

Press release

Rotterdam, 21 August 2017

## Press Preview and Opening of Fall Exhibitions

Join us at the opening of two new exhibitions at Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam. Following Ögüt & Macuga's first episode, as steered by Ahmet Ögüt (on view until 20 August), **Goshka Macuga** will now take the lead for *Episode 2: The Show is Over*, taking up the notions of destruction and 'sudden change'.

In **Rana Hamadeh's** *The Ten Murders of Josephine*, the artist and the institution have worked closely together to develop an ambitious exhibition with an enveloping sound and text-based opera at its core, performed 14-15 December at Theater Rotterdam, Schouwburg.

**Opening:** Thursday 7 September 2017, 5 pm

**Press Preview:** Thursday 7 September 2017, 4 pm

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Ögüt 🛠 Macuga 🛠

*Episode 2: The Show is Over*

8 September – 31 December 2017



Goshka Macuga, *Colin Powell*, 2011. Photo: Kristien Daem.

“Life knows what it is doing, and if it is striving to destroy, one must not interfere, since by hindering we are blocking the path to a new conception of life that is born within us.” - Kazimir Malevich

In the wake of destruction, the show is over.

This exhibition is the result of Witte de With director **Defne Ayas**’ pairing of two critically engaged artists, **Goshka Macuga** and **Ahmet Ögüt**. Macuga and Ögüt began a conversation, and through a series of coincidences identified parallel references drawn from their shared social concerns, personal stories, and the ideas driving their respective practices, such as their mutual investment in collaboration and interest in the representation of critical thinkers in the global imaginary. Both artists examine each other’s practices, a process subject to misinformation and misunderstandings along the way, as much as a generosity of ideas, commitment of time, and peer-to-peer play.

Early on in Ögüt and Macuga’s preliminary exchange, Macuga proposed to take up the notions of destruction and ‘sudden change’, played out upon the pair’s work using the exhibition space as test-site, as a means to explore processes of reconstruction. Adopting the gesture of destruction, Macuga builds on a rich heritage of artists that have engaged with both destruction as subject, concept, and process, over the years to different degrees; including Kazimir Malevich, Piet Mondrian, Jackson Pollock, Marcel Duchamp, Louise Bourgeois, Michelangelo Antonioni, Ai Weiwei, Gordon Matta-Clark, Steve McQueen, Juan Muñoz, and Thomas Demand.

With *Episode 2 – The Show is Over*, Macuga sets out to question how far destruction can work to critique, protest, and confront the present socio-economic and political predicament. In the face of the recent surge of right-wing, populist, and nationalistic agendas that have come to dominate the current political landscape, *what can be gained by enlisting destruction for social critique but also anarchic, pointless destruction; destruction for the pure pleasure of it?* - as posed by Russell Ferguson in his paper ‘The Show is Over’ (2014), after which the exhibition is named. Further, how far may destruction be invoked to challenge the perceived stability of art and its institutions through transformative processes of shattering, hijacking, and undoing in order to engage in reinvention? In such an exercise, the pair’s work and working relationship is challenged, manifested as, and through, a gesture of drastic change.

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### *The Ten Murders of Josephine*

Rana Hamadeh

8 September – 31 December 2017



Rana Hamadeh, *Can You Make a Pet*. Moscow Biennial performance, 2015.

*The Ten Murders of Josephine* is an Opera project by artist **Rana Hamadeh** structured through several evolving iterations. Preceded by a study group, the exhibition will be followed by a theatrical production premiering at Theater Rotterdam, Schouwbrug (14-15 December, 2017), a publication, and a film.

Conceived as both the spatial realization of Hamadeh's libretto, and the 'factory' and 'assembly line' for the Opera, the exhibition can be approached as a breathing, morphing sonic encampment at Witte de With. It is constituted of a system of interplaying sonic zones where several characters or events manifest as a dramaturgy across a forty-minute looping score. The spatial realization of the Opera's initial score is continuously interrupted by the live processing of the audience's speech; the live interpretations of machines; the daily migrations and displacements of objects across different rooms carried out by Witte de With's staff-turned-actors; performers' public rehearsal; and the ongoing production of props and scenographic objects for the consequent theatrical production, turning Witte de With itself into part of the Opera's materiality.

Drawing broadly on historian Saidiya Hartman and poets NourbeSe Philip and Fred Moten's writings, Hamadeh approaches the notion of the 'testimonial' as a violence not attended to, which materializes – phonically – as a monument to absent speech.

Operatic in both scale and form, the project comes at a pivotal moment in Hamadeh's diverse and urgent practice, coalescing multiple strands of theoretical research in the largest project of her career to date. Loosely based on Kafka's mouse songstress Josephine, it genuinely engenders new modalities of readership and spectatorship, and tests performative dynamics of exhibition making.



Opening 7 September 2017 are the new Fall exhibitions at Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art and TENT Rotterdam, both located in the same building on Witte de Withstraat 50. With free entrance, artist talks, and performances from 5 to 10 pm.

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**Director:** Defne Ayas

**Curatorial team:** Natasha Hoare, Samuel Saelemakers, Rosa de Graaf, Patrick C. Haas

Öğüt & Macuga is in part supported by: Mondriaan Fund; SAHA Association. *The Ten Murders of Josephine* is commissioned by Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam. Co-commissioned by MacM, Ming Contemporary Art Museum, Shanghai. Co-produced by A.P.E (Art Projects Era) and Productiehuis Theater Rotterdam. Production support by Lafayette Anticipations - Fondation d'entreprise Galeries Lafayette and In4Art Collection. Supported by Fonds 21, City of Rotterdam, Mondriaan Fund, Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, and The Arab Fund For Arts and Culture (AFAC).

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### About Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art

Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art is an international public institution with Rotterdam as its home base. Established in 1990, Witte de With explores developments in contemporary art worldwide. Witte de With has been commenting on the social and political predicament since its inception through the presentation of curated exhibitions, symposia, live events, educational programs, and a bold publishing arm.

Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art is supported by the City of Rotterdam and the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (OCW).

### Contact Witte de With

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