Cover Art Concept

Artist’s Note
How can any work of art fully capture what exists beyond the work—personal experience and emotion? I aim for evocative imagery that charges the soul and pierces our beings. I have found that the determination to live (love, really) is mirrored in nature. The rose, for example, lives despite the crushing boots of time and war. So do women, despite having their hearts trampled on, wits driven into walls of insanity, and wisdom thrown asunder as female folly. Women constantly thread the needle of hope. They have laid bare man’s truest follies, his deepest lies, and his most terrible terrors. With this in mind, I see the female form, her hidden world, her inner rose in bloom. In my painting Flowers, conceived as a commentary on the women of my Syrian homeland and their generativity, there is balance between what is seen and unseen—the hidden is as impactful as the revealed. Taking my inspiration from Gustave Courbet’s L’origine du monde, I reveal sources of nourishment and birth. What of the origin herself? Her acts of giving birth, preparing for intercourse? My Syrian woman knows herself. Her truth is her beauty. Between those things lies a calm uneasiness, an awkward elegance and, yes, life itself. —Suhair Sibai (suhairsibai@gmail.com)

Editor’s Note
Flowers, the vibrant painting by Suhair Sibai that graces the cover of this issue, evokes ideas present, absent, and hinted at in the issue’s content. That sex and sexuality are intimate and public concerns is as true for imperial, colonial, and racist projects as it is for decolonizing ones. The image foregrounds a woman’s body connected with nature as cultivating ground and outcome. It expresses a willful sexuality, her vagina as a site of pleasure rather than symbolic of the negative. The image illustrates as only art can how at the heart of decolonization are imagination, joy, and affirmation of life. —Frances S. Hasso