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Donna Huanca

VENAS DEL CAPULLO

Sean Kelly, New York

November 9–December 23, 2023

Opening reception: Thursday, November 9, 6–8 pm

Sean Kelly is delighted to present *VENAS DEL CAPULLO*, the highly anticipated, inaugural exhibition by Donna Huanca at Sean Kelly, New York. This multi-sensory exhibition expands upon Huanca's continuing exploration of themes including the body, the cycles of life, and the chaos of the natural world. This site-specific installation, in which the gallery space is enveloped in a recyclable membrane, includes large-scale paintings on canvas and sculptures in stainless steel and mixed media, as well as sound and scent. There will be an opening reception on Thursday, November 9, from 6–8 pm. The artist will be present.

Donna Huanca (b. Chicago, 1980) is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice explores the human body and the natural world through mark-making, raw materials, immersive environments, and singular structures. Encompassing painting, sculpture, and live performance, Huanca's installations are characteristically created for, and integrated with, the architectural spaces in which they are presented.

Her art is deeply invested in communal practice, exploring ritual at large as a means for transcendence, meditation, and transformation. Since 2012, Huanca has collaborated with

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performers, inviting them to improvise and interact with her surrounding sculptures and installations as their painted skin becomes a major element in the composition.

Each of Huanca's installations is a new and experimental environment, drawing on previous bodies of work, but responsive to its specific context and site. With the exhibition's title, *VENAS DEL CAPULLO*, Huanca references a state of both waiting and construction inherent to the creative process. She states, "With the installation and title, I wanted to respond to the art gallery being a place of commercial transaction and transform this space into a lab: a place that honors the creative process rather than the finished product."

For this exhibition, Huanca envelops the walls of the gallery with a translucent, biodegradable membrane, which she likens to a "womb space that functions like a petri dish in which primal sensory signals proliferate." The gallery is punctuated throughout with large-scale paintings and various sculptures. Each of them unites natural and synthetic materials and carries traces of the human body that reflect the interactive nature of her performances.

Huanca's sinuous, abstract paintings extend the life cycle of her performances by merging the transience of performance art with the permanence of painting. The surfaces of her paintings are built upon images of bodies photographed during these performances, printed onto canvas and overpainted. Camouflaged by oil paint of vibrantly colored hues and tantalizing textural dimension, Huanca's hallucinatory kaleidoscopes are distinguished by the intermixing of oil pigments with sand and other natural materials.

Installed throughout the main gallery, the exhibition also features chrome and metal sculptures, ranging from highly reflective pierced mirror silhouettes to totemic aluminum castings alluding to the constant metamorphosis of the human body. The organic shapes, contours, and impressions of these sculptural works take on an anthropomorphic quality, both welcoming visitors into the space and standing as totems for those absent. Embracing her Bolivian heritage rooted in Indigenous rituals, Huanca adorns her sculptures with ornamental piercings and braids, the latter referencing the quipu, a knot-based record-keeping device of the ancient Incan civilization's system of communication, bringing traditional practices into a contemporary framework.

Concurrent with her inaugural exhibition at Sean Kelly, Huanca is the subject of a major exhibition, titled *SCAR TISSUE (BLURRED EARTH)*, at the Faurshou Foundation, Brooklyn, New York, October 21, 2023–July 14, 2024.

Born in Chicago, Illinois, Huanca attended The University of Houston before studying at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine and Städelschule, Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Germany. Prominent institutions that have hosted solo exhibitions include: Museo de Arte de Zapopan, Mexico; Space K Seoul, Korea; Marfa Ballroom, Texas; Arnolfini, Bristol; Henry Art Gallery, Seattle; Belvedere Museum, Vienna; Copenhagen Contemporary, Denmark; Yuz Museum, Shanghai, among others. Her work has been exhibited at prominent institutions: Museum of Modern Art PS1, NY; Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, Bilbao, ES; Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, Miami, FL; Museo D'Arte Contemporanea Roma,

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Rome, IT; Shiomonoseki Art Museum, Yamaguchi, JP; Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki, FI, among others.

For additional information on Donna Huanca, please visit skny.com

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Images (Left to right): Donna Huanca, *ECDYSONE ROSA*, 2023, oil, sand on digital print on canvas 70 7/8 x 52 inches
Photo: Billy Clarken © Donna Huanca Courtesy: the artist and Sean Kelly, New York/Los Angeles; Donna Huanca, *PMA
DIARY*, 2023, cast aluminum, pigment, lacquer, 46 7/16 x 24 13/16 x 27 15/16 inches Photo: Billy Clarken © Donna
Huanca Courtesy: the artist and Sean Kelly, New York/Los Angeles