



Words by Hafsa Lodi, Photography by Atif Abu-Samra

Hippie Clinic

Reema Al Banna invites Velvet into her Sharjah home to talk spring style and her fledgling label

With her blonde hair styled in loose summer waves, Reema Al Banna embodies everything about the women she hopes will feel as passionate about her label, Reemami, as she does. Wearing a white top from her upcoming Autumn Winter collection, teamed with her best-selling nude 'spiky pants' the 25-year-old style maven is a name to watch on the local design scene and her outfit is a fitting introduction to a designer who loves to play with textures, shapes and cuts. Warm and relaxed, with a boho vibe and hint of 'haute hippie' about her, she invites us to her workshop, a fashion enclave within her gorgeous Sharjah home, comprised of hard wood floors, bold checked wallpaper, set off with pops of lime green. Much of her time is spent within these bright walls, where she shuts out exterior distractions and truly gets down to business. "When I'm in a designing mood I can sit here for hours and work, I won't want to socialise, or do anything else," she says as gives us a guided tour. A clothing rack stands cluttered with an eclectic mix of her past, present and in-the-process designs. A bright orange dress, which acted as the launch pad to her fashion career, hangs at the front. "This was one of my entries for the S*uce boutique 'design a dress' contest in 2009," she says. She had seen an advert promoting the contest while flipping through a newspaper almost three-years ago, was intrigued, and on a whim decided to enter. Though she didn't win, S*uce buyers saw potential in her unique dresses, and asked Reema to design an exclusive collection for the store. From there, the Reemami brand was born, and the rest, as they say, is history. When she needs some fresh air or a change of scene, Reema heads to her garden for inspiration and sits by her swimming pool. Surrounded by white antique-style furniture



with palm trees and red, white, and fuschia bougainvilleas in full bloom, Reema completes the picturesque image of a designer in her natural setting. Back indoors, the young designer with a love of all things floral gives us an exclusive look at her upcoming Autumn Winter collection. A pink and white dress, incorporating a peplum skirt and cut-outs, immediately jumps out as a signature piece. But she's not only inspired by the great outdoors. Reema is a gypsy at heart, albeit a very well-dressed one, and ideas and inspiration often come to her while she's sitting in her car. A designer on the go, she acts as her own muse for her current collection, as she sees herself as something of a contemporary gypsy. Pansy-printed pants, an asymmetrical collar-less blazer, a tailored romper, and a skirt splattered with gold stars are just some of the striking pieces in store for Reemami fans this season. "I wanted to clean up the gypsy image," says Reema. "I thought, 'how would the modern, elegant gypsy dress? She likes to be edgy but classy, and doesn't mind dressing up in the mornings.'" Very much like the designer herself. For Autumn Winter 2012, Reema tells us to expect something slightly more sophisticated than her previous collections, but still stamped with Reemami's signature spirited romance. After all, though she might mature and one day settle, a gypsy never loses touch with her chic and capricious style.

*Reemami is available at S*uce stores across the Middle East*