



Nayla Karam's eroticism is a life force that can't be stopped



Lebanese painter Nayla Karam may be playing a role in changing the way people view sexuality in Lebanon. Her explicit and detailed sexual paintings of the female form have fascinated many and created a stir in Beirut. Receiving a lot of mostly positive feedback, Nayla has cracked open the forbidden door of sexuality and the secret lives of women.

"Erotica," her most recent exhibition in Lebanon, took place in April of this year. The idea behind the artist's collection is simple: "It started with my final project at university. I wanted to have an impact on my teachers and really touch them deep down inside their hearts. I knew I was best at nudity, but the whole issue turned out to be quite a vast flight of endless research about human beings and their deepest desires."

The exhibition is very personal to Nayla. Each painting has its own story, its own experience, its own emotion – but each share the same soul. From a technical perspective, the composition is dynamic and strong. Every colour and each geometrical figure refers to a fragile desire in the mind of women. "It's fascinating to see people's reactions," she says, "I believe everyone imagines the painting depending on their needs and personal experiences."

Rather than superficially focusing on the naked form, Nayla's work conveys a deeper meaning. "The composition, the angles, the positions that my models are displayed in is a pure message of eroticism, but the spirit and beliefs hold a strong concept for humanity," explains the young artist, who has been studying the female form for over five years. "The woman is a beautiful symbol in life. The lines, the curves, and the circles she has been shaped in are all an expression of beauty. This beauty completes the sexuality and the desires hidden in the human mind."

Although Lebanese society is still very conservative, particularly with regards to sex and sexuality, Nayla believes it is akin to the air we breathe – something that can never be locked away. "Sexuality is something that has been a part of history. It has passed through difficulties and obstacles, just as any issue has. But nowadays, humans have stronger personalities, more exposure to culture and education, which can fight negative labels. Sexuality is a must in each and every person," she says.

But there is consolation. "Art is everything that makes the world a better place," she enthuses. "It is my source in life and what keeps me going. I was told that my pieces were very interesting... I didn't receive any criticism, except for one negative comment by a religious person who obviously came to the wrong place at the wrong time. I would never expect these people to understand because they need to learn a lot about humans before religion. I don't blame them, as everyone has the right to believe as they choose. I am a believer, but a smart one. God created a brain for humans to use and not to follow, be hypnotised, and unaware of the world we are in."