

About the cover art *This issue's cover art comes from Rajkamal Kahlon's ambitious series Did You Kiss the Dead Body? (2012). The pink-red marbled document is an autopsy report, labeled "Exhibit #16," augmented with two ink drawings of a muscular male body—illustrations akin to what one would find in a Renaissance-era medical textbook. In both depictions, the body wears a kind of slip dress that barely covers the genitals. On the left, the body without a head seems to be in the process of undressing or turning over a flap of skin to reveal an interior network of veins and other body parts. The arms of both bodies read as active insofar as they seem to be taut, pulling down the slip or skin. The drawings, however, are clearly images of a cadaver: a representation of a twenty-four-year-old detainee who, as the text reads, "died as a result of MYOCARDITIS (inflammation of the heart)." While the report states that there is "no evidence of significant trauma and that the manner of death was natural," the opened eyes of the skeletal head of the body on the right suggest otherwise. Throughout the document are official stamps and bits of bureaucratic text, with some words redacted. Rose pink and peach splotches that could be perceived as contours of a heart overlay the drawing.*

A mixed-media work consisting of text, collage, and autobiography, Did You Kiss the Dead Body? makes visible racialized men whose deaths might otherwise be ignored or erased out of history. Kahlon's drawings serve to augment the archival document's secular memorial function, imbuing these documents about torture—death certificates and autopsy reports of illegally detained Iraqi and Afghan men who died in US custody, mostly obtained via Freedom of Information Act requests—with cultural meaning and value. The series was conceived in 2009 in Berlin and led to a residency at the American Civil Liberties Union's National Security Project in New York.

Rajkamal Kahlon is the recipient of numerous grants and awards from both US and German foundations, including a Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant, a Pollock-Krasner grant, a Stiftung Kunstfonds artist grant, a Goethe-Institut artist fellowship, and a Lambert Foundation artist award. In 2019 she was awarded the Villa Romana Prize. Her work has been exhibited widely in North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, including at the 2012 Taipei Biennial, Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Queens Museum, and Bronx Museum of the Arts. For more information about Kahlon's work, please see www.rajkamalkahlon.com.

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Cover

Rajkamal Kahlon

Autopsy No.: ME04-38; pp. 1–11: The teeth
appear natural and in good condition

2012

Ink on marbled autopsy report

8.5 × 11 in.