



March 29, 2018

Ms. Suzanna Tamminen  
Director and Editor in Chief  
Wesleyan University Press  
215 Long Lane  
Middletown, CT 06459 USA

Re: Rana Hamadeh, *The Ten Murders of Josephine*, 2017, installation, opera and libretto

Dear Ms. Suzanne Tamminen,

I am writing in response to your letter, dated March 21, 2018 and sent to me via email on March 22, 2018, where you express the concerns of M. NourbeSe Philip, author of *Zong!*, on the art project by visual artist Rana Hamadeh, *The Ten Murders of Josephine* which was commissioned and exhibited by the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art ("WdW").

WdW is a state-funded contemporary art foundation with an exhibition space in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Since its foundation in 1990, this non-profit foundation has worked with hundreds of visual artists, showcasing their art and at times commissioning new work from them. WdW is also engaged in interpreting art and culture through critical education programming and scholarly publishing initiatives.

In 2016, WdW invited Rana Hamadeh to participate in its program. Hamadeh accepted our invitation and proposed her art project, *The Ten Murders of Josephine*. WdW accepted her proposal. *The Ten Murders of Josephine* consists of an art installation exhibited at WdW from September 8, 2017 to December 31, 2017, and an opera, with accompanying libretto, staged on December 14-15, 2017 at a neighboring institution, Theatre Rotterdam. Preceding the exhibition and opera was a study group conceptualized by Rana Hamadeh and held at WdW from November 3, 2016 to June 29, 2017.

As mentioned to you in my e-mail of March 22, 2018, *The Ten Murders of Josephine* took place before I took the directorship at WdW this past January 2018. Therefore, in order to prepare this response to your letter, I met several times with Rana Hamadeh, who lives in Rotterdam to read and discuss your letter, as well as to discuss the components of *The Ten Murders of Josephine* that were part of the installation, opera and libretto commissioned by WdW. I also corresponded with Defne Ayas, former director of WdW and curator of *The Ten Murders of Josephine*, and conversed with several team members of WdW who were involved in the production of Hamadeh's art project.

With this in mind, please note my responses to your questions and requests e-mailed to me on March 21, 2018 (your questions are cited here in bold).

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***We would like to know if the gallery asked to see permissions? If there were no permissions for this use, why did you go ahead? Is it clear that Hamadeh knew that she needed to obtain permission, but when it wasn't granted, she went forward anyway.***

In the summer of 2017, Rana Hamadeh initially thought about using the typography of Zong! to create a musical score for one of the components of *The Ten Murders of Josephine*. At the advice of WdW, on July 31, 2017, Rana Hamadeh approached M. NourbeSe Philip to request permission for developing that idea. M. NourbeSe Philip's response to Hamadeh's request came on August 1, 2017, and September 2, 2017.

By that second date, Rana Hamadeh explains that she had reconsidered her initial idea and, in the end, did not materialize her artwork as it was initially proposed or described to M. NourbeSe Philip. Rana Hamadeh did not inform M. NourbeSe Philip about this nor did she communicate to Philip the form that *The Ten Murders of Josephine* was taking or had taken ever since they exchanged emails in the summer of 2017.

Rana Hamadeh informed me that she regrets not having followed-up with Philip in a timely manner. She said having emailed M. NourbeSe Philip again on March 22, 2018. In that email, Rana Hamadeh approached M. NourbeSe Philip to invite her to participate in a public program with her at Lafayette Anticipations, an arts foundation and venue in Paris. (Only a couple of hours later, Rana Hamadeh received your letter from Wesleyan University Press on behalf of M. NourbeSe Philip, addressed to me and she in c.c.)

#### ***Acknowledge receipt of this letter***

I sent an email response on March 22, 2018 acknowledging the receipt of your letter.

#### ***Tell us if pages of Zong! were used in this installation as is suggested by Hamadeh's request***

No, they were not included in the installation at WdW.

***Provide a written apology and place this on your website and in all instances where the project appears, and include this credit line: "This work was inspired by the book Zong! by M.NourbeSe Philip. The book was a major influence and reference, forming an important theoretical and affective scaffolding within the work. Zong! by M.NourbeSe Philip as told to the author by Setaey Adamu Boateng, was published in 2011 by Wesleyan University Press, Middletown CT, US; copyright is held by M. NourbeSe Philip."***

Yes, at WdW we can comply with your request for partial accreditation. Our only suggestion is to include a slight edit, since Rana Hamadeh has been inspired by other works, too. This is the suggested credit line:

*The Ten Murders of Josephine* by Rana Hamadeh was inspired and informed by several historical, literary and cinematic works. Among these is the book *Zong!* by M.NourbeSe Philip, which, according to

Rana Hamadeh, "helped form an important theoretical and affective scaffolding within her work." *Zong!* by M.NourbeSe Philip as told to the author by Setaey Adamu Boateng, was published in 2011 by Wesleyan University Press, Middletown CT, US; copyright is held by M. NourbeSe Philip. Click [here](#) for more information on *Zong!*

Please consider the above credit line and let me know if we include that in the dedicated web-page of The Ten Murders of Josephine in the WdW website.

***Mail copies of the project's libretto and book to us at the address on this letterhead***

Yes, we will mail by post the three items WdW published on this project, and also include them here as PDF for your perusal:

Visitor's Guide – Fall 2017 published by Witte de With

On pages 4-5, it includes a text written by Rana Hamadeh about The Ten Murders of Josephine

Libretto

A graphic score with artwork by Rana Hamadeh

Playbill

With a text by Rana Hamadeh and credits on the opera participants; the cover of the playbill is the Libretto artwork

***We respectfully request that until all of the above actions have been taken, that you not exhibit this work again and that it be removed from the website*** ([http://www.wdw.nl/en/our\\_program/exhibitions/rana\\_hamadeh\\_the\\_ten\\_murders\\_of\\_josephine](http://www.wdw.nl/en/our_program/exhibitions/rana_hamadeh_the_ten_murders_of_josephine)).

As said, the installation and opera were presented at Witte de With in 2017 and is no longer on display here at WdW. At WdW, the website is considered part of our educational mission and programmed as an archive of projects. Our website is not simply approached or used as a publicity platform. For this reason, I consider it important that every project, program and event presented at WdW is documented in the website. For these reasons, and because we believe this situation to have been caused by a misunderstanding, we would be happy to include accreditation language on our website as we suggest above.

***Lastly, we would like to discuss with you and Hamadeh a reasonable fee for use of the material, particularly in light of her being awarded the Prix de Rome.***

The WdW is not part of, nor was or is involved in, the Prix de Rome's jury, exhibition or publication featuring and awarding Rana Hamadeh.

Should you require more information from WdW, please do not hesitate to ask. Thank you in advance for your consideration to this letter. We look forward to your response.

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Sincerely,



Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy

Director

**The following items are gathered as support materials to this letter, and can be downloaded here:** <https://we.tl/WR9L49HjAp>

1. PDF Visitor's Guide - Fall 2017 published by Witte de With
2. PDF of the Libretto of The Ten Murders of Josephine, with art by Rana Hamadeh, published by WdW
3. PDF of the Playbill of The Ten Murders of Josephine, with art and texts by Rana Hamadeh, published by WdW
4. PDF presenting screenshots of the four webpages (published in 2016-2017 and not updated since) in [www.wdw.nl](http://www.wdw.nl) dedicated to *The Murders of Josephine*:

[http://www.wdw.nl/en/our\\_program/long\\_term/the\\_ten\\_murders\\_of\\_josephine](http://www.wdw.nl/en/our_program/long_term/the_ten_murders_of_josephine)

[http://www.wdw.nl/en/our\\_program/exhibitions/rana\\_hamadeh\\_the\\_ten\\_murders\\_of\\_josephine](http://www.wdw.nl/en/our_program/exhibitions/rana_hamadeh_the_ten_murders_of_josephine)

[http://www.wdw.nl/en/our\\_program/events/the\\_ten\\_murders\\_of\\_josephine](http://www.wdw.nl/en/our_program/events/the_ten_murders_of_josephine)

[http://www.wdw.nl/en/our\\_program/events/sisters\\_in\\_crime\\_murdering\\_josephine](http://www.wdw.nl/en/our_program/events/sisters_in_crime_murdering_josephine)

cc: Rana Hamadeh; Prix de Rome jury