

apropos

[Perspektiven auf die Romania]

Sprache / Literatur / Kultur / Geschichte / Ideen / Politik / Gesellschaft

About the artist

Diana Coca

apropos [Perspektiven auf die Romania]

hosted by Hamburg University Press

2021, 6

pp. 315-331

ISSN: 2627-3446

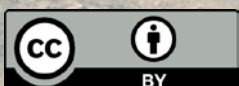
Online

<https://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/apropos/article/view/1746>

Zitierweise

Coca, Diana. 2021. „About the artist.“ *apropos [Perspektiven auf die Romania]* 6/2021, 315-331, doi: 10.15460/apropos.6.1746

Except where otherwise noted, this article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC BY 4.0)



Diana Coca

About the Artist

Diana Coca (Mallorca, 1977), artist, teacher and researcher, her main areas of interest are related to body, borders, and gender. She is currently a doctoral Humanities student at the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona. She has a degree in Philosophy from the University of the Balearic Islands, BA (Hons) in Arts from the University of Brighton, MA in Dance Research and Performance from CENART, Mexico City. Specialized in photography, she completes her training at the International Center of Photography and in performance at the Movement Research in New York. This global character has led her to exhibit her video and photo-performances in Spain, Germany, England, Italy, Morocco, Jordan, United States, China, Korea, Mexico, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and San Salvador. Relevant publications for *Brújula Magazine* (University of California Davis), *Cairón Magazine* (Alcalá de Henares University), *Tercio Creciente Magazine* (Jaén University), MACBA Contemporary Art Museum (Barcelona), online magazine *M-Arte y Cultura Visual*, Foreign Language Press Beijing, as well as producing book and CD covers for Virgin Classics (England), Picador Macmillan (England), Penguin Books (England, USA, Canada), Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Random House and Thorndike Press (USA), Editions Dönoel and Marie Claire (France), Editorial Limón Partido, *Literal Magazine* and *CONACULTA* (Mexico), Beijing This Month Publications (China), Intrinsic Publisher (Brazil) and Pegasus Yayincilik (Turkey). She has participated in performance and street art festivals at Fira de Tàrrrega (Catalonia), Linköping Contemporary Circus International Festival (Sweden) and Beijing Design Week (China).

***Neither Angel Nor Beast, Brighton, Arta, London, 2003-2004.*¹**

Inspired by the photography of Francesca Woodman, Marina Abramovic, Tracey Emin, Sarah Lucas y Joel-Peter Witkin, I produced my first photo-performance project, where I depict myself as object and subject of the action, reappropriating my own representation. I experiment with the power that the house and the journey have on us, the scar left by the process of readjustment to a new living space and country. I speak of home and memory as spirits that take over us to amputate, inspire or censor at will. I question the idea of home and family, posing them as a mould that tries to forge our personality, our identity, and our destiny, in their image and likeness, with no room for dissent and difference.

¹ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/21/neither-angel-nor-beast-arta-brighton/>

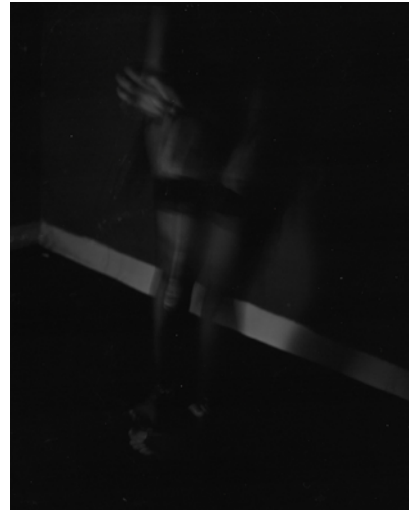


Fig. 1: Diana Coca, *Breaking the tights* from the serie *Neither Angel nor Beast*, Brighton, 2003, 30 x 24 cm, contact sheet in gelatin silver print, medium format negative.

Fig. 2: Diana Coca, *Neither Angel nor Beast I* from the serie *Neither Angel nor Beast*, Brighton, 2003, 12 x 8 cm, gelatin silver print, medium format negative.

Architetture Corporee (Corporeal Architecture), Rome, 2004-2005.²

I discover Hans Bellmer's and Günter Brus's works, the filmography of Federico Fellini, baroque churches, the paintings of Caravaggio as well as Roman statues, scattered around the city of Rome and its gardens, brimming with life and exuberance, I fragment like them. Although it may seem like a destruction, it is a reconstruction of the body and a celebration of the erogenous subject, recovering it from the silence to which the Western religious and philosophical tradition has subjected it.



² <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/21/architetture-corporee-roma/>

Fig. 3: Diana Coca, *¿Por qué las mujeres tardan tanto en el baño?* from the serie *Architettura Corporee*, Rome, 2004, 100 x 100 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, medium format negative.

Fig. 4: Diana Coca, *Caballo* from the serie *Architettura Corporee*, Rome, 2004, 30 x 30 cm, gelatin silver print, medium format negative.

Athletics of Intimacy, Madrid, 2006.³

I explore the capacity of photography to relate to time, space, people and affections, becoming an object with memory, which allows us to remember the deepest emotions and sensations. Like a journey through light, it is a manifestation of energy, of the invisible, the intangible, exploration of the physical body to remember its relationship with other bodies and its ability to feel, accepting, expressing, and inquiring emotions, sensations, and their meanings. Inspired by Carolee Schneemann.



Fig. 5: Diana Coca, Serie *Athletics of intimacy*, Madrid, 2006, 13,5 x 7,5 cm, gelatin silver print, medium format negative.

Fig. 6: Diana Coca, Serie *Athletics of intimacy*, Madrid, 2006, 13,5 x 7,5 cm, gelatin silver print, medium format negative.

³ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/21/you-me-madrid/>

Escorzos para la ansiedad (Anxiety Foreshortening Figures), Madrid, 2007.⁴

Study and adaptation of Yves Klein's *Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue* and Frank Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, a chronicle of unease where is present the idea of fear, loneliness and the marginalization of human beings in contemporaneity. Kafka witnessed the Industrial Revolution; however, we are witnessing a Technological Revolution where isolation, the attitude of the age of new technologies, is increasingly frequent and has a lot to do with the difficulty of maintaining physical relationships. The result is an inward journey, which ends in confinement. In my reinterpretation through video performance, the emphasis is not placed on the animalization of the protagonist - his transformation into an insect - but on his dehumanization. I start from subjective experience to reflect states of stress, anxiety, and ignorance in the face of a bureaucratic framework that encloses us in a labyrinthine structure, which we do not understand and will never understand, where we are a number, subjects without identity and without a name.



Fig. 7: Diana Coca, *Escorzos para la ansiedad*, Madrid, 2007, film stills.

⁴ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/21/escorzos-para-la-ansiedad-madrid/>

***Tierra (Earth), Pollença, 2007.*⁵**

The confusion of my body with the earth, like a witchcraft spell, can be understood as the magical desire to recover my land, roots and culture, after years of constant travelling. The land appears as a possible activator of this nomadic and hybrid identity. I integrate myself into the earth of origin, the island of Mallorca, in order to maintain the idea of a possible destination, ritualizing my origin.



Fig. 8: Diana Coca, *Tierra II* from the serie *Tierra*, Pollença, 2007, 100 x 100 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, medium format negative.

Fig. 9: Diana Coca, *Tierra I* from the serie *Tierra*, Pollença, 2007, 100 x 100 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, medium format negative.

***Arlés Bruto (Wild Arles), Arles, 2008.*⁶**

I study the performative self-portrait and chance, deconstructing the image of woman as a broken, fetishized and objectified doll, as well as an active subject of action. I use the body as a place of rebellion, a field of experimentation and subversion, seeking for the tension produced by eroticism. Critically, I reveal an *anti-pin up*, an illusion of curves and holes, sexuality, and desire. Inspired by Pierre Molinière's photo-performances.

⁵ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/21/tierra-pollenca/>

⁶ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/21/arles-bruto-arles/>



Fig. 10: Diana Coca, *Arlés Bruto 11*, from the serie *Arlés Bruto*, Arles, 2008, 11 x 11 cm, gelatin silver print selenium toned, medium format negative



Fig. 11: Diana Coca, *Arlés Bruto 13*, from the serie *Arlés Bruto*, Arles, 2008, 11 x 11 cm, gelatin silver print selenium toned, medium format negative

Donde el tiempo no pasa (Where time does not pass), Ribadavia, 2008.⁷

The privacy of the room is intimately related to those who sleep there, to past pleasures, to lived intimacies, to lost moments. We have entered the house of my Galician grandmother Luz. These images speak of her ghostly presence in the house, her energy, in a poetic manifestation of personal grief for his death and a mourning done in solitude, while studying in New York on a scholarship. I guess that's partly why it seems to me a sad and lonely city.

⁷ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/21/donde-el-tiempo-no-pasa-ribadavia/>



Fig. 12: Diana Coca, *Donde el tiempo no pasa 6*, from the serie *Donde el tiempo no pasa*, Ribadavia, 2008, 10 x 10 cm, gelatin silver print, medium format negative.

Fig. 13: Diana Coca, *Donde el tiempo no pasa 4*, from the serie *Donde el tiempo no pasa*, Ribadavia 2008, 10 x 10 cm, gelatin silver print, medium format negative.

***Views from Home, New York, 2008.*⁸**

During my stay in New York, current legislation did not allow us to set up a tripod and camera in public spaces, through antiterrorist laws that did not guarantee respect for fundamental rights or *habeas corpus* procedure in case of arrest. So I



⁸ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/21/views-from-home-nueva-york/>

Fig. 14: Diana Coca, *Views from Home V*, from the serie *Views from Home*, New York, 2009, 40 x 40 cm, gelatin silver print, medium format negative.

Fig. 15: Diana Coca, *Views from Home V*, from the serie *Views from Home*, New York, 2009, 40 x 40 cm, gelatin silver print, medium format negative.

photographed the domestic spaces where I lived in solitude, sinister settings reminiscent of the lighting, style, and themes of American *film noir* of the 1940s and 1950s: paranoia, loss, insecurity, claustrophobia, nostalgia, fear of the future and passion for the past. Inspired by the works of Louise Bourgeois.

***Last Dinner, New York, 2008.*⁹**

Am I an object, a subject, or both? What is the line between public and personal, intimate-social, individual-group, interior-exterior, figurative-abstract, real-virtual, body-thought? In these images I present myself as an object to be devoured and as a subject that would devour. Like a parricidal Saturn, where object and subject create a paradoxical relationship, there is no possibility of realization because the action of the subject on the object would destroy them both. Hence the tension, contradiction, impossibility, and self-destruction latent in the image depicted. I am passionate about legs, feet, heels, fetishes that transgress the sinuous line between the public and the personal.



Fig. 16: Diana Coca, *Last Dinner I* from the serie *Last Dinner*, New York, 2008, 110 x 110 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, medium format negative.

⁹ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/21/last-dinner-nueva-york/>

Naturaleza Extrema (Extreme Nature), Oaxaca, Beijing, 2009-2010.¹⁰

First invasions of public space, experimenting with my own fragmented body, an untamed body. The self-portrait and the figure in movement seek the violence of the contrast between urban spaces with nature not violated by human. The body never appears in its entirety, but in parts or in splinters - Deleuze and Guattari's body without organs -, endowing the self-portrait with subjectivity. The legs and the heel fetish are fundamental axes, with which I can sculpt the form. I use the bottom as a provocation, above all through the postures, which refer to the obscene in a Deleuzian sense: the hidden that should not come out on stage. Inspired by Luis Buñuel filmography, Maruja Mallo's *Naturaleza Viva* series, Frida Kahlo, Pipilotti Rist, Ana Laura Aláez, Ana Mendieta's photo performances and the poetry of Ernesto Carrión.



Fig. 17: Diana Coca, *Naturaleza Extrema II* from the serie *Naturaleza Extrema*, Oaxaca, 2009, 100 x 100 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, medium format negative

Fig. 18: Diana Coca, *Naturaleza Extrema X* from the serie *Naturaleza Extrema*, Beijing, 2010, 100 x 100 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, medium format negative

The City of the Broken Dolls, Beijing, 2010.¹¹

Following the previous line of work, taking over the common space, I build a visual narrative based on violent, unbalanced, and impulsive postures, avoiding the recumbent posture typical of the Western artistic tradition, in order to avoid the patriarchal representation of the passive muse and the female nude. I use an erogenous body that does not only represent, but also acts and presents itself on the street. In this way it has a performative power through which it drags and intends to transform the way we walk the streets and live the common space. It tells the story of a wild woman, with which I wanted to reflect the number of broken

¹⁰ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/21/naturaleza-extrema-pekín-oaxaca/>

¹¹ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/21/the-city-of-the-broken-dolls-pekín/>

dolls, women who suffer violence in contemporary China. However, it is not a subject of public debate even though it affects a large part of the population. Social censorship is particularly cruel towards women over forty, single and childless, who are insulted and psychologically mistreated, both professionally and in the context of the family. Inspired by the photography of Alberto García-Alix, the performances of Marina Abramovic and Hannah Wilke, as well as the film characters of Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, Jodie Foster in *Taxi Driver*, and comic character *Wonder Woman*.



Fig. 19: Diana Coca, *The City of the Broken Dolls IV*, from the serie *The City of the Broken Dolls*, Beijing, 2010, 60 x 60 cm & 80 x 80 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, medium format negative.

Fig. 20: Diana Coca, *The City of the Broken Dolls II*, from the serie *The City of the Broken Dolls*, Beijing, 2010, 60 x 60 cm & 80 x 80 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, medium format negative.

***Souvenir, Beijing, 2010.*¹²**

I propose photoperformances that involve the invasion of public space by a half-naked body - which, as such, corresponds to the private sphere - raising taboos and certain ridiculous social behaviors around the body. Through this, I wanted to investigate the limits of censorship in China in 2010, photographing in the most touristic and crowded areas that I could find. Surprisingly I had no problem with the authorities, despite being places like Tiannanmen Square, The Great Wall and the 798 art zone. Even being openly provocative in the actions for the camera, with my half naked body, neither I had problems with people nor with the forces of order. Even the passers-by or tourists wanted to participate in the project with an open minded, playful, respectful, funny, and surprising attitude, either by helping me to

¹² <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/21/souvenir-pekini/>

take the shots or by documenting the action with photographs that they later shared on the internet. Inspired by the photographs of Rong Rong & Inri.

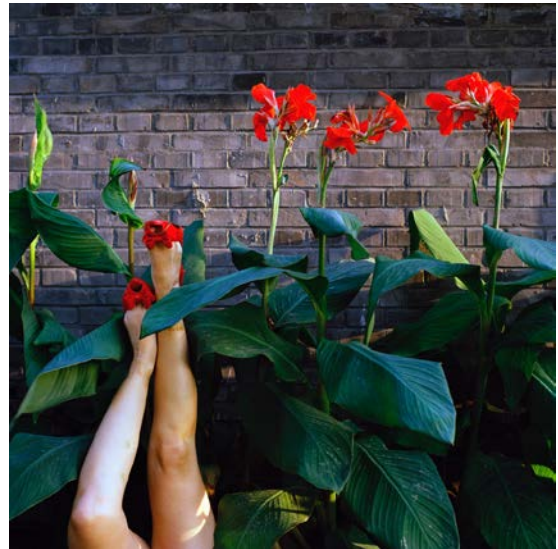


Fig. 21:

Diana Coca, *Souvenir Gran Muralla 5*, from the serie *Souvenir*, Beijing, 2010, 20 x 20 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, medium format negative.

Fig. 22: Diana Coca, *Souvenir Tian 'nanmen 1*, from the serie *Souvenir*, Beijing, 2010, 100 x 100 cm, 40 x 40 cm & 20 x 20 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, medium format negative.

***La Purísima, Beijing, 2010.*¹³**

Photographic series on the creative occupation of public space, the ground and the world through affective bodies, music, dance, choreography, performance and the collective. It portrays a concert / performance by the Madrid jazz and cuplé group 'De La Purísima', which we organized unexpectedly in Beijing neighborhoods as Caochangdi and 798. These artistic practices offer us the possibility of modifying the world, which confronts us directly with neoliberalism the capital and the police. In the words of Hannah Arendt: 'where the absolutely unexpected (...) performs the infinitely improbable'.

¹³ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/21/la-purissima-pekini/>



Fig. 23: Diana Coca, *La Purissima 1*, from the serie *La Purissima*, Beijing, 2010, 100 x 70 cm & 12 x 8 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, digital photograph.

Fig. 24: Diana Coca, *La Purissima 5*, from the serie *La Purissima*, Beijing, 2010, 100 x 70 cm & 12 x 8 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, digital photograph.

Contranarrativas Femeninas (Feminine Counter-narratives), Beijing, 2011.¹⁴

This series presents a double challenge, firstly by using artistic discourse to break with the way the female body is represented, and secondly by doing it in China with a local model. The woman is portrayed in a non-complacent way, using her strength to rebel against the established, a woman who vindicates herself and her corporality, portraying a living being, who ceases to be an inanimate object to become an active human being who resolves real situations, allowing the viewer to be an extension of the circumstances that are narrated. The aim is to show an autonomous and courageous woman, who uses nature and the city as she wishes. The project has been carried out in outdoor locations in Beijing and its surroundings, unglamorous places in the street, markets, parks, mountains, construction sites, roads, etc. in which the need for permits has been flouted and the guidelines established by the authorities for artistic creations have been transgressed. For this new generation of Chinese women, restless and confronted with their environment, art allows them to flee, to fly, or even to dream, to search and find themselves in the process of building our freedom. There are references to the photography of Sarah Moon, Guy Bourdin, Tim Walker and Norman Parkinson; the cinema of Pedro Almodóvar and David Lynch; to the representation of women in films such as *Working Girl* and *Blade Runner*; to the music of Patti Smith and Chinese rock'n'roll bands.

¹⁴ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/21/contranarrativas-femeninas-pekini/>



Fig. 25: Diana Coca, *CONTRA NARRATIVAS FEMENINAS 31*, from the serie *Contra narrativas femeninas*, Beijing, 2011, 100 x 100 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, medium format negative.

Compro, luego existo (I shop, therefore I am), Beijing, 2012.¹⁵

The subjectivity of late capitalism develops in a constant reproduction of a poetics of commodities, logos and trademarks, all of which permeate our bodies, language and perception, forming identities. With this project - inspired by Sylvie Fleury, Bandi Panda and Ma Qiusha works, as well as the Spanish and Mexican Holy Week processions - I am working on a cloistered representation, but at the same time I highlight the liberating power of art and humor in relation to the commodification of identities by capital. In human history, there have always been ways of controlling and guiding the human body. Now it extends to other forms of servitude on a planetary level: a massive and pervasive consumer fascination, not only in contemporary China, but a compulsive plague spreading globally. A new way of slavery and control over human beings. In this context, the woman, instead of being a symbol of resistance, becomes the great object that guarantees sales. Thus, human potential, the source of life, is pulverized until it is stripped of its power, becoming a puppet that advances chaotically, naked, blind, and deaf.

¹⁵ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/22/compro-luego-existo-pekín/>

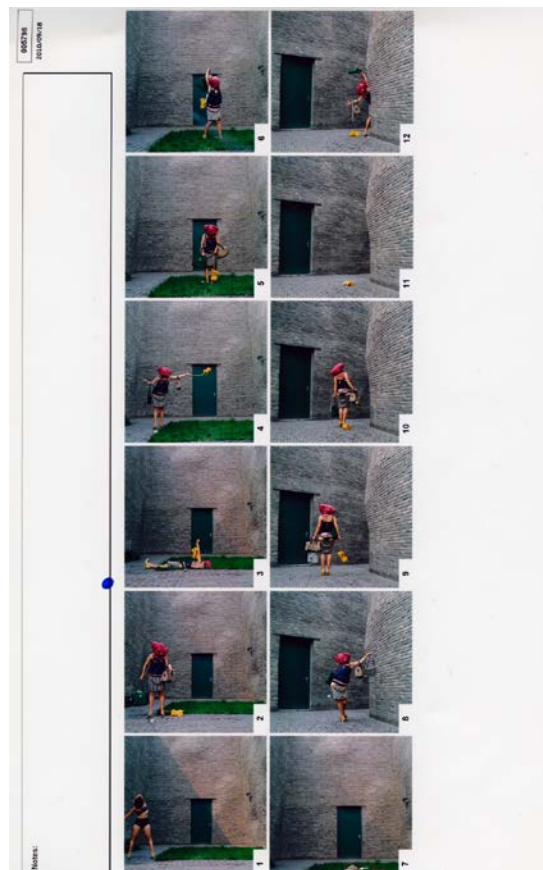


Fig. 26: Diana Coca, *Compro luego existo*, Beijing, 2012, 30 x 18 cm, contact sheet, medium format negatives

***Telluric Woman, Beijing, 2012.*¹⁶**

The body is like the earth. It is a land in itself. And it is as vulnerable to overbuilding as any landscape, because it is also divided into plots, isolated, mined and deprived of its power. It is not easy to reconvert the wild woman through redevelopment plans', quote from Clarissa Pinkola Estés in *Women who run with the wolves*. Inspirada por el trabajo de Hu Xiaoyuan y Egon Schiele.

¹⁶ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/22/telluric-woman-pekin-2012/>



Fig. 27: Diana Coca, *Telluric Woman*, Beijing, 2012, 100 x 50 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, medium format negative.

***Umbilical*, Beijing, 2012.¹⁷**

A tribute project to the Chinese poet Li Bai (701-762), a romantic poet of the Tang Dynasty. Made during the summer floods of 2012, when torrential rains in China caused flooding that resulted in hundreds of deaths and thousands of evacuees, as



Fig. 28: Diana Coca, *Umbilical*, Beijing, 2012, 80 x 160 cm, digital print in museum quality paper, medium format negative

¹⁷ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/22/umbilical-pekini/>

well as widespread chaos in Beijing, where I witnessed disturbing landscapes and scenes. Experiencing the natural catastrophe at first hand originated this photographic series, a subjective way of depicting the scenes of chaos and disarray, a metaphor for emotional flooding. It is a physical confrontation with fear, symbolized by the dirty, stagnant water of Wanging Park, fear of intimacy, fear of getting pregnant. Inspired by the works of Zhang Jie, Valentine Penrose, Dorothea Tanning, Remedios Varo and Unica Zurn.

Voluntary Martyrdom, Beijing, 2012.¹⁸

A very personal project that reflects on women and self-destructive relationships. Sometimes it happens without realizing it and ignoring our instincts, sometimes reproducing socio-cultural educational patterns of harmful behaviour. Vampiric and narcissistic relationships immersed in games of psychological violence, less obvious than physical one, but so subtle that it becomes equally dangerous and corrosive. An idea of romantic love that perpetuates violence, denies the fullness



Fig. 29: Diana Coca, *Voluntary Martyrdom*, Beijing, 2012, film still.

of people and of relationships between living beings based on equality. An Anna Karenina who sets too high expectations on love, desire, and the struggle for happiness. Leon Tolstoy perfectly portrays sentimental relationships that become increasingly passionate, obsessive, self-destructive and, at the same time, more selfish, while the love of the loved one is extinguished, since it was not really love, but the satisfaction of vanity. Inspired by Annette Messager's work *Les Tortures Volontaires*, Sanja Ivekovic, Camille Claudel, Martin Wehmer's painting, Wong Kar

¹⁸ <https://diana-coca.com/2017/11/24/voluntary-martyrdom-pekini/>

Wai's filmography, as well as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*.