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Laila Khan Furniturewalla: My mom Sundri Khan recognised my talent, told me 'You are going to be an artist'

In an interview with Livemint, Laila Khan Furniturewalla, daughter of Sundri Khan and the late Feroz Khan, opened up about her upcoming art exhibition in Mumbai.

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*In an interview with Livement, Laila Khan Furniturewalla shared details of her artistic journey.**(live mint)***

Creativity is in artist Laila Khan Furniturewalla's blood-— her mother, Sundri Khan, wields magic in her designer ensemble, while her father, Feroz Khan, created mesmerising cinematic experiences for his fans. After a gap of 18 years, Laila Khan is all set to return with her upcoming solo exhibition, titled Untamed Heart. Ahead of the show opening in Mumbai on Friday, Laika shared with Livement how Untamed Heart is personal to her.

Laila Khan's solo exhibition Untamed Heart

An artistic tribute to her parents, Untamed Heart celebrates raw emotions. Laila shared what inspired her to break free from her artistic boundaries in this body of work.

"After high school, I found myself at a crossroads, reflecting on what I truly wanted to do. I had been painting a lot but when I tried attending formal art school, I quickly realised it wasn't for me. I couldn't continue with the rigid structure of repeating the same exercises for an entire year," she said,

"From a young age, I had this deep sense of wanting to break free from limitations. I wasn't interested in following the traditional path, so while studying English literature and philosophy in college, I also apprenticed with an artist. This experience allowed me the freedom to explore without boundaries."

In her words, Untamed Heart is the result of deep contemplation.

She added, "I turned inward, painting freely without following any conventional rules or expectations. I wanted to paint what touched me deeply, what I was searching for, rather than what was expected of me. I could have continued painting the way I had before, where my work was widely appreciated and most of it was sold, but I wanted to go further inward. I wanted my heart to speak in its purest form through unfiltered, intuitive, and uninhibited expression."

"As I explored this deeper connection, my recent work began to embody a spiritual power. I felt drawn to the mystical, searching to transcend form and express divinity through my art. Emotionally, this journey resonated deeply with me, and nature played a significant role in my inspiration. The result is a body of work that is completely free from any boundaries, a true reflection of the raw, uncontained emotions I wanted to convey."

Gold, copper and other elements in Laila Khan's art

Laila's show blends ancient wisdom with modern expression, using earthy elements like sand, gold leaf, copper, pigment and acrylic in abstract composition.

Was there a conscious choice behind picking the materials? The artist detailed how she decided on the materials. She said, "Gold plays a prominent role in my work because, for me, it represents celebration. In India, gold is commonly used in religious art and during festive occasions, and since I view my art as a celebration, it naturally becomes a part of my expression. Gold also carries profound spiritual significance, is used in worship and is a prominent feature in Renaissance and Baroque art. In Indian traditions, it appears in Hindu paintings, Buddhist art, and Tanjore paintings, all of which have deeply influenced me."

"I also incorporate sand, which I sculpt directly onto the canvas. My work is intentionally multilayered and sculptural because, in this digital age where images are easily captured, I feel it's important to preserve the tactile, handmade quality of art. The physicality of my work invites interaction with the surface, making the experience more engaging and immersive. This approach introduces a human touch, evoking a deeper emotional response."

"Nature is a profound influence on my art, which is why light plays such a crucial role in my pieces. I prefer working with natural light, as it enhances the depth and essence of my work. Additionally, I have a strong passion for pigments," added Laila, who takes great pleasure in creating her own colours to control her art.

Laila Khan on mother Sundri Khan's influence

Laila Khan opted for art while her brother Fardeen Khan joined the film industry. She credits her mother as the pillar of support in her artistic journey.

"My mother, Sundri Khan, is largely responsible for me being an artist today. She recognised my talent very early on and told me outright, 'You are going to be an artist, and you must continue because you're good.'"

The exhibition will open with an exclusive preview on April 4, 2025, at Snowball Studio. It will be open to the public on April 5 and 6 before continuing at Gallery Art and Soul from April 16 to 22.