

The Ten Murders of Josephine is a multi-programme operatic project commissioned by Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art with artist Rana Hamadeh. This longstanding project is structured through a series of study groups, an exhibition, a theatrical production, and a publication – among other evolving iterations. It follows a particular dramaturgy of research and labour processes that over-write and complicate one another, not only culminating in an Opera on stage, but being *operatic* in their very negotiation of the performative and the spectacular, and their institutional carriages.

Inherited from the genre of legal spectacle in part, and from Hamadeh's earlier claims viewing justice as the 'measure to which one can access theatre', The Ten Murders of Josephine brings forth a new intuition: It proposes a distinction between the workings of 'testimony' and constitution of testimonial **subjecthood**, generating with that a discourse on the relations of the phonic and the phonemic to the notions of property, labour, legality, governmentality, documentality, *is*aurality and theatre. It asks, what it means to emerge as a 'testimonial subject', not only outside the bounds of the court of law, but even more so, in place of the legal subject.

Drawing broadly on historian Saidiya Hartman and poet Fred Moten's writings, Spike Lee's *Bamboozled*, Kafka's *Josephine*, Qura'anic exegesis and Arabic prosody, among other interlocutors, the project explores the phonic materiality of testimonial utterance as the condition of all that is irrational, unspeakable and unutterable; as an archive of the horror that subsists within the documental voice – not as a trace, but *in* and *despite* the trace. *The testimonial* becomes a catalyst that sets up the conditions for vacating our legally constituted bodies; a medium for unlearning citizenship.

The project's development is underwritten by a closed study-group, gathering under the name of Sisters in Crime: Murdering Josephine, comprised of an invited assembly of readers from different fields and practices. [Click here for more details.](#)

The project will be concluded by a book in 2018.