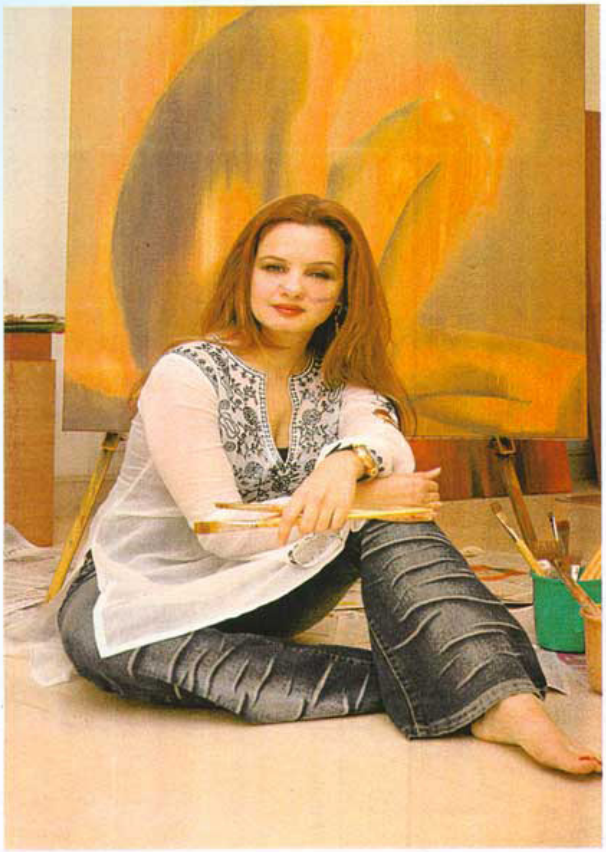
Verve
April 2007



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

Discovering 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.

