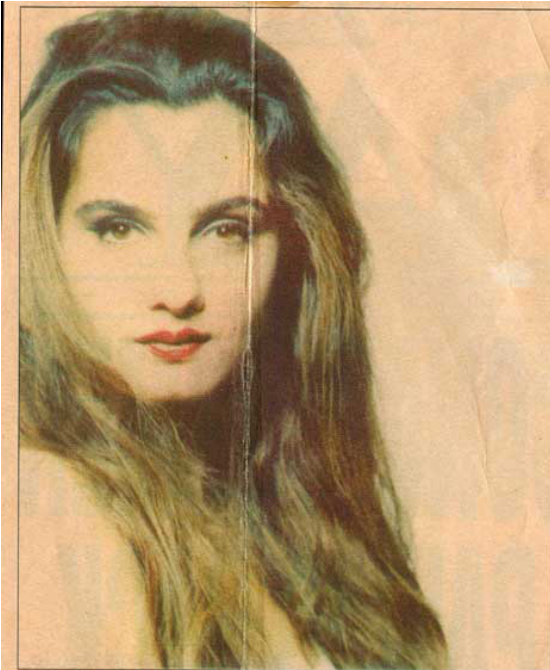


Midday

15 May 1996



GOING PLACES: Laila Khan

MID-DAY, Wednesday, May 15, 1996 • II

# STRAIGHT FROM THE ART

By Kshama Bhat

HERE'S a girl with a difference. She could have chosen to walk in her father's shoes, but chose instead to have a brush with paint.

Laila, daughter of Sundri and Feroz Khan, resisted the lure of the arc lights for a three-month course at the Slade School of Fine Arts, London. She always had an inclination towards capturing beautiful things on canvas. "I had access to all those international artists and I interacted with them a lot. This resulted in me evolving as a painter and as an artist," she says.

Always wanting to portray beauty differently, Laila chose to use sand on



One of Laila's paintings

her canvasses. "It is used mainly to give the effect of stone. This is why my paintings look like sculpture."

An exhibition, 'The Apparition Series', is slated for next year. "I've named the series so because the figures are like ghosts floating through ancient ruins. They portray the timelessness of art and architecture compared to man's temporary nature," Laila explains.

She believes in working on one canvas at a time without too many distractions. "It's easier that way. Besides, I like to work on larger canvasses. It takes 25 days for me to complete one canvas," says Laila.

Though she realised that she had an eye for colour at a very young age, the need to grow as a painter and as a person only came when she was exposed to more of it.

"The experience of being in London was a fruitful one. Besides, abroad there are no restrictions and expression becomes easy and free. Unlike at home, individualistic style is not curbed," says Laila.

The women in her paintings have a certain sadness about them. For instance, the one of three weeping rural women. "One of them is a widow, while the others are young and married. I wanted to convey that rural women still suffer," says Laila.

**Laila Khan has resisted the lure of the arc lights to keep the faith with paint**

## GALLERIA

On the large number of female forms in her paintings, she says: "I am a woman and that's one of the reasons why I've always been impressed with the female anatomy — I have nothing against the male form, but there is a certain mystique associated with the female body. And woman is the embodiment of both masculine and feminine qualities."

Though Laila has never put her paintings on show, she has already sold quite a few of her works both in India and abroad. "It started off with somebody spotting my work, appreciating it and deciding to buy it. I've sold paintings to many industrialists, socialites and celebrities. Success is important for an artist to be able to continue being creative," says Laila.

She was inspired by the Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh, Picasso and Anjolie Ela Menon. "I also admire the spirit of M F Hussain, though not his work, especially his recent ones," she says.

Laila leaves several of her works untitled. She believes in letting them talk for themselves. "The interpretation is subjective. I'm aiming for my works to interact with the viewer at a glance. The reaction it evokes should be instinctive," she says. For this talented artist that shouldn't be too difficult.

Bombay Times

19 June 2002

PRADEEP CHANDRA



## Art camp

**T**he Oberoi hotels' Annual Art camp organised by art collector and connoisseur **VICKRAM SETHI** is on today at the Opium Den. Seventeen artists including **BOSE KRISHNAMACHARI, SHIBU NATESAN** and **KAHINI ARTE MERCHANT, SUNIL PADWAL, LAILA KHAN** and **AJAY DE** among others will participate. Says Sethi, "The artists will be divided into two teams. They will also get a chance to go into the Oberoi kitchens and have a chance to cook as well!"

**DIFFERENT STROKES: Laila Khan and Kahini Arte Merchant**

Sunday Time

7 July 2002

SUDHARAK OLWE



## Laila, O Laila

**Given her lineage and glamorous looks, she could have easily been in the movies. But, artist Laila Khan Rajpal prefers to emote on canvas rather than the screen. She tells Mini Chandran-Kurian that she's not afraid of being alone**

A crouching girl-woman with a rose in her hand. The canvas sighs, weighed down by the enormity of its statement - the promise of life and the certainty of death. The young woman with golden hair steps closer to her painting. "I love doing figurative work," she says musingly. "What fascinates me most though is the fragile impermanence of life. We live every moment with the knowledge of our mortality."

Laila Khan Rajpal's first show was at the Habitat Centre in Delhi last year. Huge canvasses, embodying that quality of transience, juxtaposed against towering architectural forms. Uneven swathes of red symbolising blood, slicing fields of ochre, sienna, burnt umber and sand reliefs. Ruins that whisper of a world that lives on, even as the life that once inhabited it, is extinguished.

"I was inspired by the ruins of Petra, an ancient city of Jordan," she says quietly. "And the thought took hold of me that the creator dies, but the creation lives on. I was obsessed with transferring that thought onto canvas. The most important thing about a painting is the intention."

For one so young, her eyes are intensely evocative - darkening and glowing in remembrance and reflection. "I'm not very verbal," she confesses. "I emote on canvas. But I'm neither impulsive nor spontaneous, I'd rather not regret anything." Which probably explains why it took her eight years of 'getting

to know' Rohit Rajpal, a dashing young Davis Cup level tennis player and garment exporter from Delhi, before tying the knot in December '98. She brushes her hair back from her eyes and explains, "I had to be sure that he was the right one for me, who would give me the freedom to be me. You know, people use the word 'love' so freely. For me, it's more important that I respect the man I live with.

**“ The girls in our family are brought up pretty conservatively ”**

And I respect Rohit enormously! He is a man of integrity, you can see it in his eyes..." A pause. Then, "I'm not obsessed with being Mrs So and So. Marriage is an essential rite of passage. But I've always known, right from the beginning, that life for me would be a solitary journey. I enjoy the idea that as a painter, one needs to be alone for several hours at a time. Painting is my *raison d'être*."

And yet, given both her lineage and her

arresting looks, one could see her drifting so easily into the film industry, carving a niche for herself like her illustrious brother-in-law Hrithik, or her brother Fardeen. Her eyes light up at the very mention of her darling kid brother. "Oh, I guess I've always kind of mothered him, and it makes me so happy to see him growing as an actor."

She laughs and adds, "As for me becoming an actress, I'm afraid the girls in our family are brought up pretty conservatively, and my mother in particular, was against it. My parents were separated when I was 14, my mother and I are extremely close. I would never have hurt her; besides painting means more control over your art, acting would involve too many variables."

It is the self-assurance that sets her apart, and allows her to brush aside suggestions that her glamorous image may actually be a deterrent to people taking her seriously as an artist. "Oh, I know that some people may be drawn to my paintings out of curiosity. But that will carry me only so far! After that, it is really up to my talent. I'm eager to see how people will react to my second show, to be held in Mumbai soon. It will have more female nudes, I want to depict the strength and mystery of a woman who is an emotional anchor for her man... Well, I've only just begun, I have a long way to go before I can call myself an artist like Anjolie Ela Menon,

who incidentally I adore, or Gustave Klimt, whose work I was exposed to while I was studying at the Slade of Fine Art in London."

Interestingly, Laila did not take any formal training in art, believing that it would have cramped her style. She learnt technique from the renowned professor Kumthekar in Mumbai, and for the rest, is self-taught. Most days are spent at her studio. The studio becomes her private space, away from home, where she thinks, reads, paints. Not every moment is productive, in terms of painting, but the hours spent in contemplating help her to evolve, to seek a fierce independence.

"I cannot depend on anyone, I am not afraid of being alone. One has to live as close to the truth as possible. If the painter is not sincere or honest, it will show up on canvas. Finally, it's between you and the canvas..."

*Times News Network*

Bombay Time

20 March 2003

## Khanvas capers

**“Y**ou’re going to be an artist one day.”

was **SUNDARI KHAN**’s prediction for daughter Laila. But with **FEROZ KHAN** as dad and **SANJAY** as uncle, everybody thought Laila, like brother **FARDEEN**, would be yet another filmstar in the making. Except, art intervened. “Everyone in the family has



been creative. My creative expression comes through art,” said **LAILA KHAN RAJPAL**, opening her first major showing in Mumbai along with artist **SANJAY KUMAR** at Yantra yesterday.

Laila’s artistic inclinations surfaced in school itself, and in college, while studying for a degree in English Literature, she apprenticed with an artist. After a course at London’s Slade School, she set off on her own and has been selling her works for the past eight years. With Delhi as her base now, the buzz of Mumbai is missed. “No place like Mumbai. There’s nothing to beat the vibe that this city has,” she says.

Her family are her biggest critics — and her major source of support. “They are all art lovers, hence they critique my efforts. But they’re also very encouraging, especially my mother, who pushed me early on to hone my skills.”

As an artist, she says she recognises the growing awareness about art in the country. “Earlier, people bought art as merely decor; but now, increasingly, the audience is aware of the semantics involved. They are looking for meaning in the artworks they buy, and don’t see art for its decorative purposes alone.” And on the eternal debate about whether those daubs of paint are overpriced... Laila asserts: “Art is priceless. Creating a work of art is an isolated process — the artist puts his or her entire being in a single painting. You cannot put a price on that.”

**VRUSHALI HALDIPUR**

The Hindu  
13 November 2006

# 'I don't title my work'

**ART** Laila Rajpal explores female face for her next solo show

In a quaint corner that opens into a spectacular skylight—the atrium in ISB, artiste Laila Rajpal has students dropping by as she works on her untitled oil on canvas frame. “I don’t title my work. Art should be open to interpretation,” explains Laila at the B-School as part of its Artist in Residence programme.

“It is a lovely space and very tranquil and inspiring to work here. There is a great sense of openness, lovely rock formation and the peacocks. I am happily surprised,” she says.

## Celebrating femininity

Known for her depiction of female form that she continues post her study of life drawing from the nude while at Slade School of Arts London, here one finds her exploring female face. “Anjolie Ela Menon has been my favourite Indian artist apart from international artists Gustav Klimt and Picasso. I like the mood Anjolie creates in the women she depicts—there is a sense of melancholy in her work. For me a female principle is a symbol of love, union, sensuality and most of all the female body is a beautiful thing. At the moment I have transcended female form and I am more into portraits, celebrating female face. I am working towards my next solo show that will be held in Mumbai which will find me delving deeper within depicting inner struggle that we go through—self doubts and conflicts we have with our personality. I am



**VIVID CANVAS** Laila Rajpal transcends female form

**SHE (MEENA KUMARI) WAS A GREAT COMBINATION--A FRAGILE LOOKING WOMAN YET WITH A LOT OF CHARACTER**

studying landscape of the face,” says Laila.

Architecture, one of her inspirations, was a prominent theme for her earlier solo show at the Habitat Centre New Delhi in 2001 that was, “inspired by ancient Greek, Egyptian and Roman architecture. I was working with sand on canvas,” says Laila.

Making a fleeting appearance as a visage in her work has been actress

Meena Kumari. “I was very inspired by her face. For me her being Meena Kumari was not as significant as the fact that she was hauntingly beautiful. She was a great combination—a fragile looking woman yet with a lot of character,” she says.

Hailing from a filmy family, does she plan to make a foray into the celluloid realm? “You never know. I love the whole art

of filmmaking. My mother is a fashion designer, Suzanne is into textiles and Farah designs jewellery. My whole family is into art, each differently,” she says.

As creative director of husband Rohit Rajpal’s prêt line, fashion is yet another realm that one will find her actively involved. “It will be a trendy and affordable line for the youth slated to hit the market in two months,” she says. On the art market, “prices have skyrocketed recently. Art is being considered as a good investment proposition for a while.

There is a lot of curiosity about it all. There are art funds today. Art seems to be the in thing to do,” says Laila.

SYEDA FARIDA

Asian Age

14 June 2007

AUCTION | Sarju Kaul

# Indian art by smaller masters is London hit

**L**ondon: Indian art is the flavour of the season. Not just the established artists like M.F. Husain, F.N. Souza, Tyeb Mehta, A. Ramachandran, V.S. Gaitonde, Akbar Padamsee, Satish Gujral and S.H. Raza, serious collectors are keen on the emerging talent in the younger generation too.

The auction market for Indian art alone, according to Bonhams, has almost tripled from £26 million in 2006 to its current rate of £75 million.

To celebrate the 60th anniversary of Indian Independence, *Tehelka* organised an auction of the works of emerging artists here on Monday.

The Emerging Indian Masters in the Art for Freedom line-up was auctioned at Asia House by Bonhams auctioneer James Knight on Monday.

The highlights of Monday's auction were some unique collaborations between the emerging artists and Indian and British celebrities from diverse fields.

Explaining the concept that led to these unique collaborations, restorer and historian Aman Nath said, "It's not a well-known fact, but artists collaborate a lot to charity. And if a celebrity can add to a piece of art by collaboration, then it's a worthwhile process."

A collaboration can work in many ways, he added. It can be a process where the celebrity and the artist spend some time together and develop the piece, but it is rare.

In other cases, the celebrity can send a few hours with the artist and contribute a bit to the painting. Sometimes, due to lack of time and other reasons the celebrity can just endorse a painting after it has been painted by the artist.

Explaining the process of pairing an artist with a



**CELEBRATING INDIA: Paintings from The Emerging Indian Masters in the Art for Freedom line-up at the auction. The painting above is titled *Naika*. ASIAN AGE photographs**



celebrity for a collaboration, Mr Nath said: "In some cases, the pair knows each other personally and take it from there. But mostly, many don't know each other. It's much like an arranged marriage.

What the facilitators so is to try and pair up people with similar personalities. Some celebrities insist on working with artists who they admire."

However, whatever the type of collaboration, an

endorsement by a celebrity adds a buzz to the painting and that helps a charity cause, Mr Nath said.

The best option in a collaboration is to get the celebrity to paint something on a canvas, he

added. "A painter can always incorporate that into the final concept."

The first part of the auction, sale of 35 paintings, mostly works by established masters and a few collaborations, took place on last Thursday.

The highlight of the first auction was a "live collaboration" on a painting by M.F. Husain and filmstar Shah Rukh Khan. The painting was auctioned for £160,000.

As the works of legends like Husain, Tyeb Mehta and Satish Gujral command expensive prices in the world market, buzz has shifted to emerging artists like Partha Shaw, Seema Kohli, Subrata Kundu and Vasundhara Tiwari Broota.

The proceeds of the sale will go towards *Tehelka*. The artists, who contributed their paintings for the auction, too will get a percentage from the proceeds.

Elated by the response to both the auctions and two-day seminar, Challenge of India, hosted in association with Asia House at the Royal Society of Arts, editor-in-chief Tarun Tejpal, when asked if the auction and the forum would be an annual event, said that it is likely.

The response to Monday's auction was amazing. Works by Abdul Qadir, Ashoke Mullick, Krishnendu Porel, Lalitha Lajmi (filmmaker Guru Dutt's sister), Laila Khan Rajpal, Mohan Malviya, Neeraj Bhakshi, Nupur Kundu, Partha Shaw (painter Lalu Prasad Shaw's son) got great response from the buyers.

Others who were appreciated were Seema Kohli's collaboration with young British lawyer Nipun Gupta, Somenath Maity's collaboration with Avtar Lit, Vasundhara Tiwari Broota, Veer Munshi, Vishal Joshi and *Tehelka*'s in-house artist journalist Sankarshan Thakur.

Bombay Times

24 March 2007

# Laila, O Laila!

Sundri and Feroz Khan's artist daughter Laila Khan Rajpal is ready for her first solo show in Mumbai

**RUBINA A KHAN**  
Times News Network

Sundri and Feroz Khan's daughter, artist Laila Khan Rajpal, believes that women can be complete individuals. It's not surprising, then, that the feminine is the subject of her first solo show in Mumbai on March 29, titled *Dreams Have No Titles*.

"I am exhibiting 17 pieces on oil and charcoal," says the proud artist, her black eyes glinting with excitement. But why choose the feminine as a subject? "The influence is of my mother Sundri, without whom I would have never been a painter, and my aunt Zarine. All the girls in our family are brought up in a very individualistic manner, to follow our passions and talents. I am trying to explore the beauty and the visual part of a woman's body. It's more important for me to feel beautiful than actually look beautiful. Besides the form, the inherent spirit and life force of each piece is what is the essence. I have done a portrait to the likeness of Sonia Gandhi with her eyes. Women are afraid to project who they really are. I feel in my work, there should be no masks. If you're sexual, then project yourself as such. I am a woman and it's a struggle between being an artist and a woman everyday," explains Laila who's in the city.

One might think it very unusual for an artist to have a limit-



Laila Khan Rajpal and (below) her paintings including a portrait of Sonia Gandhi



es the hunger to excel," she reasons. Does she think her brother is as good looking as he's made out to be? "I definitely think he's a very handsome guy and inherently, very stylish. The men are spoilt by us girls in the family. And because they have grown up with women, they have that added sensitivity," says the dotting sister. There are six works of Laila adorning her family home in Juhu apart from many private collections in India and abroad. And recently, her work was bought by an American collector whose collections are considered one of the 10 best in the world.

ed colour palette, but then, Laila is different. "My palette is not very extensive. I love the colour red because it's the colour of passion and of blood which is life. I use red because it gives me hope. I started using red lipstick when I was 18 and I was very comfortable, never mind what anyone said. I live my life very passionately and it reflects in everything I do, be it food, art, clothes... Earlier, my works were done only in red, brown and gold," smiles Laila whose mother is her best critic.

"My father is very encouraging of my work and my brother Fardeen is critical. But then criticism makes you want to grow and increas-

Bombay Times

31 March 2007

**ROCKSTAR:** Feroz Khan

**THREE CHEERS:** Laila Khan Rajpal, Shabana Azmi and Vikram Sethi

**GAL POWER:** Sussanne Roshan and Neelam Kothari

**SAY CHEESE:** Rohit Rajpal

**GRAND DAME:** Zarine Khan

**FAMILY TIES:** Fardeen and Sundri Khan

## What's Sundri Khan's take on nudes?

**L**aila Khan Rajpal's first solo show — Dreams have no Titles — in Mumbai had the gallery teeming with friends, family and art aficionados on Thursday evening. **Shabana Azmi**, who Laila described as "a woman of enormous strength of character. Not only is she an actress par excellence but a stalwart in social development", inaugurated the show along with **Vickram Sethi**, **Urmila Matondkar**, **Fardeen** and **Sundri Khan**.

Fardeen elicited oohs and aahs for his haute look, but he seemed unfazed by it as it was his sister's big day. **Rohit Rajpal** stood by his wife and was overheard telling someone, "I am so proud of Laila." Touching, **Zarine Khan**, **Sussanne Roshan**, **Simone Arora** and **Malaika Khan** (all dressed in black save for Malaika in bright green) came together; **Urmila** and **Shabana** discussed the Malaysian weather where they are headed to shortly. **Pinky Reddy** and **Pradeep Hirani** were both vying to outdo each other in praise of the work on **Sonia Gandhi**. Wonder who finally conceded! **Harsh Goenka** was magnanimous in praise and being among the biggest art collectors in the country, he oughta know!

**Anu Dewan**, **Arzaan** and **Khushnuma Khambatta**, **Anil Dharker** and **Devioka Bhojwani** were among the others sipping on wine and enjoying the art. And **Feroz Khan's** entry was the grandest of all, with all eyes turning toward him as he waxed eloquent on art, particularly his beautiful daughter's paint brush.

**NOW THAT'S ARTITUDE!**  
 Someone asked **Sundri Khan** why Laila had chosen to paint nudes, and she was foxed by the question given it should have been addressed to the artist, but she replied, "You are born nude!" Sundri's spunk is by now legendary, so it came as no surprise!

**YUMMY MUMMY:** Simone Arora

**ART FOR ART'S SAKE!** Harsh Goenka

**TWO MUCH!** Kishan and Tanya Kumar

**Meena Raheja**

**PRAISE POSSESSION!** Pradeep Hirani and Pinky Reddy and (left) Nawaz Modi Singhania



DNA

19 April 2007

# Indian art takes on child trafficking

## 12 paintings will be auctioned at a gala fundraiser in Washington DC

**Sheree Gomes-Gupta**

**AFTER** working towards several charitable causes in India, the country's artists are now extending their helping hand to children in America. Twelve artists will donate their



works to help raise funds for Children's Network International (CNI), which works to prevent child trafficking in the US.

The event, which will take place in Washington DC on May 19th, will also include a performance by Ustad Zakir Hussain and a live painting show by artist Subhash Awchat.

The auction will offer works by artists including Jaideep Mehrotra, Laila

Khan Rajpal and Brinda Miller. Says Laila, "I'm going to create a good piece of art, so it sells at a great price and helps raise money for the cause."

If you're wondering why they are helping kids in America when so many in India need desperate attention, organiser and artist Bina Aziz explains, "You'll be surprised to know that child traffick-

**I'm going to  
create a good piece  
of art, so it sells at a  
great price**

*—Laila Khan Rajpal*

ing is as big a problem there as it is here. Plus, CNI is extending its support to various NGOs like Khushi here in India."

A preview of these art works will be held between April 27 and 29 at the Point of View Art Gallery in Mumbai.

[g\\_sheree@dnaindia.net](mailto:g_sheree@dnaindia.net)

SMS **ENT** to 4567  
for all **Masala of  
Bollywood**

**4567**  
for ₹.₹

DNA

31 March 2007

# A canvas of dreams



Well attended!  
 Hello brother: Laila Khan Rajpal and Fardeen Khan

**the affair**  
 Inauguration of Laila Khan Rajpal's art exhibition.

**d. d. v.**  
 Thursday, March 29, CIA

**the juice**  
 LAILA Khan Rajpal's works of art - 'Dreams do not have Titles' was inaugurated by veteran actor Shabana Azmi. Laila's family was in full attendance to extend their support. Fardeen Khan was constantly by Laila's side throughout the show. Urmila Matondkar who also came to the show was spotted chatting up quite a few guests including Alyque Padamsee, Fardeen and Shabana Azmi.



You've been naughty: Alyque Padamsee and Urmila Matondkar



Gang of girls: Mallika Khan, Neelam Kothari, Suzanne Khan and Simone Khan



Sundari Khan with Rajesh and Zeba Kohli



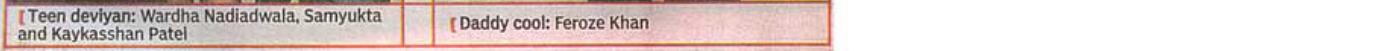
This way please: Raageshwari Loomba and Pooja Bedi



Teen deviyans: Wardha Nadiadwala, Samyukta and Kaykashan Patel



Daddy cool: Feroze Khan



Nawaz Modi Singhania and Monica Vazirali

DNA  
 7 February 2007



**PARTYING SHOT**

# When the love of art beckons

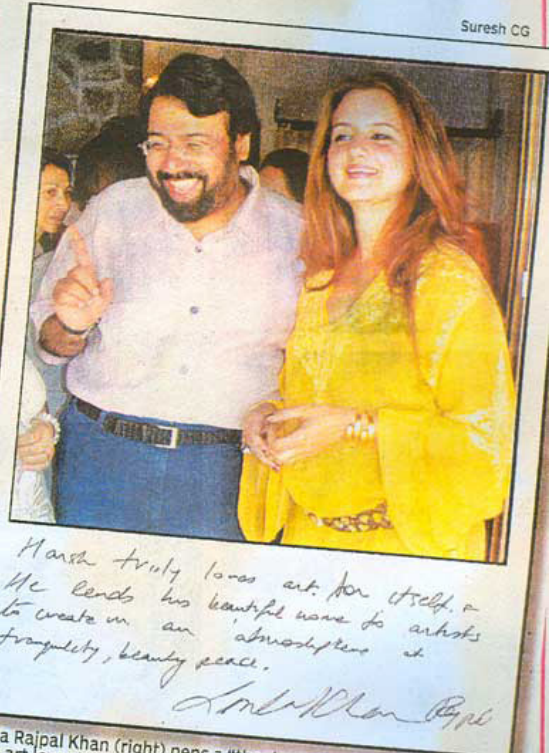
In Mumbai, dinner starts at 11 pm and I'm fast asleep by then. I'd prefer a brunch over a night out any day.

— Suchitra Krishnamoorthi at Harsh Goenka's Sunday brunch at Marve



Suresh CG

WHEN an invite comes from none other than Harsh Goenka, Mumbai's party hearty celebs will go all the way to make their presence felt. For that's exactly what they did on Sunday afternoon as they trekked to CEAT House, Marve for a brunch hosted by Goenka and Vickram Sethi to celebrate the conclusion of yet another successful RPG Art Camp. "I love art and people who are passionate about it. Ultimately, it's the presence of so many artists coming together that matters," said Goenka. The clear blue skies, a beach side view, lip smacking food, free flowing drinks and a live band made the afternoon all the more enjoyable.



*Harsh truly loves art. For itself & He lends his beautiful home to artists to create in an atmosphere of tranquility, beauty & peace.*  
 Laila Rajpal Khan

Laila Rajpal Khan (right) pens a "thank you" note for gracious host and art lover Harsh Goenka



Madhumati and Samir Mondal are the perfect couple



Saryu Doshi joins hands with Sakti Burman



**OVERHEARD**

Artist Julius Macwan saying, "Neither am I gay nor do I look it. I am comfortable and happy in what I wear."



Pravina and Jamal Mecklai are their colourful self



Poonam Dhillon is feeling the blues



Julius Macwan skirts the issue



Denim's the way for Nisha Jamwal



Shekhar Kapur likes stripes

**ALSO SPOTTED**

Mala Goenka playing the gracious hostess, Nirja Shah trying to keep away from the Amritsari kulchas, Uday Singh sans wife Rashmi who is away in the US and the rest of the arty party brigade.

Natasha came in with mum-in-law Sundri Khan

Mumbai Age

31 March 2007

# Untitled art fascinates all

SHEFALI MARTINS | MUMBAI

**F**or once, I have come to an art exhibition, where I can understand without explanations, and even titles," says ad man and theatre person Alyque Padamsee about artist Laila Khan Rajpal's ongoing exhibition "Dreams do not have Titles". The preview for this exhibition was held at the ICIA Building on Thursday and it saw Laila's celebrity family and friends come in full attendance to support and admire her work. But besides the glamour, there was tradition as well, for the exhibition was inaugurated by actor and activist Shabana Azmi, who lit the ceremonial lamp. While she was seen keenly observing the paintings, and getting intricate details about the colour palette used and the like, from the artist, others were also looking and talking about the paintings with keen interest.

Among those present from the art and glamour world were Laila's husband Rohit Rajpal, her parents Sundari and Feroz Khan, brother-actor Fardeen Khan, aunt Zarine Khan, cousins Mallika Khan, Sussanne Roshan and Simone Khan, Alyque Padamsee, designer Nisha Jamwal, actors Urmila Matondkar and Neelam, chocolatier Zeba and Rajesh Kohli, singer Talat Aziz with wife Bina and many others.

The art-oriented interest of the evening was evident in the fact that none of the celebrities were ready to discuss anything other



(From left to right) Laila Khan Rajpal, Simone Khan, Sussanne Roshan and Zarine Khan at the event

than the art works with media persons.

Laila's show is based on the feminine predicament. She states, "My aim is to transform the complexities of the figure into harmonies of simplified forms, revealing the innate reality." Her works are never titled as she wants the viewer to have the freedom and not the burden of being shown the way, rather than finding it.

Her brother Fardeen, shares similar feelings, he says, "I don't think titles are required at all for art works. Even where they have titles, I don't read them, I like to draw my own interpretation." The actor says that he likes three particular paintings from the display because "they spoke to him".

The exhibition is on till April 7 at the ICIA building.



(Left) Actor Urmila Matondkar; (above) actor Shabana Azmi at the preview of Laila Khan Rajpal's paintings. THE ASIAN AGE photographs

Verve  
April 2007



## ART MART



### Laila Khan Rajpal's portraiture, *Dreams Do Not Have Titles*, delineates her inner struggle

**D**ISCOVERING LAILA KHAN RAJPAL'S CALLING WAS QUITE A surprise. Rather than follow in her father's footsteps, actor, Feroz Khan's daughter opted for the role of a painter over a decade ago. While studying English Literature at Sophia College, Laila trained as an artist. "I worked with Mr Gumthekar who came home for a couple of years, as I didn't want to go to a rigorous art school," she disclosed. Feeling the urge to paint from the nude and aware of the paucity of nude models here, she enrolled at the Slade School of Fine Art in London. "The human body has always had a tremendous impact on me... and there are a lot of live stories there. That's when I got exposed to Western art, which influenced me a lot."

From sculpting sand on canvas with a knife to depict ancient architectural structures that spoke about the impermanence of human life in comparison to the permanence of man's creations, she was drawn to figure and form. Laila's first solo show in 2001 at the India Habitat Centre, Delhi, took place eight years after

she began painting. "I wasn't ready to make a public statement about my work before that," she explained. Today, after depicting ephemeral female figures, delicate roses and fragile butterflies to symbolise the sexual, erotic and ethereal qualities inherent in them, Laila has moved inward. This time, she used charcoal and oil on canvas for a series titled *Dreams Do Not Have Titles* - which was being shown at the Institute of Contemporary Indian Art (ICIA), Mumbai, until April 7.

"I've gone into portraiture and the delineation of my internal struggles," she divulged. "I face struggles between being a woman and an artist, I have self-doubts, I struggle with my personality - hence the portraiture is more involved." Many of the paintings are veiled by transparent layers of pigment, and one wonders if she is trying to obliterate those images... albeit unconsciously. There are some nudes in the show, besides the Goddess Lakshmi that the series began with.



### VITAL ABSTRACTIONS

Artist, Vijaya Bagai, whose work has evolved over the last three decades and has shown globally across continents, redefined her creativity with her recent paintings and drawings, *Amalgamation - Exploring The Shift*, at Shridharni Art Gallery, New Delhi. The artist has always stressed that the human figure is only a small part of the whole civilisational structure. Often using bright colours to convey positivism and creativity, she shows a penchant for an abstraction of architectural forms. Her faintly drawn figures in action are discernible against the geometric lines of the built habitat. Her canvases that reveal an impressive sweep, display a dynamic synergy between the world of man and infinite space. As always, in her recent showing, her work explored life and human relationships in enigmatic ways.



Bombay Times

7 November 2008

# 'I don't want to be curbed'

Non-conformist artist Laila Khan on experimenting with Islamic calligraphy and Salman Khan's paintings...

**NICOLE DASTUR**

Times News Network

She hails from a *filmi* family, but despite being Feroz Khan's daughter and Fardeen's sister, Laila Khan decided to take the path less travelled; she preferred to be behind the canvas rather than face the camera, and paint instead of sing and dance around trees.

After carving a niche for herself within her Bollywood-centric family and Mumbai's colourful art scene, she's now ready to experiment. On the 29th, Laila will be exhibiting a special work in Dubai, which will be auctioned for the Khushi and Al-Noor charities. Done in collaboration with prominent Dubai businessman Ismail Mohammed, Laila, known to be a non-conformist as far as her artworks are concerned, has experimented with Islamic calligraphy.

"I have painted Allah in the Islamic calligraphy style," she states, further elaborating, "Islamic calligraphy or Arabic calligraphy is an artistic form of writing. Since representation of figures and images is forbidden by the religion, this artistic form of writing was invented. It has fascinated me since child-

Prathamesh Bandekar



**ART ATTACK: Laila Khan**

hood and I have employed the Thuluth calligraphic style, one of the many ornamental styles." Thuluth is based on the principle that one-third of each letter slides downward, thus giving it a strong curve-like aspect.

Are there any rules for this self-taught artist? "I don't want to be curbed. An art school can't teach you what to see and feel, it can only brush up what's there," she believes. Which is why she opts to leave her paintings untitled — "Every piece of art contains something special for everyone, it's important to experience the uniqueness of art. Titles limit perceptions."

Another self-taught artist that is attracting attention these days is Salman Khan. Has she seen his works? "Yes, he's been painting for a while now and seems quite passionate about it." But can one's artistic side suddenly come into being? "Anything creative can never be forced, it has to come naturally. There has to be a natural progression. You can't just get up one day, paint for six months and then have a show! I painted for 10 years before making a public statement with my first solo show," says Laila.

**Midday**

14 October 2008



## Her handiwork

Salman Khan ain't the only one with a talent for painting. At the recently launched art gallery, Tradition art at Juhu, which is run by Zarine Khan and Bina Aziz, one got to see Laila Khan's talents. The lovely lady — pictured here with one of her pieces — is very passionate about what she does. Cheers lady!



For video, visit  
[www.mid-day.com](http://www.mid-day.com)

Bombay Times

6 August 2009

# Fashion steps off the ramp and into art ★

Artists are joining designers with a show at the Mumbai Fashion Week

**RACHEL FERNANDES**  
Times News Network

The Mumbai Fashion Week this October will throw its doors open to the art world. You may enjoy fashion on the ramp and paintings, sculptures, murals and photographs, off it. Designers taking part in the Fashion Week have not yet been announced, but Ajay De, Arzan Khambatta, Samir Mondal, Satish Gujral, Jayasri Burman, Rini Dhumal, Brinda Miller and Laila Khan Rajpal will represent the art world at the NCPA through an 'ArtStudio' put together by Jamaat. They will display works interpreting their idea of fashion.

Speaking about the



**ART MEETS FASHION:** Ajay De, Laila Khan Rajpal, Brinda Miller, Samir Mondal; (standing from left) Pravina Mecklai, Simeen Oshidar, Arzan Khambatta and Anil Chopra

ArtStudio, advisor Anil Chopra said, "This is the first time an initiative like this is being undertaken. The artists have absolute freedom to do what they want. It's their expression of fashion. It's all about one creative form expressing what it thinks about

the other."

While Pravina Mecklai of Jamaat added, "The world over, fashion designers have showcased their collections at art galleries and museums. While on the other hand, some haute couture designers in Milan have art galleries within

their prestigious stores. This is an enthralling synergy between art and fashion as they both reflect visual creations with colour and form."

The artists chosen for this initiative are hip to fashion. Arzan Khambatta is planning a very powerful

piece, mostly in copper, epitomising fashion. "There is art in everything and I'm all for art mixing with all other kinds of art. After all, they are both forms of creativity and it will only add to the link," he said.

rachel.fernandes@timesgroup.com



Bombay Times

8 August 2009

SATURDAY 8 AUGUST 2009

**BOOMTOWN RAP**

BOMBAY TIMES, THE TIMES OF INDIA

3

Pics: Snehil Sakhare

The power of **ONE**



RARE FARE: Rouble Nagi, Sapna Mukherjee and Maya Alagh enjoy the show

husband sang a *bandish*; *ghazal* talent Talat Aziz supported wife Bina in her artistic endeavour while Zarine Khan had not just husband Sanjay but also all her daughters, her daughter-in-law and her niece by her side. Sisters Sussanne Roshan, Simone Arora and Farah Khan Ali caught up with one another and their cousin Laila Khan, whose works were also part of the exhibition (Farah's kids being quite the centre of attention).

Alfaz and Brinda Miller brought their daughter along; so did Pooja Bedi. Rouble Nagi made a rare appearance as did singer Sapna Mukherjee. Medha Jalota, Kiran Juneja, Kamiya Mulhotra, Usha Agarwal, Ananya Banerjee... the evening was truly a merger of families, religions and talents.



Poonam Dhillon



ONE FOR THE FAMILY TREE! Farah Khan Ali poses with her children

**T**hursday evening was all about union — the union of Om and Allah; of family bonding; of the art fraternity coming together and of friends and colleagues enjoying a creativity-filled evening. Zarine Khan and Bina Aziz hosted a calligraphy art exhibition at their Juhu art space, and the room soon filled up with intellectual minds, music maestros and art aficionados.

Priya Dutt and Pandit Jasraj inaugurated the show and lit the ceremonial lamp. Everyone was with their spouses — Pandit's wife Madhura was lost in spiritual bliss while her



Pandit Jasraj

When Om met Allah...

Pandit Jasraj narrated a spiritual experience he once had during a concert when he had sung a *bandish* 'Mero Allah Meherban' completely extempore. He explained how the sound of Om and Allah emanates from deep within the body and then proceeded to sing the composition much to the delight of everyone present. Priya spoke about how she too experienced the power of both Om and Allah in her life through her parents.



Malaika Khan and Priya Dutt



Laila Khan, Simone Arora and Sussanne Roshan



Zarine and Sanjay Khan and Talat and Bina Aziz



For more pictures of this event go to

<http://photogallery.indiatimes.com>  
 Click on Society-Parties-Bombay

DNA  
 11 August 2009

## A fine blend

The **OM AND ALLAH** art show has elements from personal experiences of Pandit Jasraj, finds  
**SUJATA CHAKRABARTI**

This one is a show that spells out the marriage between two mediums of creativity — music and art. A host of artists get together for a calligraphy show in the city, which is a dedication in their way, to promote a sense of unity among different religious communities.

Interestingly, the art show stemmed from an incident that took place almost 10 years ago that concerned music maestro Pandit Jasraj. While Panditji confirms that memories of the incident are still fresh in his mind, gallerist Bina Aziz explains, "In this case, the law of attraction has prevailed between music and art. Pandit Jasraj has had a great influence on the entire concept we have used for our collection." Incidentally, al-

most 10 years ago in Toronto, while giving a concert and singing a *bandish* dedicated to the unity of different religions, the ace musician fainted on stage and describes the experience akin to a trance.

**.event of the day.**

Laila Khan who has been in the art fraternity for almost a decade says that while she has always been working on calligraphy, it's the first time that one of her works is also dedicated to Om

— often interpreted as the sound that was created when the universe was formed. Laila says, "I have personally always been fascinated by calligraphy

— it's a way of reverence. While it has always had a religious significance for me, it is the first time that I have experimented with working on Om."

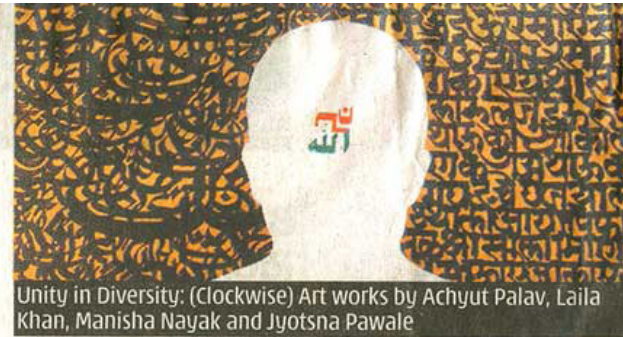
Laila points out the interesting aspects of using lines, the unit of calligraphy, to create something as powerful as Allah and Om concepts that often come with

religious connotations. She says, "For an artist, it is a journey of constant evolution. This period has marked intensive growth in me. My earlier shows were all about commissioned art works, but this one has come from within."

You can catch *Om and Allah* at Tradition Art Gallery, Juhu till August 21.



Pandit Jasraj



Unity in Diversity: (Clockwise) Art works by Achyut Palav, Laila Khan, Manisha Nayak and Jyotsna Pawale



Indian Express

7 August 2009



to it ever since," says Khan, seated on the living room of her Juhu home, in jeans and a T-shirt and yet a picture of glamour with toe nails gleaming a ruby red. "I have of course learnt all six scripts, but I like the Kufic, with its square style, the best."

This is also a landmark show for her because this is the first time she's done an interpretation of the Om. "It's a deeply spiritual sound and I feel that it speaks of peace and calm. I've tried to explore that in my art, but I still feel there are so many levels I haven't touched," she adds.

The lady is often seen in the company of Suzanne Roshan, Maheep Kapoor, Farah Khan Ali and Bhawna Pandey. It still seems strange that someone from a film family was not tempted by the lure of arc-lights, but she explains, "My father was always so protective of me, since I'm the only daughter. Besides, I'm a very solitary person. I only ever attend film parties if it's a close friend or family."

# Khan confidential

Laila Khan takes on calligraphy in her art, but keeps her words minimal

POOJA PILLAI

**W**HEN you're the daughter of one of India's biggest movie stars, carving out your own niche can be a struggle. But Laila Khan, daughter of the late Feroz Khan and sister of actor Fardeen Khan, always knew she wanted to paint. Khan says her mum

Sundari saw her talent when she was young and eventually Khan enrolled herself in London's Slade School of Fine Arts.

Her journey as an artist has been 20 years long; but Khan finds herself in many new places now. For starters, she's abandoned her former stamping ground, Delhi, post her recent estrangement

from tennis player Rohit Rajpal, and is now a regular in Mumbai's page-three circuit. She's also dating Farhan Ebrahim Furniturewala, former model Pooja Bedi's ex, but these are cards the 39-year-old keeps close to her chest. "I don't like to talk about the people in my life. I'd much rather focus on my work," she requests.

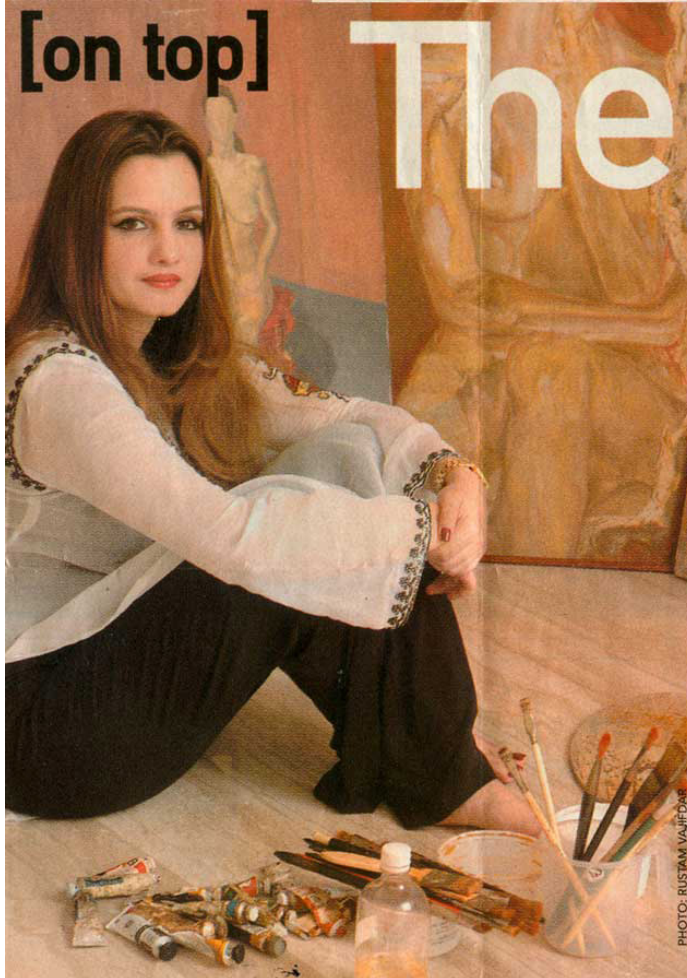
So let's. Khan is keeping busy with a new exhibition on calligraphic art that will be on display at her aunt Zarine Khan's Juhu gallery, on till August 21.

"Calligraphy is a venerated art in Islam, since it's used to write the Quran. I encountered it first as a child when I was learning Urdu and Arabic, and have been attracted

Three months since her father passed away, she is the picture of composure with a polite "I'm fine, thank you very much". But that doesn't mean she doesn't throw the occasional fond glance at a picture of him, placed on a coffee table. "I'm definitely going to paint my father," she confesses, before quickly changing the subject.

Times

18 September 2009



[on top]

# The feminine mystique

She believes dreams have no titles and that the female form is infinitely fascinating. FARHAD J. DADYBURJOR reconstructs a portrait of the woman behind the artist, **LAILA KHAN RAJPAL**

**W**hen were you first drawn to the easel and brush?  
I think I was drawn to art, even way back in school, because of its ability to express without any loss of control. The freedom that one felt and realised, because it's just between you and the canvas. There's no hidden truth; there's no lie. And that itself was fascinating for me. So, after school, I apprenticed with an artist whilst studying English literature in college and then later, went to the Slade School of Fine Art in London because I wanted to study the nude; I wanted to study from life. Though art school cannot teach you to have an eye; it can't teach you emotion. That has to be in you, and you have to believe you have something to say, which is original.

When did you decide to pursue art as a full-time career?

It started with painting for myself, but then people wanted to buy my work. And the selling was interesting because the money gave me the independence and creative freedom to continue, and make one's own decisions. For me, freedom and pleasure - these are the things in life! And I'm fortunate that I don't have to sell my work to live - and that's why it's a bigger onus on me to be true to my work.

Isn't it also cathartic - a way to live out your demons?

Sadness is a part of life, and it's all around us. It creates intensity, a brooding, an introspection. I think a work should hide more than it reveals. Painting is an experience which is very solitary and artists are solitary people. They may not necessarily be lonely people, but they are alone...though not really alone.

They are most alive when they are alone.

Yes. Though I never feel alone because this is divinity; this is what it is. When I finish a work, I feel I couldn't have done that - that this is a force of life and creation and God which infuses itself through you. I draw a lot of strength from my work. It is what I am. It's autobiographical.

When or how do you know that you've finally finished a work - that it needs no more?

That's the greatest quest for any artist. When to restrain; to let go. Because overworking on a painting can take away so much, and sometimes in three strokes you can finish a work. I think the painting decides that for itself, but you get to know that only with a lot of painting. You know, you learn painting by painting.

What are you currently working on and how do you approach your work?

There are no 'rules' in my dictionary - I approach my work in a very instinctive and natural manner. Like currently, I'm working on a figurative series which are all manifestations of the female principle of a woman. A woman can be many different things: she can be fragile, strong, erotic...she can be a man, a woman, and through her I'm exploring beauty, the destruction of beauty, the transience of human life...

Is there a name to the series?

No, dreams have no titles.

Which artists have influenced you?

Picasso, Van Gogh, Salvador Dali, and amongst Indian artists, Anjolie Ela Menon. I love the mood she creates; her intensity.

Artists were meant to tackle themes that wrestled with the world. Do you think that holds true for Indian artists today?

Whilst there is a lot of packaging, like in most things today, yet you have a lot of artists who are trying to say something...though the movement in that direction needs to be more. Today, there's a lot of money in the art world - and why not? The days of the tragic artist dying in poverty have gone.

Times 18/9/09

The Age  
8 August 2009

# glam-sham



(Right) Laila Khan; and her works (above, below) on display at the Tradition Art Gallery PHOTOS: Asian Age



## Celebrating life with calligraphy

EDLYN G. D'SOUZA

THE ASIAN AGE

**L**aila Khan has always put a big part of herself into her art. She says it helps her distill the pain and express all that she feels. "I celebrate the life that I love through my art. Whether I'm feeling rebellious, loneliness, love or despair, I always show it through my work. It has always been very personal for me," says the artist, who is exhibiting her first calligraphic works based on the "Om" symbol, apart from Islamic calligraphy.

"I've always been fascinated by Islamic calligraphy. With Om and Islamic calligraphy side by side, I'm trying to show the unity of people. Islamic calligraphy is the primary means for preserving the Quran and Om is a sound that contains all sounds. Hence I have tried to show the connection between man and



God," says Laila.

Coming from a film family, Laila has broken into the art world very successfully. As an artist, she constantly reinvents her style and chooses not to stick to particulars, much like what she's done all her life. "I always feel the need to evolve. An artist should never be static. Some are known for their style but when you get too involved with that, you tend to become complacent and redundant," says

Laila.

True to her word, she has done nudes, human faces, architecture, and has worked with materials like oil and acrylic paints, charcoal and even sand. Soon, she will be going to the Central Saint Martin School of Art in London to learn expressive painting. She also wants to move to abstract art.

For now, her calligraphic works are earning her a lot of praise. On display at the Tradition Art Gallery in Juhu, the writings evoke a sense of calm. "I've tried not to use too many colours. I've used a lot of gold pigments and acrylic because gold is something that draws people and I've always been fascinated with its hues," she says.

The exhibition will be on till August 21.

Bombay Times  
7 September 2010

## WHY I LOVE ART

# 'It's my instant yet abstract connect with divinity'

...says artist **Laila Khan Furniturewala**

**W**hen I say art has been given to me by someone else, it may sound quizzical. But I do feel that this skill isn't my own, it's given by God to me. When I paint, I disconnect from the rest of the world and my choice of colours, strokes and the image just start to flow on its own. To me divinity has been abstract, that's why I do not title and caption my paintings. I have been painting since 15 years now. But after a gap of three years, I am now making Ganesh paintings. This lord ushers in good beginnings and I feel we all need that at every stage of our lives. I am using acrylic and god leaf to give it a hint of shimmer. In my new studio, there's a lot of light which

filters in and I can see the seaface from the windows. The entire set-up is so beautiful that I paint for hours and feel energised at the end of it. There was a time when I used to feel so strongly about my works getting sold, it felt as if a piece of me is going away. But now, once I am done with the entire canvas, I detach myself. I believe that only when the old is gone, can the new begin. I am planning to do my solo show next year and I'm preparing for that day, quite excited about it too. With Ganesh Chaturthi falling this Saturday, I feel He shall transcend all barriers of religion and bring peace and happiness to all of us.

As told to Nimisha Tiwari

'I NEVER  
TITLE MY  
WORKS, SO  
PEOPLE  
CAN INFER  
ANYTHING'

FOR THE LOVE OF ART:  
Laila Khan Furniturewala

**l'Officiel**  
March 2010



THE POWER OF *Art*  
LAILA KHAN

"Art eternally captures beautiful things in life...something that life itself cannot do." Excellence, passion, traces of memory, hints of self and honesty adorns Laila Khan's art. What started out as a childhood hobby was nurtured by her mother and years later, Khan holds her own as a gifted artist. Her penchant for western art led her to do a course at SLADE, London where she gained skills in fresco and life-study. Essentially a figurative artist, she strives to infuse emotion and intuition into her creations. She views art as a form of free, personal expression and hence believes that the audience must have their own reflections from it. Her 2007 collection was aptly titled *Dreams Have No Titles* and she has a second solo in the works. Greatly inspired by the significant women in her life, Khan's work features the female form in all its aesthetic glory. One cannot miss her passion for art, and the immense talent that follows. **S.R.**

# 'Fardeen is my biggest critic'

Pic: Srinivas Setty



ARTIST'S PERSPECTIVE: Laila Khan Rajpal

**SHILPA VAIDYA**  
Times News Network

**F**eroz Khan's daughter, Laila Khan Rajpal has come a long way. In town as artist-in-residence at a B-school, she talks about her childhood, being an artist and life in Delhi, where she lives.

#### AS AN ARTIST

I have always believed that a human being is transient but his creations are timeless. But for my work to grow and achieve that, I had to grow as a person. When I came out with my first solo show in 2000 there was waywardness in my work. I used to paint ghostly apparitions against the backdrop of monuments. I was quite drawn to portraying the woman's face and body since the feminine form has always been a recurrent theme in art. I would sketch a woman's face resembling Meena Kumari since I adore her. Back then I used to explore the body and hence the sensuality in my works. However, today I have become more inward and prefer to do portraits exploring various emotions, internal struggles of the human mind and a search for satisfaction.

#### FAMILY MATTERS

My mother always thought I was destined to be an artist, as painting was my hobby since childhood. Being ac-

tor Feroz Khan's daughter and not choosing acting as a career is one question that haunts me wherever I go. To me, more than my father, it was coming from an artist family that mattered. It's all in the genes. My cousins, the girls - Suzanne, Farah and Simone are creatively inclined and established designers and I take pride in that.

#### PASSING THROUGH

Laila Khan Rajpal like her work is a woman of many hues.

Hyderabad Times meets the artist to find out what inspires her

#### FARDEEN, MY BIGGEST CRITIC

He dislikes half of my paintings and the other half that he likes, he keeps! I can undoubtedly say he is my biggest fan and the most vocal critic.

#### ON ABSTRACT ART

Anything that evokes an emotional response is art. You should always trust the first thing you notice. Don't go looking into the deeper layers of the canvas for some sort of an intellectual answer, when one look at the surface has moved you emotionally. The more you observe art, the more it sensitises you.

#### ART FOR ART OR INVESTMENT?

Art belongs to everybody and it is something to be shared and possessed at the same time. Today, it has become a priority to a lot more people. You may buy it for investment but it is not going to just adorn your walls. With time, it will enrich your life.

hyderabadtimes@indiatimes.com



Bombay Times



## LAILA'S BRUSH WITH COLOURS

**A**s a child, she would sit and paint for hours, spreading a riot of colour across her own little world. There is still a child in her... **LAILA RAJPAL** has grown up to become an artist. "Women have always been at the centre of my work. And what I try to feature in my work is the essence of freedom," says Laila. She recently had a group exhibition Harvest 2002, in Delhi which also featured the work of around 75 artists including **M F HUSAIN**, **PARESH MAITY** and **SANJAY BHATTACHARYA**.

"This time round," points out Laila, "there is a shift in my work. It is much more figurative. One will see red, but shades of blue and ochre play an important role on the canvas."

The woman within the artist has been inspired by another woman the one who brought her into this world. "My mother is my best critic — she analyses my work the best. As far as I

am concerned, I just want to be myself, the person I am this is what spells freedom for me."

Laila admits that the artist in her couldn't, perhaps, have been complete without the support of her family. "My husband, **ROHIT** is interested in art and this helps. My father (**FEROZ KHAN**), of course, has always been very supportive." Laila's brother, **FARDEEN KHAN**, has gone a step further.

"He told me that he would commission work for me. But

there are times when he doesn't like my work — he is very honest in his opinion," she says.

While art is what was inherent in her genes, Laila confesses that she chose to let the talent lie hidden till she was sure she could share her work with the world. "I come from a very artistically-inclined family. It is only when I realised I was ready that I presented my first show last year. Now, there will be more to come," she promises.

SANGHITA SINGH

**ART STROKES**



# LAILA'S LIFE CANVAS

**SHE'S NOT JUST ANOTHER STAR KID. LAILA RAJPAL-KHAN, A CELEBRATED PAINTER IN HER OWN RIGHT, TELLS MASALA! THE STORIES OF HER HEART AND THE MEANING BEHIND HER ART...**

## FAVOURITE ART PIECE

"The painting closest to my heart is the nude I gifted to my brother when I had a show at Yantra in Mumbai. Fardeen picked it out himself actually. The piece was part of a nude series I had done, in fact it was the first painting that I painted of the series. For me a woman's nude body is like a landscape — a beautiful thing. Even though there's nudity in the work, there is an element of pure elegance."



Fardeen Khan.

## FAVOURITE ARTISTS

Among the Indian artists I enjoy Shekhar Roy, Chandra Bhattacharya and Anjali Ela Menon's works. I admire M.F. Hussain very much. I think his energy is tremendous and he is responsible for taking Indian art to the international map. The Western artists I like are Igonshi, Gustav Klint, Lucien Freud, Salvador Dali, Picasso, and Van Gogh. I also like Caravaggio during the Renaissance.



**T**he celebrated Laila Rajpal-Khan shuttles between the two party capitals, Mumbai and Delhi, three-four times a month. You could call her celebrated on both counts — as an artist and as the daughter of Sundari and Feroz Khan. *Masala!* awaits her arrival for the interview in her drawing room at FK House in Juhu, where her family lives.

When Laila flounces into the room looking saucy and stunning in a strappy pink *bandhini* summer dress, you forget she's anybody's daughter. The girl has her own rather charming personality. Shoot complete, she settles to speak easily on her work, her life and her family...

**You have often said that when you start a painting you never know where it's going...**  
 Well, I'm terrified when I look into a blank canvas. But when you do start, the painting decides for itself. There's so much you want to say through your work. Something takes you over — it's a very unconscious process, very introspective, meditative and therapeutic. Restraint is something you learn and the more you paint and the more mature you get. When to stop is the biggest obstacle. So the more you paint, your eye is trained to stop when necessary. I think that's the biggest challenge for an artist.

**Did you have teething problems at the beginning of your career?**  
 Well in the beginning stages, an artist has a lot to say and you want to say it all at once. But you learn restraint. The best way to learn painting is to paint. Art school doesn't teach you emotion; it doesn't teach you to have an eye. That is intrinsic and it is a gift. I think a little bit of art school can only hone your skills and polish what you already possess. I studied at the Slade School of Art in London on a short five-month programme. I went there because I wanted to study art through nudes. I was painting a



Above: Laila Khan-Rajpal says that she gives a lot of credit to her husband for dealing with her eccentricities. "Artists are unconventional. We need nurturing so that we can flourish. My husband has fostered that environment for me."

lot of nudes at the time. It was only after I interacted with the foreign students that I was exposed to Western art — which has been a great influence on my work.

**Would you categorise your art as a form of catharsis?**  
 Yes, I lose myself when I work. It consumes me and I thank God for it. In my opinion you're never alone when you're an artist — you're life lies with art.

**Do you thank your husband for understanding you and your work?**  
 I do. Well largely, there's a side to artists and creative people, that's very Bohemian. They're unconventional, emotional, highly sensitive and temperamental. And it ►

**"Restraint is one of the hardest challenges for an artist. It comes with time."**

► takes someone very stable and secure to understand all the idiosyncrasies of an artist. All creative people need nurturing, without that anchor, stability, and fostering environment, they cannot flourish. My husband has definitely been all of those things to me. He loves art as well, he used to sketch at one time actually. He and my brother Fardeen often give me a critical analysis of my work. If they don't like a piece they always tell me.

**Is there a difference in the way you painted before marriage and now?**

Yes, every stage brings about something new in a work of art. As long as I'm growing and don't remain stagnant I am happy. I never stick to a style because that style sells or because there's a market for it. Sometimes artists tend to stagnate and fall into a comfort zone of doing one type of work that they think sells. I hope that never happens to me. I try consciously to get away from that.

**Many of your art pieces have a signature red butterfly on them... what does this symbolise?**

[Laughs] That is true. The butterfly is a symbol of metamorphosis and of transformation. The series in which the butterfly appeared represented the female principle. The female is the symbol of love, creation and union. She is fragile yet strong.

**What was the first painting you ever did, and did it sell?**

Again, it was of a woman — but a headless woman. I sold it for Rs8000 (Dhs667) and at that time, for me it was a lot of money. I was so excited.

**What's the best compliment you've received on your work?**

I've been told that my work enriches people,



Above: Laila with one of her art pieces.  
 Below: One of Laila's art works.

### KIDS WHO TREAD THE PATH LESS TRAVELLED...

Unlike many other star children, Laila never had the inclination to join Bollywood. Instead she became an artist. Her cousin Farah Khan-Ali (daughter of Sanjay Khan) became a jewellery designer. The list of star-kids who did not follow in their parent's footsteps doesn't stop there...

Aditya Kapoor, the son of legendary actor Shammi Kapoor, ran amusement parks abroad for a while and later directed *Chamale*, which is up for release soon. Kailash Surendranath, the son of actor Surendranath of *Anmol Ghadi* fame, became one of India's best-known ad filmmakers. Even Raakhee and Gulzar's daughter, Meghna chose to become a director rather than an actor. Her film *Filhaal* won critical acclaim the world over. Dimple and Rajesh Khanna's daughter Twinkle did a short spate in Bollywood but quit films after marrying Akshay Kumar. This lady who dabbles in candle making prefers to lead the life of a quiet boutique owning wife today. Subhash Ghai's daughter Meghna is now helping him establish a major film institute in India.

Thus proving that all rich kids... are not spoil brats!

that it grows on them and they find more meaning in it every day. For me, appreciation is great. Just purchasing a painting as an investment has less meaning than someone who may not be able to afford it but loves the work and is willing to speak to me about it.

**So just buying a Laila Rajpal doesn't do much for you as opposed to...**

No, of course it's encouraging when people put money down. When you earn your own money it gives you the sense of independence, which is very important for an artist. To me the greatest compliment has been when people love my art without realising that it was my art. Very few people

**Above: Laila says that every stage in her life brings about a new style in her art works.**

have their own minds, when it comes to art, most people get swayed by hype or a name.

**What touches your heart most?**

A person who has nothing and is yet able to smile... when I see beggars on the street, smiling and happy, that touches my heart. But then that is the poetic justice in life, that is the way God balances. Because I've noticed that the more people have, the more they have to worry about. I'm also touched by people who have impairments and can still be happy and strive. When I see people who paint with their mouths or with their feet, I consider myself very, very fortunate in too many ways, and I think I enjoy God's grace. I'm not a religious and ritualistic person but I believe in the power of God, especially when I'm working.

**What is the nicest thing your husband has said to you about a work?**

There was a piece I did of Meena Kumari for a show called Art In Cinema, held in Delhi where each artist had to base their work on a film. I based it on *Sabib Bibi Aur Ghulam*, the scene on the bed where Meena Kumari is lying down drunk and she doesn't want Rehman to leave. I did that in charcoal, a very realistic rendering. My husband thinks I should do more like that.

**Do you find it difficult to break away from the 'Feroz Khan's daughter' tag?**

I don't want to break away from it. But when you come from a family that is known, the onus on you is far greater. I don't need to sell my work, so I try to be truer to my work. Yes, the fame and the family I come from has its advantages but no one's going to put money down for me because I'm somebody's daughter. If you're true to your art, it'll always show. Yes I've faced obstacles, hurdles, jealousy and brickbats but I have tried to use it to become a stronger person. ■