
English Translation

The Radiant Dawn of a World Where Everything Is Connected

Eszter Salamon

Monument 0.10: The Living Monument

With *Monument 0.10: The Living Monument*, choreographer Eszter Salamon opens new horizons in the Monument series, initiated in 2014. Invited by Annabelle Bonn ry, Artistic Director of Carte Blanche, Salamon immerses us in archipelagos of constantly (re)arranged images and figures, linked by dynamic threads of fabric, monochrome, electronic music, and voices. An extraordinary beauty to convey—a masterpiece. In this unique interview, we meet the multidisciplinary artist-researcher passionately committed to freedom, whose persistent desire is to usher in the dawn of "everything in relation" and nurture a resilient imagination.

Monument 0.10: The Living Monument is part of an extensive process of transformation that began with the Monument series in 2014.

Yes indeed—in the various Monuments, I explore our relationships with History, and I'm particularly interested in minor histories, those of forgotten or excluded figures from collective memory. My approach is rooted in my position as an artist-researcher rather than as a historian. Through rediscovering documents and employing autobiography, I create fragments of narratives that challenge the grand narratives of official History. History is always written by those in power—shaped by certain perspectives, ideologies, and interests—and I actively seek to question these visions.

When I began the Monument series, I didn't know where it would take me. The series evolved progressively; contexts revealed themselves, and different forms emerged. Creating for the cultural industry is not what primarily interests me. I care much more about subjects and experimentation—especially through interdisciplinarity—which can sometimes take five to ten years. This is true for my research project about Valeska Gert, which recently also took cinematic form. Working with moving images means operating in another space-time, creating new oscillations between past, present, and future.

For me, the fundamental question is: How does choreography create relationships between people, geographies, histories, and artistic practices?

With *The Living Monument*, I seek to create connections through both living and non-living forms, opening up new poetic fiction—a different relationship with ourselves, each other, and the world around us.

On Creating Connections in Art

In many ways, the Monument series is the essence of your artistic practice, continuously creating links—between works and within the works themselves.

This is what always motivates me. This is clearly visible in the danced lecture *Magyar Táncok*, created in 2005 with my mother Erzsébet Salamon, my brother Ferenc Salamon, musicians, and experts in traditional Hungarian dances, dances I extensively practiced in my youth.

I invite audiences to reflect upon the political construction of the body through my own experience. What has my body been subjected to? How was it ideologically and aesthetically “domesticated”? How has my imagination been colonized by classical ballet? My body has been shaped by Hungarian dances, classical ballet techniques, and contemporary dance. How do these questions resonate beyond myself—for spectators, writers, scientists? How are tensions between tradition and modernity negotiated in society?

“Creating connections” inevitably leads me to build narratives and discourses. Wherever there is a body, there is a voice. I have always felt compelled to question—my training in traditional dances and classical ballet, and my contemporary dance experiences in 1990s France. I developed a critical framework to interrogate how bodies are represented, how the spectator’s body is perceived, the gaze, what we choose to see or not see, and the meanings we ascribe to what we see.

This also applies to the work *AND THEN* (2007), based on interviews with other women named Eszter Salamon, creating arbitrary connections between individuals otherwise unrelated except perhaps by geography, fragments of European history, or women's autobiographies.

For me, it's crucial to form relationships with audiences based less on fascination and spectacle, and more on sharing and commonality. Above all, it's about creating meaning and cognitive experiences triggered by the senses. Perhaps this Monument series is the epitome of precisely that.

On the dramaturgy of Monument 0.10: The Living Monument

Regarding *Monument 0.10: The Living Monument*, one immediately notices its distinctive dramaturgy, simultaneously transformational and relational—anchored in physical elements such as “dynamic monochromes,” sounds, drapery, and space. All of this radiates extraordinary, almost contagious beauty. Can you

elaborate on your approach to dramaturgy and the creation of these undefined, highly original figures?

The dramaturgy became increasingly precise as I collaborated with the dancers of Carte Blanche, as well as the technical and artistic teams. When Annabelle Bonn ry, artistic director, proposed that I work with them during the pandemic, I quickly recalled my 2010 research in Brazil on the phenomenon of transfiguration—the exact moment when figures appear and disappear.

For me, it was evident that *The Living Monument* should consist of sequences transforming into each other. The work comprises multiple layers interacting dynamically: the emergence of figures, slowness, interplay of colors and materials, movements within and between bodies, and their density. It was essential that space also undergo transformation, alongside the figures and bodies. This is why I collaborated with James Brandily on the scenographic space, employing recycled fabrics. *The Living Monument* is rooted in the movement of bodies, costumes, masks, materials, scenography, electronic music, and singing. The voices resonate within Carmen Villain’s recomposed electronic music.

Recycling is central to *The Living Monument*. The hallucinations of images, fabrics, or voices express this. Perhaps what's most important isn't what's immediately visible, but what lies behind—the transformations we sense through the slow, dense shifts of bodies and postures, giving the piece its cinematic or dreamlike quality. These postures and figures are evocations, not mere illustrations—they're propelled by a force that continually evolves through the dancers' gestures.

In Monument 0.10: The Living Monument, as in most of your pieces where no articulated language is present, the relational modes offer different ways of creating meaning from an original and ongoing connection between humans and non-humans, between interiority and physicality, between the "signified" and the "signifier."

For me, there are as many possible physicalities as there are forms of language and imagination. I work extensively with the concepts of the "outside" and the "in-between," and especially with the potential for narration. This doesn’t necessarily mean "telling a story." Rather, the imagination is activated between visual and auditory memory, evocation and interpretation, from which multiple relationships can generate a narrative potential. The idea is to create a work open to an indefinite temporality and geography—a work completed through the spectator’s viewpoint. What I create also functions as a pharmakon—something that both allows us to care for each other and that which itself

requires care. This implies that the dancers are deeply invested. The portion of their "embodied" imagination becomes part of the collective imagination that emerges in *The Living Monument*. The expressive power is also concentrated in the masks, which simultaneously create proximity and distance between the bodies of the audience and the dancers.

Monument 0.10 is an enigma with its "re-hallucinated" figures—figures that aren't citations, but rather intensities and potential depth. To allow these figures to emerge, faces are often "buried," making forms and fictions alternately appear and disappear. Relationships intertwine slowly. Perhaps the strength of the performance lies in its kinesthetic quality. Magnetic, it diverts us from straightforward narration, immersing us instead in an effervescence of sensations, movements, and meanings, both individually and collectively. This constitutes the other mode of narration.

On the Wider Implications

At the end of *Sermon du millénaire*, anthropologist Philippe Descola wrote: "...the radiant dawn of a world where everything is in relation will rise." Isn't that precisely *Monument 0.10: The Living Monument*? It opens up!

I dream of it. Clearly, most indigenous peoples never lost "everything in relation." There's so much to learn from their practices and knowledge, especially since knowledge in the Global North is deeply hierarchical, gendered, racialized, and commodified.

To rediscover "everything in relation," we must enter into resistance and relationship—ending exploitation, ecocide, and various forms of fascism.

We're already intoxicated, infested with microplastics. It's time to act collectively, to invent new ways of being together, to slow down and listen.

Therefore, it's essential to ask: Who speaks? From where do we speak? I'm an interdisciplinary feminist artist-researcher. Art is my tool. I propose actions, ways of thinking and dreaming, dismantling and rebuilding language, inventing new logics of sensation, de-hierarchizing the body and its movements, and developing relational poetics. I continue exploring intergenerational relationships, invisible connections, and touch between feminine bodies. I find meaning in sharing new forms of care. If my work enables people to feel, sense, heal, listen, and listen to themselves, then perhaps all is not lost. That said, art can do much—but not everything. It can offer aesthetic, spiritual, reflective, and collective moments that clarify and reorient us. Our bodies blend consciousness, memory, and relationships between humans and non-humans, past

and future. Yet, without a poetic politics, a world where everything relates still seems distant and vague.

— Interview conducted by Sylvia Botella, February 2025. The title is taken from Philippe Descola's text *Sermon du millénaire*.