

broken as old works are plastered and painted over by the new. A visual topography forms as these layers grow and can only be understood by taking an on-the-ground approach. Guided by Zooba founders Chris Khalifa, Adam Mourad, and Omar Mobarek, &Walsh was taken through the city, away from the theatrics and visual contrivances of popular tourist destinations.

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Jessica Walsh, founder of &Walsh, says there was as an unintended and undeniable beauty to much of what the team saw, and a wealth of possibilities within these graphic and typographic interactions and intersections. Posters plastered over painted type, illustrated murals alongside geometric tiles, and color-blocked walls next to the detail of wall-hung rugs. These unique moments generated hundreds of photos, sparked many more ideas, and ignited plenty of conversations as the creative teams of both Zooba and &Walsh travelled through the city streets together.

Initially, a disparity exists between the unplanned nature of the visual culture that gives character to Cairo, and the systematic and codified

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nature of visual identity systems. However, through an abundant and what appears as an almost randomized assembly of image, type, color, and pattern, much of the energy, serendipity, and life of the references are retained. Zooba’s visual identity thus has the immediacy and loud character that feels fitting for NYC, yet retains much of the intersectional nuance of Cairo. It is clearly a product of a direct experience and an observational aptitude, but also a collaborative openness.

“We worked with a Cairo-based calligraphy artist to paint the Arabic type for the branding. We layered this with modern versions of patterns and illustrations inspired by the streets of Cairo. Just like their food is a modern twist on traditional classics, we aimed to do this with the visual language.”

Working with Mohamed Mohamed, known for his typographic painting of Cairo foul carts, the studio solidified the cultural bridge between countries, teams, and creatives by embracing commissioning over imitation. Photographs of organic paint strokes by Mohamed Mohamed were scanned in and applied over vector-based compositions to bring to life the juxtapositions that are present throughout the city. This also extends to the typeface with small