

The Top Emerging Artists of 2016

Artsy Editorial

Among the more pervasive art-world narratives of 2016 was the downturn in the market for works by emerging artists. Market contractions may have limited the sheer number of new names bubbling up to surface this year in comparison to the last few. But this tempered pace also allowed for greater attention to be placed on the emerging artists of true quality and depth who gained traction in 2016—and it allowed a number of artists who have been working actively and slowly gaining recognition over several years to step up and strongly stake their claim as among those defining contemporary art today. Surveying this landscape, Artsy's editors consulted a number of data sources, including UBS's art news app Planet Art, and the insight of influential individuals to see who among these new and newly essential names proved a cut above the rest. Here, in no particular order, are the top emerging artists of this year.

Donna Huanca [Follow](#)

B. 1980, CHICAGO • LIVES AND WORKS IN BERLIN AND NEW YORK



Portrait of Donna Huanca in her Berlin studio by Jonas Lindström for Artsy.



Thirty-six-year-old artist Huanca has long taken skin and the human body as her medium—from imprints of paint-daubed performers à la Yves Klein, to performances featuring trancelike nude models clad head-to-toe with pigment, clay, and bodystockings. But this year saw her practice reach new heights. In addition to a September solo at Peres Projects, a performance at Manifesta 11, and a handful of group exhibitions, Huanca tied up the year with her first U.K. solo at the Zabłudowicz Collection—notably, the space’s first performance-focused commission.

The exhibition kicked off during Frieze Week in London, filling the collection’s 19th-century chapel with stunning sculptural installations swarmed by a gang of glacially moving, painted performers (she calls them collaborators). Amidst the scent of Palo Santo—a wood tied to sacred and shamanic rituals—they moved through the space, lulling runaway fairgoers into a brilliantly meditative state. The show’s curator, Maitreyi Maheshwari, says Huanca’s work “provokes a mixture of devotion from her collaborators and a visceral discomfort from her audience as we are asked to confront our attitudes to the body and all the power dynamics attendant to it.” These include, among others, looking and being looked at, gender, race, sexuality, and objectification. “She has a very clear vision of what she wants her work to do, and is very open to working with others in order to make that vision a reality,” says collector, philanthropist, and Zabłudowicz Collection co-founder Anita Zabłudowicz.