

ARTFORUM

CRITICS PICKS

VIENNA

Donna Huanca

LOWER BELVEDERE AND ORANGERY

Rennweg 6

September 28, 2018 - January 6, 2019



Spread over eight rooms in the Baroque former summer residence of Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663–1736), Donna Huanca’s current exhibition has an opulence all its own. Bright and dim spaces alternate throughout the Lower Belvedere, evoking an initiatic journey into a brave new world. Nude models—sixteen at the opening and two for the duration of the exhibition—with bodies painted in canary-like greens, oranges, and blues starkly contrast with their life-size marble and plaster counterparts, culled from local sculpture collections and arranged in a circle in the penultimate gallery. Huanca calls her female and androgynous models “live paintings,” though they function as both canvases and brushes. Some wear elaborate headpieces of what looks like melted, amorphous plastic, or pose perfectly still on pedestals; others move slowly along the white walls, leaving behind traces of their passage. The resulting wall rubbings inevitably nod to Yves Klein, but they also recall the excesses of Viennese Actionism and hint at Ana Mendieta’s earth-body works.

In the sound piece *Teco y Zenon*, 2018, the artist’s father teaches her mother Quechua, harkening to Huanca’s Bolivian roots. The same is true of the evocative Spanish titles, including that of the exhibition as a whole. “Piedra quemada” (Burnt Stone) culminates in the elemental soundscape of birdsong, crickets, crackling fire, and gushing water, heightened by the faint aroma of charred wood that permeates the final room. Animated by Huanca’s models and the lustrous, metallic, and velvety materials, the wall paintings and richly textured sculptural assemblages come together in a setting designed to solicit all our senses.