



American Society of Media Photographers

## Questions with a Pro: Lois Greenfield

Today's Questions with A Pro subject is **Lois Greenfield**. Lois is an ASMP member and photographer famous for her work in capturing the human body in motion for clients including Sony, Disney, Rolex, Pepsi, and some of the most prestigious dance companies in the world.

You can see more of Lois' work here: <http://www.loisgreenfield.com>

**We Asked:** As someone whose work is deeply tied to motion, what elements define an action image to you?



**Lois Said:** What I am looking for in my photos is not just to stop the action, but to create unique moments that can only exist as a photograph. I am on a quest for a magical image, in which the conjunction of the dancers' movement, expression and gesture becomes part of an enigmatic scenario. The point is not to have the viewer figure out what is going on in the photo, just to present the mystery of that instant. If my photographs seem surreal, it is because the split second I shoot is actually beneath the threshold of perception; we can't see it with our naked eye.

Rather than shooting choreography, I ask the dancers to improvise. What has kept my interest in this obsessive inquiry for 40 years is that each time I invite a dancer into the studio I have no idea what the resulting images will look like. And I must emphasize that I never use Photoshop to rearrange any element in the photo; my images are all single exposures.



**We Asked:** What new avenues and channels for you work have you used to stay successful in a changing business/publishing environment?

**Lois Said:** I have been fortunate that my exploration of dancers seeming to defy gravity has found applications in the commercial world. The images lend themselves to metaphor, conveying concepts such as balance, precision, excellence, human potential, etc. Often I have been asked to create a concept for a commercial campaign, or shoot an adaptation of an existing shot for a client. Merchandising has been another outlet, with my photos appearing on umbrellas, notecards, notebooks and calendars. I hope that the publication of my new book, *"Moving Still"*, published by Chronicle Books, Fall 2015 will inspire commercial clients to hire me!



**We Asked:** What risks early in your a career paid off big time for you?

**Lois Said:** I started out as a photojournalist, and quite by accident got sidetracked into photographing dance. I was shooting dress rehearsals for the "Village Voice", the "New York Times" and other publications in the late 70's, and became frustrated by the fact that I was just photographing someone else's art, instead of making my own. So I started experimenting, asking dancers to improvise for the camera as I taught myself how to use strobes to stop the action. I developed a personal style that had nothing to do with a specific dance, but instead captured the unique qualities of the dancer.



I was shooting with a Hasselblad, and the square format radically cropped the dancers' limbs, which was certainly not the accepted convention in dance photography! The risk was that I gave up shooting the literal dance shots that the media wanted, but the reward was the creation of my own style, and that paid off in every way! Recently I challenged myself to find a new aesthetic for my photos of dancers, and I got so swept up with the new series, that they comprise at least a third of my new book.