

## HENRY ART GALLERY TO PRESENT DONNA HUANCA: MAGMA SLIT

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Donna Huanca: MAGMA SLIT  
April 2, 2022 – February 5, 2023



Donna Huanca, *SPRING*, 2021. Oil, sand on digital print on canvas. Courtesy of Peres Project. Photo: Billie Clarken.

Bolivian-American artist Donna Huanca (b. 1980, Chicago, IL) creates work that destabilizes the male gaze while exploring femme and indigenous, specifically Andean, narratives and mark-making. Huanca's installations encompass painting, sculpture, and live performance, and are characteristically created for, and integrated with, the specific architectural spaces in which they are presented. Her art is deeply invested in ritual practice, both drawn from Andean culture and exploring ritual at large as a means for transcendence, meditation, and transformation. As the title of the installation at the Henry, *MAGMA SLIT*, suggests, Huanca's recent work melds those concerns with ideas emergent around her recent motherhood—magma as the blood of the earth (the original mother), slit referencing an opening, or as the artist cites, “a stretch mark”—along with the cellular, even zygotic shapes repeated throughout.

For this commissioned exhibition, the artist creates an architecturally immersive environment consisting of a vast stage of interlocking ovoid/cellular forms, landscaped with white sand and supporting six mirrored “screen” sculptures. The steel sculptures, each titled *PUERTA DE TRENZAS* (Gate of Braids), have precision cuts excised into each surface, sourced from the artist's drawings of small groups of human figures and crowds, creating absence where the collective human figures would be. Long swaths of braided,

colored hair adorn the works, like metonymic talismans. In contrast, other sculptural forms of varying scale reside throughout the landscape, organic in silhouette and surface treatment, and reference both extraterrestrial archeology and weighty bodily presence. Four mural-sized paintings surround the stage; each represent one of the four seasons, and bear the same title as the exhibition overall. As viewers journey through the space, they are invited to experience a kaleidoscopic engagement with their own reflection and the works.

A large, curved corner wall hosts a wall rubbing, as does the turret space. Executed in a private performance by an invited dancer as a proxy for the artist, the rubbings provide human scale to the monumentality of the site. They function both as trace of the individual, as well as the body in space, writ large. Viewers enter the turret individually, and within that intimate space—both heightening and relieving the vast and destabilizing journey through the gallery—experience the sound and olfactory works as well. Huanca layers the scents in the olfactory piece from site to site, adding elements evocative of the different natural region they inhabit. Smell being recognized as one of the strongest triggers of memory, the artist intends the notes of wet, burnt earth, palo santo, copal, and leather, among other subtle cues, to free the space for the viewer's individual translation and connection. The sound piece heard in the space exists as four chapters, referencing the four elements, seasons, and cardinal directions. Huanca refers to them as sonic collages, samples from her surroundings, people in her life, and online; deeply interested in the use of binaural beats, the sound can function as a meditative guide, both for the audience and when the exhibition is activated by performers.

A complete sensory experience, the installation aims to evoke a slippage of space and time inviting participants to both find and lose themselves. Throughout the length of the exhibition, the Henry, the artist, and cultural performers of all genres will work together to produce a series of programs in dialogue with the exhibition's themes, performed on a sculptural auxiliary stage created expressly for those events.

Huanca's exhibition is the first commissioned work supported by the Richard E. and Jane Lang Davis New Works Fund. A complimentary publication will accompany the exhibition.



Donna Huanca, *Obsidian Ladder* [documentation of performance, June 28 – December 1, 2019, Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles]. Courtesy of the artist, Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, and Peres Projects, Berlin. Photo: Joshua White.

### About the Artist

Donna Huanca completed her education at the University of Houston; Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine; and Städelschule, Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. She has completed several residencies, including at SmackMellon, Brooklyn; Access Gallery, Vancouver, Canada; and Headlands Center for the Arts, San Francisco. Huanca is the recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship; Art Matters Grant, New York; Francis Greenberg Award, Art OMI, New York; DeGolyer Grant, Dallas Museum of Art; and a 2016 Hirshhorn Artist Honoree. She has had solo exhibitions at the Marfa Ballroom; Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China; and Belvedere Museum, Vienna, Austria. Huanca has featured her work in group exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp, Belgium; Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, Omaha; Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki, Finland; and Malmö Konsthalle, Sweden. Her work is held in the collections of the Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, China; Belvedere Museum, Vienna, Austria; and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

*Donna Huanca: MAGMA SLIT* is organized by Shamim M. Momin, Director of Curatorial Affairs. Lead sponsorship is provided by a gift from the Friday Foundation in honor of Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis and a grant from [The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts](#). Media sponsorship provided by The Stranger.

## Henry Art Gallery

The Henry's mission is to engage all people in the transformative power of contemporary art and ideas. The museum is internationally recognized for bold and challenging exhibitions, for being the first to premiere new works by established and emerging artists, and for highlighting contemporary art practice through a roster of multidisciplinary programs. Containing more than 27,000 works of art, the museum's permanent collection is a significant cultural resource available to scholars, researchers, and the general public. The Henry is located on the University of Washington campus in Seattle, Washington. Learn more at [henryart.org](http://henryart.org).

Henry Art Gallery  
University of Washington

MUSEUM HOURS  
Thursday: 10 AM – 7 PM  
Friday – Sunday: 10 AM – 5 PM

PHYSICAL ADDRESS  
[15th Avenue NE + NE 41st Street](#)  
Seattle, WA 98195

ADMISSION  
General Admission: \$0-20 suggested donation;  
Free for Henry members, UW faculty and staff,  
children and students; Free on first Thursdays

MAILING ADDRESS  
Henry Art Gallery  
University of Washington  
Box 351410  
Seattle, WA 98195

GENERAL INFORMATION  
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