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Laila, O Laila!

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

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





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 limited 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 increases 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 doting 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.