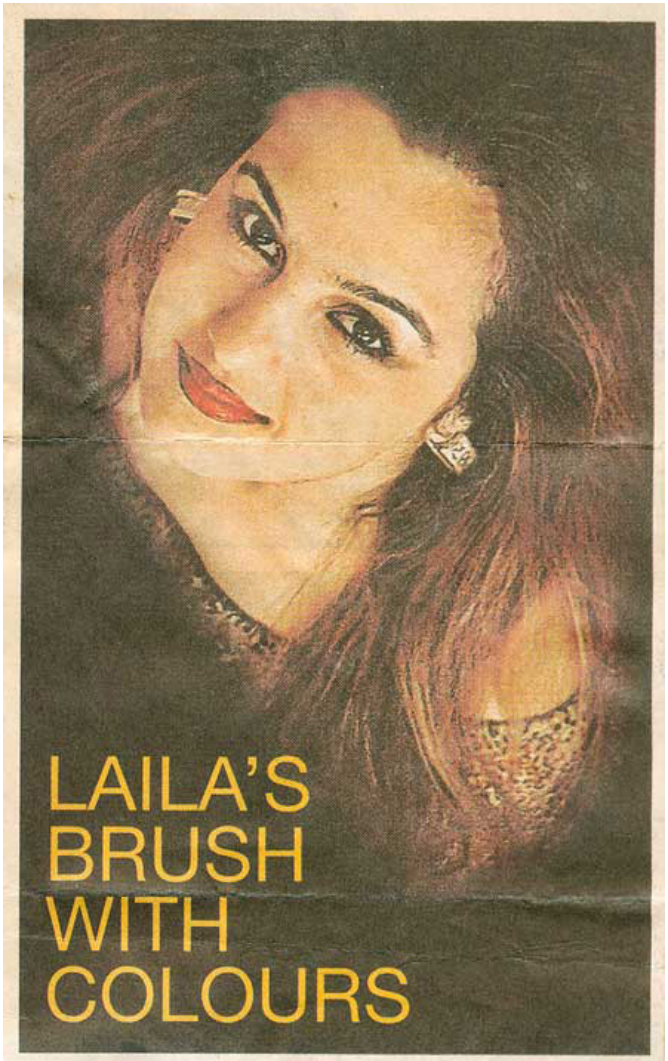
Bombay Times



LAILA'S BRUSH WITH COLOURS

As 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**.

ART STROKES

"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