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BODY LANGUAGE

A new Lebanese magazine prepares to bare all



It's sold in specially sealed envelopes or couriered to your home to – by the founder's own admission – avoid the censors. Yet, she insists that *Jasad*, or 'Body', is not a pornographic magazine.

"It is a project related to the Body: the body of life, the body of the mind," says Lebanese editor-in-chief Joumana Haddad (pictured). "It's about the arts, literatures and sciences of the body in Arabic, and all orchestrated by an Arab woman. Our aim is to inquire into the consciousness of the body – and its unconscious." Come again?

This elevated explanation is no surprise, given Haddad's pedigree. The poet, author and critic edits the cultural page of prestigious Lebanese newspaper *An Nahar*, and oversees a literary prize.

Her new magazine sits somewhere between a racy literary publication and an Arabic take on Britain's *Erotic Review*. The launch issue ran pieces on everything from foot fetishism to cannibalism, with suitably stimulating works of art. Though Lebanon has stringent obscenity laws, these aren't as rigorous as other parts of the Arab world. Besides, says Haddad, *Jasad's* aim isn't to titillate, but to restore the venerable body culture, which once thrived in the Middle East, Mahgreb and Asia Minor." She adds: "Some of the things written in Arabic a long time ago would make the Marquis de Sade blush. Now even the word 'breast' in Arabic would be shocking in certain circles." To protect its image, the magazine is priced at \$130 for four issues.

Alex Rayner

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