

# HUGS FROM THE SOUL

THE NEW EXHIBITION BY EVA CLAESSENS & JULIAN LENNON

By Nicolás Isasi  
@isasi.nick

Silent gazes of solid bodies evoke human figures, in an atmosphere of peace and harmony. That is the first sensation when we enter the new exhibition of the artist Eva Claessens with Julian Lennon in Portugal. The enormous and renovated cultural space CRIATURA, belonging to the luxurious Verride Palácio de Santa Catarina boutique hotel in Lisbon, is the gateway to this poetic world that combines love and nature. Between stone walls and vaulted ceilings from the 18th century, we find women, skies and flowers, while in the earthly part, we observe bodies hugging and kissing each other.

EVA CLAESSENS AND FRIENDS WITH LOVE FROM NATURE is the title of this exhibition conceived by the Belgian contemporary artist, who called up her English friend to a joint creation for this special event. Paintings and drawings on canvas without frames, and sculptures in different materials such as ceramic or marble are some of her new works conceived during long nights in recent months. In the curated selection of photographs, Lennon focuses on certain concepts, such as the detail of a solitary flower or the close-up of a sad youthful face that watches us as we enter, like that beautiful song of the child whose gaze emanated saltwater.



The monochromatic black and white palette extends throughout the tour through this space that, preserving the mystique of its architectural past, proposes a neat contemporary restoration. Eva's subtle undulating lines give shape to the human bodies that, as in the historical Pompeii, seem to have been paralyzed during the most ordinary actions. For his part, Julian captures the faces and wardrobe of these bodies, expressed in photographs of various dimensions, thus providing the necessary depth field to complement the sculptures. And there, like Alice in Wonderland, costumes with books on their head dance through outdoor gardens where nothing is real.

Developed at the Antwerp Art Academy and the Accademia Dell'Arte in Florence, Eva Claessens worked at the art studio of Romano Stefanelli as a model and an artist. She works mainly with acrylic paint, watercolor, and pencil on various structures, prints and sculptures such as those we can see in the

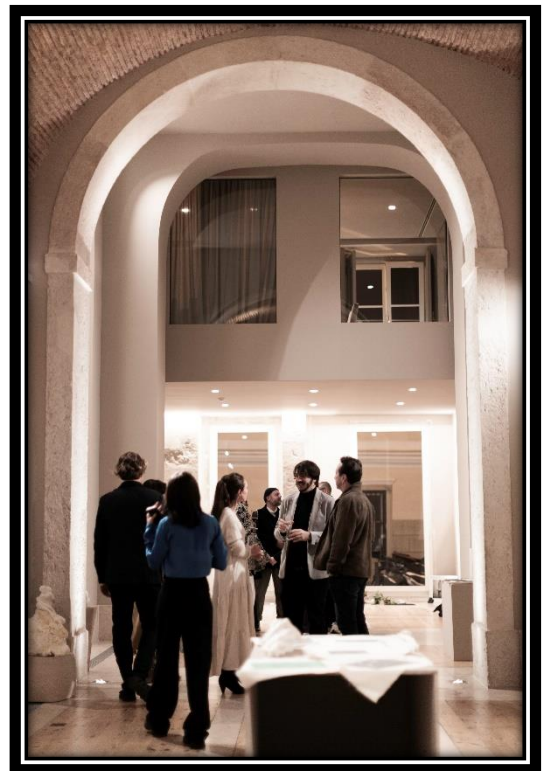


present exhibition. During this time, she perfected her use of different color techniques. Her work has been presented individually and collectively, primarily in Europe, South America and Asia, while she works on commissions for collectors and companies around the world. The guest of honor in this exhibition is the English musician, photographer and philanthropist Julian Lennon, who began his artistic career linked to music from a young age. His first studio album, *Valotte* (1984), was a success. Over time, his art expanded into photography, documentary film and visual arts. In 2020 he was named a Peace Laureate by UNESCO and last year he published his latest album titled *Jude* (2022), which refers to the song “Hey Jude”

published by The Beatles in 1968. This seventh album is an introspective work with deep and moving songs that invites the listener to a dialogue between the past and the present.

WITH LOVE FROM NATURE is the first exhibition in which Eva and Julian work together. In Eva’s words, “Julian is my best friend, my partner in crime, and we create together as we breathe. Julian was my natural choice to share these beautiful walls with.” The artistic union between them works like clockwork, allowing the audience to flow between the different vaulted passageways of the Portuguese capital. In Julian’s words, “when we are together, we want to go on adventures and are always curious to discover magic somewhere, always eager to absorb more, feel more, and breathe. We want to experience life to the fullest,”

Halfway through, a small sculpture shows the passionate meeting of lovers. One can feel the held breath coming from the crevice that separates them. Mirrored, symmetrical faces, about to kiss like those kisses of Klimt, Magritte or Doisneau. Their knowing glances and secrets are latent. A mysterious whisper between two people who, linked in the same stone, represent the embraces of the soul. At the end, a section with couches and warm lights presents us with more female silhouettes, a white rose and the face of a bride heading to the altar in a game of mirrors. A woman with her head in the clouds dreams peacefully with her eyes closed, reminding us that it is time to say goodbye. Let’s hope this collaboration is the beginning of new and promising parallel paths between two outstanding creators who, crossing the limits of formats, embrace art and friendship.



Photographs: Romain Dussaulx