

Egyptian comic book artists are w their way out of censorship

"It wasn't just a political revolution, it was also an artistic revolution. This is reflected in th

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Twins Cartoon

Twins Cartoon is the pseudonym of Cairo-based identical twin cartoonist Mohamed and Haitham El-seht.



“Comics is storytelling, comics is acting, comics is writing – everything. C says Mohammed El-Seht of Cairo-based cartoon duo [Twins Cartoon](#).

Before 2008, comic artists and street artists in Cairo were underground. [revolution took hold](#), emboldening the people of Egypt, creatives came c threat of censorship and violence from the government and a conservati

Mohammed explained it best at [the Design Indaba Festival in 2016](#) when how to (sic) express our rights through demonstration against authority b demonstration. It wasn’t just a political revolution, it was also an artistic re in the art scene of Egypt.”

But now, over a year since their appearance at Design Indaba, the disillu

When we meet up with the twin cartoonists, Mohammed and Haitham, w country visit to North Africa to uncover how design, creativity and innova better world.

As part of the journey we documented stories from people like 25-year-old designer [Amna Elshande](#) Africa-inspired garments to bridge the gap between African identity and Middle Eastern identity, an e held by many Egyptians.

We met [Dina Amin](#), a tinkerer who builds machines using junk and promotes them using stop animat most polluted countries in the world.

We also spent time in the historic Downtown Cairo with [Omar Nagati](#), an architect and activist who b architecture is as much a part of the livelihood of the city as big-budget urban developments.

With each of them, we see the limit to what a political revolution on its own can accomplish and the s ahead despite feeling deflated.

“Actually, after the revolution, many people started to make comics, graffiti and photography. They st everything is for us, we own the street we own the comic magazine, we own everything,” explains M

“But it was fake, maybe the revolution was real, but what they feel was fake because the revolution c can be a good tool to keep going and struggling. From my point of view, we still have more and mor

Their work did indeed begin in earnest after the Arab Spring. Following in the footsteps of other Egy magazines like [Toktok](#) and [Shakmagia](#), Mohammed and Haithem launched [Garage Magazine](#) in 2015 and publication.



They also co-founded the [CairoComix Festival](#) in the same year and have since been involved in numerous comic book projects including [the first English edition of Garage Magazine](#) with Design Indaba, which

Their work is humorous, vibrant and reflective of traditional Arabic dialect, making it relatable to the Egyptian audience. For their subject matter, the two seem wearied by politics.

There is more to Egypt than sexual harassment and a failed revolution, they tell me as we weave our way through the frenetic Tahrir Square.

Mohammed and Haithem lead us to a street cafe in a back alley and we settle alongside the locals who are eating and smoking hookah even though it's 12am on a Tuesday. The streets only begin to empty and they explain.

To me, the city seems to always be in a frenzy, with the day's gridlock often indistinguishable from the night. Artists, [Farid Nagy](#) captures this feverish energy in New Adam, a short comic included in the first edition of the magazine. It's about a man who leaves an idyllic life for the city.

Initially, he falls for the fast food, fast cars and quick money but soon he loses interest, finding that life in the city is just another of Nagy's shorts, Bubble, he tells the story of people who are inattentive to the problems facing them until those problems begin affecting them.

"We live in Cairo; it's a very crowded city and it has its own social problems," says Nagy when we speak about the city. "It's good inspiration. There is a lot of problems such as the crowded places and sexual harassment



Themes like the city, relationships, politics and identity are all part of Garage Magazine's offering large and Haithem allow their comics to interpret a theme as they please.

"We give the artists the freedom to do what they want to do because it's not a dictatorship," says Mohamed. "It's without censorship. It's important for us to do without censorship."

Censorship is still a growing concern in Egypt with the country banning scores of websites in [a recent media](#). This recent push to curb dissent makes art collectives like Garage even more valuable as the oppressive regime but at the people, asking them to challenge their own beliefs about daily life in Egypt.

"I don't have a fear of the regime or the government," says Mohammed. "I always have a fear of the people because many of them are not employed and don't have an education. So if you make something that is out of the box, something they are not used to having, they just come and make censorship by themselves."

WATCH THE TALK WITH TWINS CARTOON



Twins Cartoon on comics as power, beauty and expression

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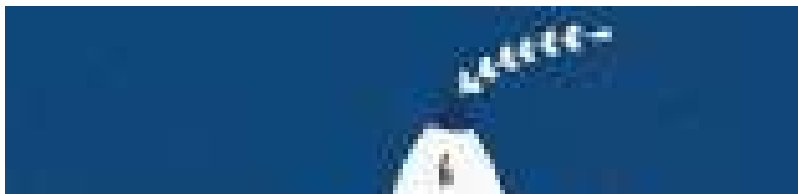
Identical twin brothers Mohamed and Haitham El-seht are at the heart of Egypt's creative scene.

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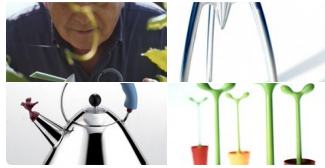


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