



INDIA TODAY

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FROM HERITAGE-INSPIRED TO
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CELEBRATING THE FEMALE FORM

Lyla Freechild's beautiful blue pottery pieces draw a parallel between objects of beauty and the objectification of women

By RIDHI KALE

She always felt a strong connection to Persia. Turquoise has arrested her attention for as long as she can remember and the Persian belt has captured her imagination for years. Turkey was the first country she visited outside India. Then in 2014 a friend introduced her to Turkish stoneware art. It was a match made in design heaven. "After all this how could I have remained separated from the most beautiful craft of blue pottery that has Turko-Persian roots?" says artist Lyla Freechild (originally called Chetna Arora, she rechristened herself as Lyla, which is a Persian name). The 28-year-old, who calls Jaipur her home wanted to celebrate sexuality and the body in its natural form so she collaborated with e-commerce website Fanusta (she is now its creative head) to come up with a vivid range of ceramics celebrating the female form.

What's the story?

My practice revolves around exploring ideas of gender and sexuality. Unlike the male gaze, my art is about normalising the feminine body



and reducing its regular objectification. Sometimes, my figures can shock you or make you feel uncomfortable, but they take people out of their comfort zone and look at a woman's body anew. By creating deep and narrative works on conventional pottery, I intend to juxtapose mundane objects with women's narratives.

Materials used?

Quartz stone powder, powdered glass, borax, tree gum, sodium carbonate and *multani mitti* (Fuller's Earth).

What do you retail?

Blue pottery articles that mainly include plates, platters, bowls, mugs, hooks,





coasters, tiles, vases and accessories. My favourites are the recently created blue pottery statement necklaces, a vase titled *Self in Making*, a platter titled, *Mandala of Bodies* and blue pottery silver nose pins.

Designing a piece

Whether it's a 5mm bead or a 36" vase, it passes through 42 manual processes and takes a minimum of five to seven days to create. Larger objects take about 15 to 20 days, depending on the weather. Each piece needs to dry in the sun before goin through the next process.

Off-beat techniques used

Painting with my menstrual fluid and capturing the beauty of nudity are significant to my practice.

Challenges faced along the way?

Weather plays a key role in practicing the craft of blue pottery. It can only be practiced in dry and hot climate, so during monsoons which generally last from mid-June till mid-September there is no work. However, lot of back-end work happens like preparation of colours and moulds. Apart from weather, another major challenge is the lack of artisans. The older generation is vanishing and the younger generation isn't willing to take up this craft as it's manual, which makes it



Artist Lyla Freechild (above) designs blue pottery bowls, platters, plates, vases and mugs that highlight the female form



pretty laborious. Not everyone is inspired to work with this craft as it requires lots of patience.

Why have you collaborated with Fanusta?

Unlike other e-commerce websites, I resonated with Fanusta's vision of honouring the artists and supporting them by bringing their art to local as well as a global audience. Fanusta is not only a creative enterprise but a patron in modern times that not only sustains and revives dying crafts.

PRICE ₹600 to ₹15,000
AT www.fanusta.com

