

# marwa ADEL

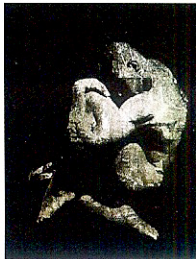
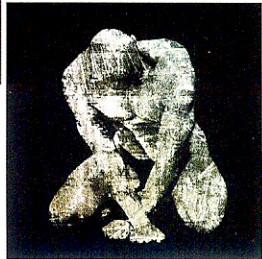
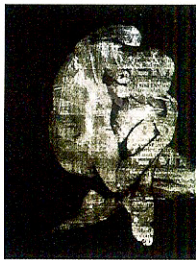
## GOING GRAPHIC

With her graphic take on the female form and daring digitally enhanced photography, Marwa Adel is fast becoming one of Cairo's hottest new artists. Enigma's Perihan Kharma meets the 26 year-old maverick and mother...



Marwa Adel self-portrait

**I**t's a cold afternoon on a little street in Zamalek and we're waiting for up and coming contemporary artist Marwa Adel. With no idea what Adel is going to look like, we try to guess. Having seen Adel's work, we're expecting the whole nine yards. Will she be goth? Will she be achingly hip? Will she arrive in sweats, splattered in paint? Interviewing artists is always unknown territory, but in this case we're wrong on all counts. When Marwa arrives she is pretty, petite, dressed casually and most surprisingly, she is veiled.



This was a shock because Adel's work is anything but conservative. Her pictures take traditional elements and warp and twist them to create achingly modern pieces that are oriental and edgy. Nudes wrapped in calligraphy, a young feminine black boy with his face covered in words and flowers surrounding his head; her pieces are subtly sexual, liberal and avant-garde.

Coming from a modest background, Adel's work does not evoke traditions; it is surprisingly bold and audacious. A stark contrast to how she looks, even how she carries herself. She is honest when she speaks about everything; from wearing her veil to how she got started in the art world.

Adel, 26, is already married, has a baby and a blossoming name in the art world. She has exhibited at Safar Khan, sold out her art and enjoyed rave reviews. She is now working on her sophomore exhibition at Safar Khan and is showcasing her art in Dubai in June. Yet she wasn't always sure she would be an artist. "I was studying Marine Biology at Cairo University, but a friend of mine was studying fine arts. So I sat down on a computer and kind of fiddled with PhotoShop and it grew from there. I

experimented with what I could do and developed my own style."

Adel takes pictures of textures and people, draws the calligraphy and inputs it all into the computer where she creates a fascinating final piece. Her work is a compilation of photography, mixed media, sketching and graphic design. And her works reflect the inner conflict many Egyptians have; where they act one way but look another way. The poetry in her calligraphy also exemplifies her willingness to court controversy. Adel expresses herself in her paintings, and says her paintings portray someone tied down and oppressed within the constraints of society. "We live in a constraining society where there are a lot of double standards, especially when it comes to women," says Adel. "My art is about showing them in a different light in which female beauty doesn't have to be objectified."

**"I want to show women in a different light in which female beauty doesn't have to be objectified"**



Her inspirations mainly lie in Renaissance art and its full figured women and intricate backgrounds are echoed in her pieces. This element is at once nostalgic and very, very modern. Pain, pride and petulance are all recurring themes in her work. "When people see my work they are surprised I'm veiled, but I've never let it get in the way. I do everything my way," she says with a smile that is both innocent and decidedly wicked... much like her art. ■

