and latex, Huanca and her performers urge the viewer to confront their own instinctive response to the human form, which, in the artist's hands, is both familiar and distorted, decorative and abstract.

Huanca's **two-dimensional painting practice is fundamentally linked to the performative elements of her oeuvre. Photographs of her performers' decorated bodies** are blown up and transposed to canvas, where they are re-worked with paint. Gesture is enlarged and amplified; the soundlessness of her performances reverberates across her abstract compositions. During this process, Huanca engages with the colours and forms painted on her models, resulting in a genuine interaction between the ephemeral choreography of performance art and the permanence of painting. The glacial movements of her wordless performers result in a tactile painting practice rooted both in natural process and mediated dialogue, which freezes movement in a static medium that nonetheless hints at its inspiration and origins.

Huanca graduated in Fine Art at the University of Houston, 2004, and studied at Skowhegan School of Painting, ME, in 2006, and at Städelschule, Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Frankfurt, Germany. She has exhibited widely, including solo exhibitions at Ballroom Marfa, Texas, USA; Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA, USA; Copenhagen Contemporary, Denmark; Belvedere Museum, Vienna, Austria; Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China; Travesia Curatro, Madrid, Spain; Peres Projects, Berlin, Germany; Zabłudowicz Collection; London, UK; and MOMA PS1, New York, USA. Recent group exhibitions have included shows at Kunstverein, Hamburg, Germany; Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp, Belgium; The Strand, London, UK; **Contemporary Arts Centre, Lausanne, Switzerland; Museo D'Arte Contemporanea Roma (MACRO), Rome, Italy; Museum of Contemporary Art Miami, Miami, USA and The Soap Factory, Minneapolis, USA.**

She is a recipient of the Hirshhorn Artist Award, 2016; Fulbright Scholarship, 2012; DAAD Artist Grant, 2009/10 and the Francis Greenberg Award, 2008, amongst others. Her work is held by a number of international public collections including Belvedere Collection, Vienna, Austria; Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, China; Espacio 1414/Berezdivin Collection, Santurce; Zublowdowicz Collection, London, UK, Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, USA and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Collection, New York, USA.

About Arnolfini

Woven into the fabric of Bristol since 1961, Arnolfini is an international centre of interdisciplinary contemporary arts, presenting an ambitious, diverse programme of visual art, performance, dance, film, and music, designed to appeal to a broad audience.

Housed in a prominent Grade II listed, accessible building on the city's harbourside, Arnolfini is a pioneering, inspiring public space for arts and learning, offering an innovative, inclusive, and engaging experience for all.

A world-renowned institution, **throughout its history Arnolfini's programme has** welcomed artists from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds, supporting and developing their work, investigating their influences and aspirations.

Arnolfini nurtures long-standing relationships with a wide range of community and creative partners, while continuing to explore and develop new opportunities across the city and beyond.

Through sharing a 60-year archive of exhibition slides, publications, and an extensive artist book collection Arnolfini celebrate the heritage and wide-reaching impact the organisation has had throughout its history.

Since 2019, Director Gary Topp and team have sought to honour Arnolfini's founder Jeremy Rees' principle to 'Enjoy Yourself'; welcoming everyone into the space, and inviting engagement with the wide-ranging programme, in any number of ways.

Arnolfini is an independent charity (CIO) and part of the University of the West of England, Bristol, supported by Arts Council England and the Ashley Clinton Barker-Mills Trust.

About UWE

The University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) has a global and inclusive outlook, with approximately 30,000 students and strong industry networks and connections with over 1,000 employers. Research at UWE Bristol focuses on real world problems and the University plays a pivotal role in the regional economy. With over £300 million invested in infrastructure, buildings and facilities across all Campuses, UWE Bristol is creating a place for learning that is innovative, ambitious, connected, enabling and inclusive. UWE Bristol is ranked 21st in the Guardian university league table, as well as 7th in the UK for student satisfaction, and has been awarded the highest possible rating in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) 2018, achieving GOLD Standard.

About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. By 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. Between 2018 and 2022, we will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help deliver this vision. www.artscouncil.org.uk

About Ashley Clinton Barker-Mills Trust

Arnolfini Gallery is supported by a linked charity, the Ashley Clinton Barker Mills Trust (ACBMT). Arnolfini founders Jeremy and Annabel Rees were first introduced to the artists and benefactors Peter and Caroline Barker-Mill in 1963, by the London gallerist Lesley Waddington. It was a fortuitous meeting that was the catalyst in allowing Arnolfini to develop from a small volunteer-run private gallery into a major **international arts centre. The Trust's principle object is to 'support' Arnolfini and it** does this primarily by making annual grants from the income earned on its investments to make quarterly payments. It has also been able to make small fund one- off capital grants to help the Arnolfini transition to its current financial model. www.arnolfini.org.uk/about/ashley-clinton-barker-mills-trust