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LOIS GREENFIELD: MOVING STILL



Lois Greenfield

I am interested in the spontaneous act of creating images without forethought. I know many artists start with an idea in mind and then they put it on paper. I don't work that way. I may have a starting point, which is in the form of a question that begins with "What if..." or a directive, "Let's try..." Frankly, if I knew what the finished picture would look like I wouldn't bother to make it, as my interest in this process is to get beyond my imagination, not document an already formulated idea.

The ostensible subject of my photographs may be motion, but the subtext is Time. A dancer's movements illustrate the passage of time, giving it a substance, materiality, and space. In my photographs, time is stopped, a split second becomes an eternity, and an ephemeral moment is solid as sculpture.

I started as a newspaper photographer in the 1970's, and was assigned to cover not only news, but also dance performances. After years of shooting dress rehearsals for the *New York Times* and the *Village Voice*, I realized that I didn't want to document someone else's art form. I experimented shooting with electronic strobes to capture moments that are otherwise invisible to the human eye. I got a photo studio in the early 80s where I asked the dancers to improvise, creating often high-risk movements that could not be performed as part of a regular dance—moments created exclusively for the camera. The results were startling, a departure from what people expected from dance photography. The images looked surreal, as the dancers seemed to float, defying gravity—caught in seemingly impossible moments. I had inadvertently created a new way to photograph dance and dancers that was radical at the time. I use the same

manual Hasselblad I did in the 80's, and Broncolor strobes. I don't use auto-focus or a motor-drive. I can only shoot one frame at a time, and that works for me. Although I shoot with a digital back on my Hasselblad, all my pictures are taken as single image, in-camera photographs. Although a number of my images look "impossible" to capture in one shot, I never recombine or rearrange the figures within my finished images. What intrigues me is making images that confound and confuse the viewer, but that the viewer knows, or suspects, really happened. I am dealing in the poetics of a visual language rather than in its literalness.



Lois Greenfield (Born 1949, New York City, NY): Lois became interested in photography when she was 15 years old, while volunteering on a community service project on an Apache Indian reservation in Arizona. During her college years in the late 60s she wanted to be a photojournalist and worked for local newspapers covering rock concerts, demonstrations, and dance concerts. Working in a studio

in NYC since 1982, she began to photograph dancers, collaborating with them on improvised, non-repeatable, often high-risk moments. The fruits of that exploration were published in her first two books, *Breaking Bounds* (1992) and *Airborne* (1998). Her most recent monograph, *Lois Greenfield: Moving Still*, also published by Chronicle Books, US, was released Fall 2015. Although her assignments have taken her all over the world, Lois is a life-long resident of New York City. [Portrait © Kris LeBoeuf, 2015]





























Lois Greenfield: Moving Still is now available from [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

(224 pages, 158 images, Chronicle Books, 2015)

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