

*Hope*, by Suleiman Mansour

art selection and comment by [Lil Copan](#) in the [August 25, 2021](#) issue



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In the art world, he is familiarly called Sliman. Younger Palestinian painters revere him. For more than 40 years, working in occupied lands, Suleiman Mansour has taught, led, and engaged in creative work that brings together art forms, cultural legacy, and a record of a land and a people. A Palestinian Christian, he embeds in his work recurring themes and designs drawn from Islam. As the magazine *emel* puts it, "Islam is not only part of his culture but also his identity."

During the First Intifada, when Palestinians were cut off from basic supplies, Mansour helped lead an artists' movement using the materials of the land itself. Some of his best-known works are from this time and incorporate mud. Whether an image of Palestinians marching with paintbrushes and pens and flags or the symbol of a dove above a land, Mansour colors each image with hope—for peace, for restoration.

"Listen," he says, "we must—you *must*—honor these people, you must find justice pulling at your heart, you must work for peace." Asked about the intention behind his art, he responds, "Art is our situation. When you don't have a homeland . . . and when people deny your existence. So art is a form of saying we are here. We have long roots here. [Art] gives home to the homeless."