

# Oum Cartoon أم كرتون



01/28/16

## Caricature & Comics From Egypt, Mother of the World

Egypt detains ex-presidential candidate, latest in arrest series | Reuters <https://t.co/phlznJp6B0>

RT @zapiro: Zapiro's cartoon @dailymaverick (23 May 2017) on USA president Donald Trump's historic visit to Israel - <https://t.co/rlZyJLUdi...>

RT @declanwalsh: "The Politics of Art in the Middle East" - talk by @mideastXmidwest in DC, June 2. <https://t.co/3j0w7Gfk9M> @Eventbrite



[twitter.com/mideastXmidwest](https://twitter.com/mideastXmidwest)



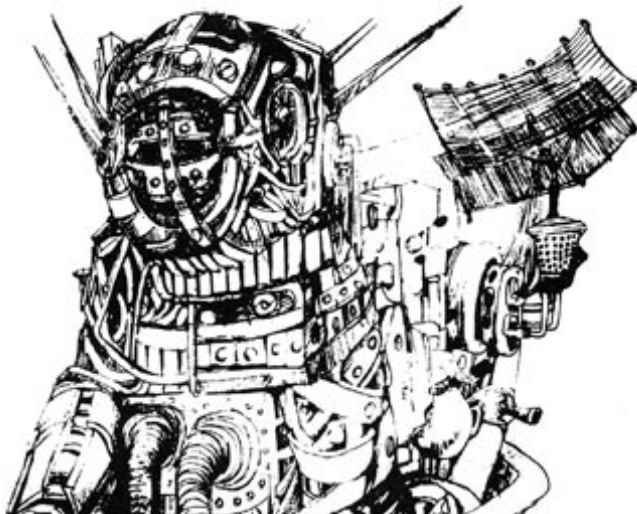
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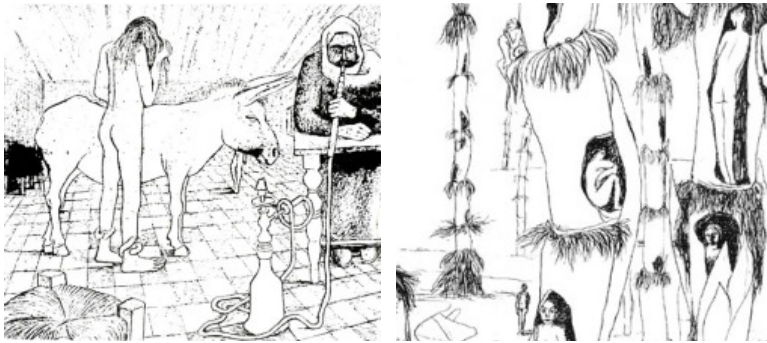
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## Gazzar's Pen

Abdel Hadi El-Gazzar (1925-1965), the great painter of modern Egypt, is known for his colorful expressions of social realism and dystopian visions of anti-social surrealism.

At a small gallery currently on display at Cairo's Modern Art Museum, I was taken by Gazzar's pencil and ink drawings, an aspect of his practice that has not received as much attention as his canvases. (The cache of images above was retrieved from the museum's website.)

Gazzar's vivid pen strokes project intense movement and stillness, techniques sometimes seen in comic art. I wrote in a [recent blog post](#) that the drawings of Egyptian surrealists in the 1930's and 1940's have influenced the alternative comix movement sweeping Egypt. Indeed some of Gazzar's grotesques would not be out of place in contemporary zines or graphic novels.



Photograph of Abdel Hadi El-Gazzar working on his painting *The Past, the Present and the Future*, c. 1951. via *Frieze*.

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Gazzar's **political activism** is crucial to understanding his playful approach to class and technology. Of his creations, the art historian Clare Davies **writes**:

*This world is threateningly irrational and sensual, infused with animistic magic and populated by djinn, fortune tellers and madmen. Gazzar's paintings and drawings of the period rely on a vocabulary of class-inflected human types – modern Egypt's 'others' drawn in outline – rendered in an exotic underworld, yet somehow retaining a specificity and agency that complicates the civilizing narrative so central to Egyptian art of the period.*

We see this in "Spirit World" (top), where visitors rest their heads on the tombs of contemporary mummies. The disproportioned extremities force the viewer to take a double or triple take.



Detail of "Spirit World."

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Also of note: Gazzar illustrated a series of poems, including many by Ahmed Morsi.

The result is a turbulent page that, for this reader, can be neatly described as the proto-alt-comic.