

A brush with Gayatri Devi

JAIDEEP MERHOTRA
recalls painting the late
Maharani for possibly
her last portrait

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ALMOST six years ago, Maharani Gayatri Devi posed for a photo shoot to be used for possibly her last portrait made by Jaideep Merhotra. "She was very reluctant to get any of her portraits made. And even I don't do portraits, so I was reluctant as well. But Maureen Wadia convinced both the parties to get this portrait made," recalls Jaideep.

He adds, "Initially, I was-



Jaideep Merhotra with Maharani Gayatri Devi and her portrait

n't sure if she wanted to get her portrait of the current look. Also, I wasn't sure whether she would want me

to make her portrait as many renowned French artists have made her portraits earlier. But she agreed.

I wanted to capture her current look and also portray the royalty, grandeur and inner beauty of the Maharani. In fact, she also signed the portrait and so the portrait has two signatures on it."

Jaideep recalls the evening that he spent with the Maharani. "We had dinner together and she signed a copy of her memoirs for me. She was someone who lived life to the fullest."

The portrait was later auctioned at a high-profile event in Mumbai. "It was won by the company who designed a range of diamond jewellery in tribute of Maharani Gayatri Devi. And in the same event, the Maharani also broke into the famous song, *Diamonds Are A Girl's Best Friend*."