

KAAI THEATER

ESZTER SALAMON & BOGLÀRKA BÖRCSÖK

MONUMENT 0.5:

THE VALESKA GERT MONUMENT

18 > 19/10/2018 20:30 | KAAITHEATER

DANCE | 1H40

EXTRA Join us on Thursday 18/10 for a post performance talk with Eszter Salamon and Boglárka Börcsök, moderated by Tom Engels.



ESZTER SALAMON & BOGLÀRKA BÖRCSÖK

MONUMENT 0.5: THE VALESKA GERT MONUMENT

NL Als er één danskunstenaar een monument verdient, dan is het wel de Duitse Valeska Gert (1892-1978). Haar niets-vrezende provocatieve performances, haar liefde voor het groteske en burleske, haar voorkeur voor het marginale én haar zoektocht naar een nieuwe representatie van het lichaam, maakten haar zonder twijfel tot één van de belangrijkste kunstenaars van haar tijd.

Maar Eszter Salamon legt in haar Monument-serie niet de nadruk op eerbetoon of herdenking. Ze wil ons in de eerste plaats op een andere manier met geschiedenis laten omgaan. Ze beperkt zich in *The Valeska Gert Monument* dan ook niet tot re-enactments en historische documenten. Samen met Boglárka Börcsök vertaalt ze vooral een energie uit het verleden naar het heden. Ze geven het kunsthistorische discours een autobiografisch karakter, en vullen historische gaps op met eigen verbeelding. Deze speculatieve benadering van geschiedenis zorgt voor onverwachte betekenissen en referenties aan het heden.

- Eszter Salamon is een vaste gast in het Kaaithheater met knappe voorstellingen als *Magyar Tàncok*, *TALES OF THE BODILESS* en *MONUMENT 0: Haunted by wars (1913-2013)*.

FR S'il y a une artiste de la danse qui mérite un monument, c'est bien l'Allemande Valeska Gert (1892-1978). Ses performances audacieuses et provocantes, son amour du grotesque et du burlesque, sa prédilection pour la marginalité et sa quête d'une nouvelle représentation du corps en font sans aucun doute l'une des artistes les plus importantes de son époque.

Mais dans sa série de Monuments, Eszter Salamon ne met pas l'accent sur l'hommage ou la commémoration. Elle désire avant tout nous faire aborder l'histoire de manière différente. Aussi ne se limite-t-elle pas dans *The Valeska Gert Monument* à des reconstitutions et des documents historiques. Avec Boglárka Börcsök, elle transpose surtout une énergie du passé vers le présent. Elles donnent au discours de l'histoire de l'art un caractère autobiographique et comblent les brèches historiques avec leur propre imagination. Cette approche spéculative de l'histoire fait surgir des significations et des références au présent inattendues.

- Eszter Salamon est une habituée de la scène du Kaaithheater où elle a présenté de beaux spectacles comme *Magyar Tàncok*, *TALES OF THE BODILESS* et *MONUMENT 0: Haunted by wars (1913-2013)*.

EN If there is one dance artist that deserves a monument, it is certainly the German Valeska Gert (1892-1978). Her fearless, provocative performances, her love of the grotesque and burlesque, her preference for the marginal and her search for a new presentation of the body, undoubtedly make her one of the most important artists of her time.

The emphasis of Eszter Salamon's Monument series is not on tribute or commemoration, however. Her primary aim is to enable us to deal with history in a different way. Consequently, she does not limit *The Valeska Gert Monument* to re-enactments and historical documents. Along with Boglárka Börösök, she translates an energy from the past to the present. They give their art-historical discourse an autobiographic touch and fill historical gaps with their own imagination. This speculative approach to history results in unexpected meanings and references to the present.

- Eszter Salamon is a regular guest at Kaaitheater, with impressive performances such as *Magyar Tàncok*, *TALES OF THE BODILESS*, and *MONUMENT 0: Haunted by wars (1913-2013)*.

ON THE MONUMENTS SERIES AND *THE VALESKA GERT MONUMENT*

BY ESZTER SALAMON

Today, I think of choreography as a structure that I use to create links between places, people, histories, artistic practices, and memories. These operations offer new critical and poetic opportunities away from the historically dominant practice of separation, which has been produced by abstracting relations between causes and effects and structures of power. I use fiction, editing and poetic condensation to enhance participation through imagination, both in theater and museum contexts.

With the Monuments series, started in 2014, I engage in speculative history writing without the promise of teleology. These monuments are embodied, performative and temporal. I conceive them as processes of emancipation from positivist conceptions of history and against amnesia. They are thought of as anti-monuments, always numbered below the threshold of 1. They are occasions for resisting oblivion and exclusion with the potential to transform and repair as they invest in the act of creating memory: their very capacity to build narratives through performative archives of poetic documents. When celebrating forgotten artists, aging bodies, rhythms and gestures of oppressed cultures, these monuments compose with fragments and transform traces into new meanings without fixing them as relics.

Valeska Gert was an avant-garde artistic figure. From the early 1920s on, she developed a performance practice combining theater, dance, cinema, poetry and singing, a mixture of expressions familiar to Berlin's cabaret scene of that time. Gert created radical performance art by experimenting with gender, race, national identity and aesthetics. Despite her artistic fearlessness, provocativeness and anarchic intensity of performance, the importance of Valeska Gert's role in art and dance history has been disregarded for a long time.

The Valeska Gert Monument proposes that if the past cannot be remembered, then it can still be invented. This temporal monument mainly focuses on works that haven't been documented, constituting the largest body of work by an artist who almost entirely faded into oblivion. What does it mean to speculate about the life and work of a non-living artist? How can the untraceable be envisioned? What happens if artworks are re-imagined based on a single photograph, poem or title and the belief in historical truth is suspended?

The Valeska Gert Monument draws dynamic tensions between the notions of memory, archive and history and become tools for animating historical (utopian)

consciousness through exercising critical, ethical, and poetic empathy. Rather than displaying documents, the monument performs imagination and takes autobiography and fiction as the main fields of investigation. Through extending thoughts, utterances and gestures next to historical associations and echoing expressions, the monument unfolds a trans-subjective space of multiple (physical, textual, vocal, poetic) dimensions.

What kind of value can be given to a fictional archive? How can fiction affect our relationship towards knowledge and its production? What meaning can be constructed if we acknowledge the fact that our relationship to history has a history? Composing with the past from the perspective of the present is different from imagining the past as it could have happened. Beyond fascination and mimesis the desire is to problematize failed historical consciousness and invent new relationships towards the past in order to shape the future (of art and artistic practice). Thus, performativity, as it is used in *The Valeska Gert Monument*, has more to do with ideas of embodiment and empathy than with reenactment.

What remains in the fish net of History? There were and still are reasons why Gert's role hasn't gained more relevance in art history. She was a solo artist, never founded a school, didn't create a style, didn't established a dance company. Asking what we learn and how we learn, as well as what we remember and how we remember is crucial for developing non-normative, critical relationships towards the production of knowledge and art. Remembering and archiving is not only for learning about the past. Archives shape our imagination and consequently our future.

CREDITS

CONCEPT & ARTISTIC DIRECTION Eszter Salamon | ARTISTIC COLLABORATION Boglárka Börcsök | CHOREOGRAPHY & TEXT Boglárka Börcsök, Valeska Gert, Eszter Salamon | PERFORMANCE Boglárka Börcsök, Eszter Salamon | LIGHT DESIGN, SCENOGRAPHY Sylvie Garot | SOUND DESIGN Bart Aga, Marius Kirch | TECHNICAL DIRECTION Matteo Bambi | COSTUME DESIGN Anne-Catherine Kunz | TAILOR Marie Eva Rodriguez, Gisèle Charles | SET Construction Atelier de Nanterre-Amandiers | PRODUCTION & ORGANIZATION Botschaft GbR, Alexandra Wellensiek, Studio E.S, Elodie Perrin | CO-PRODUCTION Kaaitheater, PACT Zollverein, City of Women, Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers | SUPPORT Fondation Boghossian - Villa Empain, Museum der Moderne Salzburg, DRAC - Regional Agency of Cultural Affairs in Paris, The French Ministry of Culture and Communication | FUNDING NATIONALES PERFORMANCE NETZ (NPN) Co-production Fund for Dance supported by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media | WITH THE FRIENDLY SUPPORT OF Fonds Transfabrik – Franco-German fund for the performing arts | THANKS TO Liza Baliasnaja, Mario Barrantes Espinoza, Nestor Garcia Diaz, Robin Diehl, Stefanie Lingener, Marie Messien, Herman Sorgeloos, Yvonne White



MORE #BIGNAMES AT KAAITHEATER

Mette Invarlsen TO COME (EXTENDED)

Advertising, film, magazines, the internet: we are constantly surrounded by images of sexualized bodies that display the intimate and the erogenous. In to come (extended) 15 performers explore the relationship between individual sexual freedom and sexuality as a collective experience.

16 > 17/11 | DANCE

Meg Stuart BUILT TO LAST

Five performers travel through the history of dance – and possibly into its future. Is it possible, today, to still believe in eternal values and universality? Things are built up only to fall down again, in much the same way that we long to constantly rediscover ourselves. In *Built to Last* (2012), Stuart worked for the first time with existing classical music.

19 > 20/01 | DANCE

Rosas & tg STAN QUARTETT

As the world stands on the verge of collapse, a man and a woman exchange a razor-sharp dialogue based on a caustic text by Heiner Müller. Frank Verduyssen from tg STAN and Cynthia Loemij from Rosas share the stage and explore the essence of the relationship between words and movement. Again at Kaaithheater after 20 years!

23 > 26/01 | DANCE/THEATRE

Philippe Quesne CRASH PARK

The idea of an island as a place of infinite possibilities has always been a source of inspiration for writers and artists. It can be a place of heroism or of tribulation; of utopia, dystopia, or something in between. In *Crash Park*, Philippe Quesne has created his own colourful Robinsonade, full of wondrous creatures.

22 > 23/03 | THEATRE