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## **EVITA TEZENO: My Life, My Story**

**April 16 – May 28, 2022**

**Opening Reception: Saturday, April 16, 5 to 8:30 PM**

*“I want to take you home. I want you to share my journey, my memories of my childhood and my past experiences. I want you to learn about my family and how they shaped me for who I am.”*

— Evita Tezeno

Luis De Jesus Los Angeles is very pleased to announce **EVITA TEZENO: My Life, My Story**, the artist’s second solo exhibition with the gallery. The exhibition will be on view from April 16 through May 28, 2022. An opening reception will be held on Saturday, April 16th, from 5:00 to 8:30 pm.

Known for her depictions of characters in harmonious everyday scenes inspired by her family, friends and acquaintances, as well as personal dreams and moments from her adult life, *My Life, My Story* continues Evita Tezeno’s exploration of Black American life through an intimate gathering of members of her family — across time, generations and geography. This new body of work honors and is dedicated to her family.

In a recent interview, Tezeno shared how her personal experience with Covid during the past two years allowed her to examine her own life more closely. “I hate to blame everything on Covid,” she said, “but I and so many others have lost friends and family. And it made me reflect on how rich my history is. I have had my grandparents, I’ve had my great grandparents in my lifetime, and my life has been so full.”

She traces her story from her maternal and paternal great-grandparents, Louisiana sharecroppers who picked cotton and were itinerant workers who migrated to South Texas, to her maternal grandparents who raised her in Port Arthur, to various aunts and uncles and cousins from both sides of the family whose colorful personalities and peculiar habits became imprinted upon her young mind.

Tezeno dips into this vast pool of memories to create her collage paintings on canvas. Richly patterned hand-painted papers, found objects and materials are transformed into scenes of everyday life. She introduces us to her great-grandmother Mary Payton, (“Mammie,”) who raised chickens and made teacakes, and her paternal grandmother, Edna Tezeno, a “strong praying woman” who could not read but had the bible memorized.

There are also her grandparents, Elizabeth (“Sis”) and Raymond, who raised her. Sis, a conservative and prissy lady — she made Evita’s clothes and left her jars of buttons when she passed — had style and always wore dresses. Raymond took Evita shopping at the White House department store in nearby Beaumont and bought her art supplies. Agnes (Sis’s sister) loved to party and was partial to fancy jewelry. Evita’s parents, estranged at the time, would stop by on their way to Antoine’s or another club to show off their outfits. “They had all the records — Supremes, Isley Brothers, Marvin Gaye, all the latest songs — and I would play the records over and over again and dance in the living room.”

And, there’s Aunt Lucile and Uncle Will in Houston (he was twenty years older). She made her own hats and sewed all her clothes for church — and would mow the yard in pearls and red lipstick. Her house was always immaculate. Evita’s great grandparents on her mother’s side, Big Mamma and Pappa Joe, raised their granddaughter too, Darla, and Evita liked to go to their house and play with other kids.

## LUIS DE JESUS LOS ANGELES

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“When we were together, we were together; we talked, laughed, connected and there’s not that anymore,” says Tezeno, reflecting on a time before cell phones and other technological distractions. “I miss the time of really connecting like we used to when I was young.”

“People gravitate towards the things they know and that’s all I knew,” says Tezeno. “The memories and the things I were taught helped me deal with adversity. I like the simple things in life; it’s the simple things in life that make you feel close to home. And it gives you a sense of peace because the world is so chaotic.”

In *My Life, My Story* Evita Tezeno commemorates childhood, family, storytelling, and treasured memories about growing up in South Texas as a way to connect with others while sharing those things that are so important to her work – expressions of love, hope and happiness.

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Evita Tezeno (b. 1960) is a Port Arthur, Texas native and graduate of Lamar University. She lives and works in Dallas.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Better Days* (2021) at Luis De Jesus Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA; *Evita Tezeno and Jas Mardis: Sharing Memories* (2021) at ArtCentre of Plano, Plano, TX; *Memories Create Our Yesterdays and Tomorrows* (2019) at Thelma Harris Gallery, Oakland, CA; *Memories That Speak to My Soul* (2018) at Stella Jones Gallery, New Orleans, LA; and *Thoughts of Time Gone By* (2017) at Peg Alston Gallery, New York, NY.

Tezeno’s work is included in the permanent collections of the African American Museum of Dallas, the Embassy of the Republic of Madagascar, the Pizzuti Collection, Columbus; Bill and Christy Gautreaux Collection, Kansas City; and The Bunker/Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection, Palm Beach. Other collectors include Esther Silver-Parker, Samuel L. Jackson, David Hoberman, Denzel Washington, Star Jones, Laurie David, and Susan Taylor, among others. She has been awarded commissions by the Essence Music Festival in New Orleans, The Deep Ellum Film Festival in Dallas, and the legendary New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival ("Jazz Fest"), where in 1999 she became the first female artist to design its celebrated poster. She is a recipient of the prestigious Elizabeth Catlett Award for The New Power Generation.

Her work has been published and featured in numerous publications and media outlets, including Artforum, Artillery Magazine, Culture Type, Patron Magazine, Document Journal, Black Art in America, Collective Arts Network Journal, Art Matters with Edward Goldman, The Dallas Examiner, D Magazine, Dallas Woman, North Dallas Gazette, Fort Worth Star Telegram, Dallas Morning News, Eclipse Magazine, ONYX Magazine, The Shreveport Times, Visionary Art Collective, Visual Art Source, NBC 5 - DFW (video), and MAG-RAW Creations (video).

For further information, including images and previews, please call 213-395-0762, or email:

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