

# Art

Edited by Eddy Frankel  
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## SHOW OF THE WEEK

# Donna Huanca



**THERE'S ONLY ONE** nightmare more frightening than the one where you're naked in a room full of clothed people. It's the one where you're fully clothed in a room full of naked people. So get ready to have all your bad dreams come true, because American artist Donna Huanca's show features models wearing body-length nylon stockings and a whole mess of paint. Nothing else. It's terrifying.

They move around this old chapel in ultra slow-mo, smooching their bodies into panes of glass, leaving smears of paint behind. At one end of the room there's a three-storey glass structure, which the models clamber through and lie in. At the other end, there's a wooden platform covered with speakers, throbbing with an endless drone. In the centre there's a big white sandpit covered in footsteps. Thick incense fills the air, sound shakes the windows.

You can watch from the safety of the mezzanine above, but you'd be missing the point. Stay downstairs, be confronted by the nudity, the aching slow movements, the stillness in the air, the scent, the noise. It's heart-racingly weird to stand there as the performers walk past you, lost in their dazes. It's so removed from a normal everyday experience that it's almost transcendental for you too.

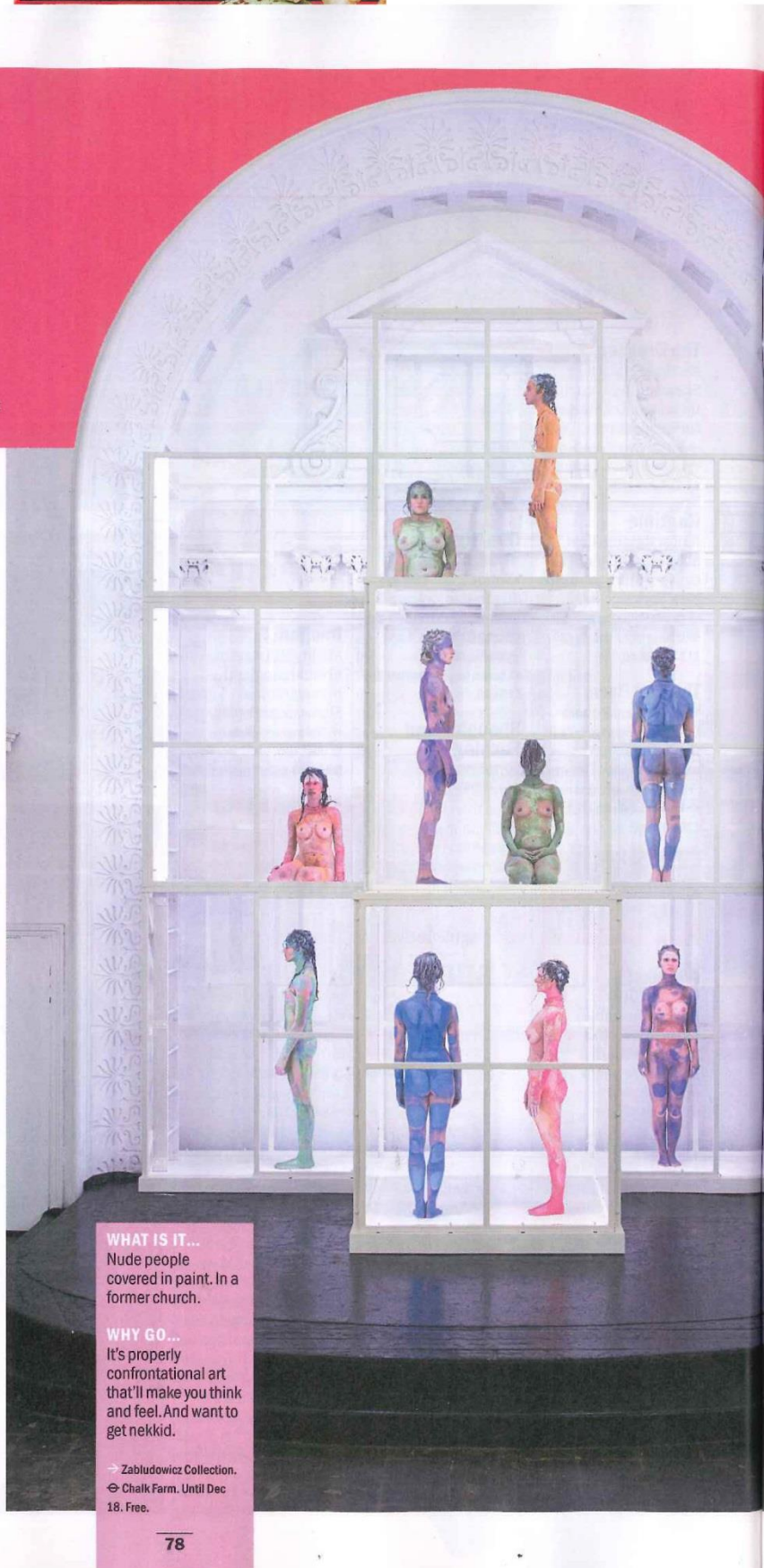
### WHAT IS IT...

Nude people covered in paint. In a former church.

### WHY GO...

It's properly confrontational art that'll make you think and feel. And want to get nekkid.

→ Zabłudowicz Collection.  
⊗ Chalk Farm. Until Dec 18. Free.





Let's not beat about the totally euphemistic bush here, this show has the capacity for being hilariously ludicrous – like a TV sketch show skit about how stupid modern art is, with naked idiots pressing themselves into glass. It requires that you suspend the bit of your brain that wants to mock this and head straight for the bit that can look at a naked human without giggling. That's where you'll find the part of you that's open to Huanca's art, the part that can see the beauty, the elegance and the courage of what's happening here. It will also help you to stop laughing at her last name.

But the reason it works is because Huanca's aesthetic is so strong. The back room is full of paintings and photos of paint-smearing skin and body-like sculptures made of latex and hair. They're well-composed, thoroughly thought-out and genuinely pretty, perfectly complementing the models' painted bodies.

The longer you stay, the less it works. Gallery staff chat, people check their phones, they normalise the installation, makes it too real. Real is overrated, it's the magic of it all that makes it so good: it's being confronted with strangers' bodies, it's the visceral thrill of becoming aware of your own, it's the ridiculousness of watching people move around like hippies left dazed and alive because they didn't drink enough of the Kool-Aid. It's not a dream, but it's not a nightmare either. ■



**By Eddy Frankel**  
Who found this whole thing incredibly and painfully uncomfortable.

DONNA HUANCA, SOME CYRILS, JOSE COMAS-FORGES BY FERNANDO COLLETTA, GALLERY: THE ARTIST AND OTHER SUBJECTS. PHOTO BY TERRY BAL, WHITECHAPEL GALLERY GUERRILLA GIRLS COMMISSIONER IS TERRY WORSER (EUROPE), (2013) PHOTO: DAVID BARRY/TAN/ARE



## Guerrilla Girls



### WHAT IS IT...

A feminist collective dishing out some rough justice to European museums.

### WHY GO...

Stick two fingers up at the establishment, this is art demanding change.

→ Whitechapel Gallery.  
⊖ Aldgate East.  
Until Mar 5.

**THE GUERRILLA GIRLS** are some of the art world's most creative complainers, and for more than 30 years, they have been handing America's galleries their arses on a platter. For their show at the Whitechapel Gallery, they've turned their attention to Europe.

This entire exhibition is based on a survey they sent out to 400 art institutions across 29 countries on the continent. In it, they demanded stats for their representation of female artists, those who are gender non-conforming and artists of colour. Spoiler: it doesn't go well.

The completed questionnaires are pasted on to the gallery wall, filled with the urgently scrawled handwriting of gallery directors. Put your contacts in, because there's a whole lot of reading required for this show.

It turns out that the average representation of women artists was a pathetic 22 percent. One of the few glimmers of hope was Poland, where that figure was 28 percent and all but one of the responding galleries had a female director.

Informative as all this is, there's not a great deal going on here visually. These artists are brilliant orators, and a stronger audio-visual element would have hammered their message home.

But the group wanted the numbers to speak for themselves, and it's not hard to see why. These are the galleries that spoon-feed us our art, and shape our definition of what's 'worth' seeing. These are the museums that curate our visual history through their collections, and we can't afford not to question them when our history is rewritten as 80 percent male and 85 percent white. If it weren't for the Guerrilla Girls, they'd get to keep on pretending those arses were squeaky clean. ■  
*Katie McCabe*