

Lois Greenfield

Por Natalia Ardanaz Yunta

Lois Greenfield began her career as a photojournalist. She became interested in photographing postmodern dance in the mid-1970s. In 1982, she opened her first studio in NYC to work with dancers in a collaborative, controlled environment. She has since had solo exhibitions in museums and galleries around the world.

She has created signature images for countless contemporary dance companies world wide. Many of these images can be seen in major magazines, as well as her previous two books *Breaking Bounds* and *Airborne*, as well as and her yearly calendar. Commercial clients have picked up on the metaphorical potential of her vision, and she has created major campaigns for global companies. Rather than document choreography what intrigues her is making images that confound and confuse the viewer, but that the viewer knows really happened. Her photographs are taken as single exposures. She never recombines or rearranges the figures within the photographed image. Bringing her photography onto the stage, Greenfield has worked with the Australian Dance Theatre to create and perform in *HELD*. The essence of this award-winning dance is the live capture and simultaneous projection of her photographs as part of the performance. She is developing projection and video projects that incorporate her photography into installations fusing the antithetical concepts of stillness and movement. Her newest book, *Moving Still*, showcases her work over the last 15 years, in which she shifted to color photography, and explored more enigmatic scenarios.

Lois Greenfield comenzó ejerciendo el fotoperiodismo. Empezó a interesarse por fotografiar danza posmoderna a mediados de la década de 1970. En 1982 abrió su primer estudio en Nueva York para poder trabajar con los bailarines en un ambiente de mayor colaboración y más controlado. Desde entonces ha expuesto en solitario en museos y galerías de todo el mundo.

Ha creado imágenes con su sello distintivo para incontables grandes compañías de danza contemporánea del mundo entero. Muchas de esas imágenes se pueden ver en las principales revistas, además de en sus dos libros anteriores, *Breaking Bounds* y *Airborne*, así como en el calendario que publica cada año. Algunos clientes corporativos se han percatado del potencial metafórico de su visión y ello la ha llevado a crear campañas para empresas multinacionales. Más que documentar la coreografía, lo que le fascina es generar imágenes que confundan y desoriente al espectador, pero que el espectador sepa que han ocurrido de verdad. Dispara sus fotos con una sola exposición. Nunca recombina o reorganiza las figuras en la imagen fotografiada. Greenfield ha llevado sus fotografías al escenario en colaboración con la Australian Dance Theatre para crear y representar *HELD*. La esencia de esta galardonada obra de danza es la captura en directo y la proyección simultánea de sus fotografías como parte de la propia representación. Está desarrollando proyectos de proyección y vídeo que incorporan su fotografía a instalaciones en las que fusiona los conceptos antitéticos de reposo y movimiento. En su último libro, *Moving Still*, exhibe el trabajo que ha llevado a cabo en los últimos 15 años, en los que se ha pasado a la fotografía en color y se ha adentrado en escenarios más enigmáticos.



Sham Mosher, 1993.



6



De izquierda a derecha: Lois, © Marc-Henri Cykert. Ashley Roland, 1998.

JJohn Berger in his celebrated Ways of seeing wrote. "Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled".

Yes, seeing is a pre verbal experience- until we learn words and then use them to categorize and describe what we see.

Photographs are not necessarily free of language: they have their own visual syntax that is analogous to language, but not necessarily limited by vocabulary or linguistic structure. Isn't calling something "indescribable" often the highest praise?

One could think of my photos as a visual analog to surrealist poems, where logic is subverted by imagination. Since my passion is to take photographs that defy rational explanation, I am dealing in the poetics of a visual language rather than in its literalness. Yet my photos are all literal documents of exactly what happened the moment I pressed the shutter. Because our brains cannot register 1/2000th of a second, we can only "see" that split second as a photograph, and often we have trouble believing what we see!

There is no "solution" to the questions posed by my photographs; they are meant to frame contradictions, find a coherence within chaos, and present the mystery of that instant. All my pictures are taken as single image, in-camera photographs. I never recombine or re-arrange the figures within the frame. It is their veracity as documents that gives the photographs their mystery.



De izquierda a derecha: Jennifer Clutterbuck, 2002. Flipper Hope, Jack Gallagher, Daniel Ezralow, Ashley Roland, 1993.

J John Berger, en su célebre Modos de ver, escribió: "La vista precede a las palabras. El niño mira y reconoce antes de saber hablar. Pero no es esa la única manera en que vemos antes de hablar. Ver es lo que nos asigna un lugar en el mundo que nos rodea; explicamos ese mundo mediante palabras, pero las palabras nunca pueden invalidar el hecho de que ese mundo nos rodea. Nunca se ha establecido una relación entre lo que vemos y lo que sabemos".

Sí, ver es una experiencia preverbal... Hasta que aprendemos palabras y las empleamos para categorizar y describir lo que vemos. Las fotografías no están necesariamente exentas de lenguaje: tienen un sintaxis visual propia que es análoga al lenguaje, pero que no está necesariamente limitada por el vocabulario o la estructura lingüística. ¿No es cierto que, muchas veces, decir que algo es "indescriptible" es el halago máximo?

Se podría pensar que mis fotos son el equivalente visual de los



7



Paul Zivkovich, Craig Bary, 2007.

Maybe surrealists depict dreamlike, this complex and mysterious relation? You prefer to tap into the unconscious too... did you answer this dilemma?

I don't think of my photographs as dreamlike, I see them as enigmatic moments. You could even say they subvert reality. In many of my photos dancers float in a universe without gravity, in other images the dancers reach a zenith in their pull against gravity or succumb to its inexorable force. That dialogue is always in play.

You started to use digital -back few years ago, Lois, do you think you have lost that magic in the process of shooting nearly blind as you did with film?

I still shoot blind! For one thing I have to anticipate a moment before it happens. I can't wait to see an interesting moment and then decide to shoot it, I have to press the shutter on the instinct that the next second of what I see will resolve itself into a unique configuration. In what must be considered a very archaic way of working, I only take ONE frame out of a continuum of movement. Sure, I can look at the monitor to see the moment I just shot, and ask the dancers to repeat the phrase they just did, and give them new directions in terms of their timing, placement, gestures, facial expressions etc...but there are very few second chances in my split second capture of improvised moments.

I certainly take more photos with the digital back on my old Hasselblad than I did with film, but I don't have a higher ratio of good images. Just the way blind people can learn to cross the street, I could always tell if we got something interesting on film or not!



Dario Vaccaro, 2007.

Quizás los surrealistas apelan a lo onírico para plasmar esta misteriosa y compleja relación. También tú prefieres ahondar en el subconsciente... ¿Has logrado responder a este dilema?

No considero que mis fotos sean oníricas; las veo más como momentos enigmáticos. Podría decirse incluso que subvierten la realidad. En muchas de mis fotos, los bailarines floran en un universo carente de gravedad, en otras alcanzan un céñit en su esfuerzo por contrarrestar la gravedad, o bien sucumben a su fuerza inexorable. Ese diálogo siempre está presente.

Comenzaste a trabajar con respaldo digital hace unos pocos años. Lois, ¿crees que has perdido esa magia que tenía el proceso de disparar casi a ciegas como hacías con la película?

¡Todavía disparo a ciegas! Para empezar, tengo que anticiparme al momento antes de que ocurra. No puedo esperar a ver un momento interesante y entonces decidir capturarlo. Tengo que pulsar el disparador siguiendo el instinto que me dice que al segundo siguiente de lo que veo ante mí resultará ser una composición única. Parecerá una manera muy arcaica de trabajar, pero escijo un solo fotograma de algo que está en constante movimiento. Es verdad que puedo mirar el monitor para ver el instante que acabo de capturar y pedirles a los bailarines que repitan los movimientos que acaban de hacer, darles nuevas instrucciones sobre los tiempos, la colocación, los gestos, las posiciones, la expresión facial, etc. Pero la fracción de segundo de momentos improvisados que capturo da muy poco pie a segundas oportunidades.

Es cierto que hago muchas más fotos con el respaldo digital montado en mi vieja Hasselblad que las que hacía con película, pero tampoco es que obtenga una mayor proporción de buenas imágenes. Igual que los ciegos son capaces de aprender a cruzar una calle, siempre soy capaz de saber si tengo algo bueno o no en determinada foto.



“I have been interested in the movement of the body since I was a child. I began to study dance at the age of 12, and I have been dancing ever since. I have performed in many countries around the world, and I have also taught dance to many students. I believe that dance is a way to express ourselves and our emotions through movement. It is a form of art that can be appreciated by everyone, regardless of culture or language.”

“I have been interested in the movement of the body since I was a child. I began to study dance at the age of 12, and I have been dancing ever since. I have performed in many countries around the world, and I have also taught dance to many students. I believe that dance is a way to express ourselves and our emotions through movement. It is a form of art that can be appreciated by everyone, regardless of culture or language.”

“I have been interested in the movement of the body since I was a child. I began to study dance at the age of 12, and I have been dancing ever since. I have performed in many countries around the world, and I have also taught dance to many students. I believe that dance is a way to express ourselves and our emotions through movement. It is a form of art that can be appreciated by everyone, regardless of culture or language.”

“I have been interested in the movement of the body since I was a child. I began to study dance at the age of 12, and I have been dancing ever since. I have performed in many countries around the world, and I have also taught dance to many students. I believe that dance is a way to express ourselves and our emotions through movement. It is a form of art that can be appreciated by everyone, regardless of culture or language.”

“I have been interested in the movement of the body since I was a child. I began to study dance at the age of 12, and I have been dancing ever since. I have performed in many countries around the world, and I have also taught dance to many students. I believe that dance is a way to express ourselves and our emotions through movement. It is a form of art that can be appreciated by everyone, regardless of culture or language.”

“I have been interested in the movement of the body since I was a child. I began to study dance at the age of 12, and I have been dancing ever since. I have performed in many countries around the world, and I have also taught dance to many students. I believe that dance is a way to express ourselves and our emotions through movement. It is a form of art that can be appreciated by everyone, regardless of culture or language.”

“I have been interested in the movement of the body since I was a child. I began to study dance at the age of 12, and I have been dancing ever since. I have performed in many countries around the world, and I have also taught dance to many students. I believe that dance is a way to express ourselves and our emotions through movement. It is a form of art that can be appreciated by everyone, regardless of culture or language.”

“I have been interested in the movement of the body since I was a child. I began to study dance at the age of 12, and I have been dancing ever since. I have performed in many countries around the world, and I have also taught dance to many students. I believe that dance is a way to express ourselves and our emotions through movement. It is a form of art that can be appreciated by everyone, regardless of culture or language.”

“I have been interested in the movement of the body since I was a child. I began to study dance at the age of 12, and I have been dancing ever since. I have performed in many countries around the world, and I have also taught dance to many students. I believe that dance is a way to express ourselves and our emotions through movement. It is a form of art that can be appreciated by everyone, regardless of culture or language.”

“I have been interested in the movement of the body since I was a child. I began to study dance at the age of 12, and I have been dancing ever since. I have performed in many countries around the world, and I have also taught dance to many students. I believe that dance is a way to express ourselves and our emotions through movement. It is a form of art that can be appreciated by everyone, regardless of culture or language.”

“I have been interested in the movement of the body since I was a child. I began to study dance at the age of 12, and I have been dancing ever since. I have performed in many countries around the world, and I have also taught dance to many students. I believe that dance is a way to express ourselves and our emotions through movement. It is a form of art that can be appreciated by everyone, regardless of culture or language.”

Your work has been published and exhibited around the world, how do you think it is seen in these parts of the world? Do you think the understanding of your work has different perception according to the culture?

I think my work is pretty universal; the reaction to my photographs is pretty much the same around the world. People relate to the pictures as photos of human potential, and are awed by what the dancers can do.

When I set up a shoot I don't have a specific intention in mind as to what the pictures will look like. My interest, after all these years, is to see where the process leads me. Only when reviewing these images do specific themes emerge. I find that some of my images could be seen as illustrations of the Greek myths of Narcissus, Sisyphus, Orpheus etc.

Other themes could be construed as biblical, with dancers evoking the Expulsion from paradise or the Annunciation to Mary.

What's interesting is that dancers from many countries often tell me that seeing my photos inspired them to be dancers!

Thirty-five years dedicated to capturing movement, to stopping time, to revealing what the “naked eye” cannot see... through photographs, why not cinema (photography in movement), what differences do you find between both languages?

Actually, I wanted to be a filmmaker before I became a still photographer during my college years.

But what has sustained my interest after all these years is the alchemy of still photography- that can stop time, make the ephemeral moment as solid as sculpture and reveal what the human eye can't see.

Narrative Cinema is too similar to our experience of real life. I am more interested in what I imagine than what I actually see, and the output of that imagination is the still photograph. In addition, my photographs are always surprises, since I set something in motion and don't see the 1/2000 of a second that I shot until after I shoot it.

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 that...” Frankly, if I knew what the finished picture would look like I wouldn't bother to make the picture, as my interest in this process is to get beyond my imagination, not document an already formulated idea.

Has publicado y expuesto por todo el mundo. ¿Cómo crees que se ve tu trabajo en las distintas partes del globo? ¿Te parece que existe una percepción distinta de tu trabajo en función de las distintas culturas?

Creo que mi trabajo es bastante universal. Las reacciones ante mis fotografías son prácticamente las mismas en todo el mundo. La gente identifica el potencial humano de las fotos y les impresiona lo que son capaces de hacer los bailarines.

Cuando preparo una sesión no tengo ninguna intención concreta en mente acerca de cómo serán las fotografías. Lo que me interesa, después de todos estos años, es ver adónde me lleva el proceso. Solo al revisar las imágenes surgen temas específicos. Descubro que determinadas imágenes podrían verse como ilustraciones de los mitos griegos de Narciso, Sísifo, Orfeo, etc.

También pueden aparecer temas de índole bíblica, como que los bailarines evoquen la expulsión del paraíso o la anunciación de la Virgen.

¡Lo que resulta interesante es que bailarines de muchos países me suelen decir que ver mis fotos les inspiró a hacerse bailarines!

Treinta y cinco años dedicados a investigar el movimiento, a detener el tiempo y a revelar lo que el ojo desnudo no ve a través de la fotografía... ¿Por qué no el cine, que es fotografía en movimiento? ¿Qué te parece que diferencia a ambos lenguajes?

En realidad, cuando iba a la universidad, quise ser cineasta antes de convertirme en fotógrafa.

Pero lo que ha mantenido mi interés durante todo estos años es la alquimia de la fotografía fija: que logre detener el tiempo, hacer que el momento efímero sea tan sólido como una escultura y que revele lo que el ojo humano no es capaz de apreciar.

El cine narrativo es demasiado parecido a nuestra experiencia en la vida. Me interesa más lo que imagino que lo que veo, y el resultado de esa imaginación es la fotografía. Además, mis fotos son siempre una sorpresa, ya que me pongo ante algo que está en movimiento y no veo esa 1/2000 fracción de segundo hasta después de haber disparado.

Me interesa el acto espontáneo que supone crear imágenes sin premeditación. Sé que muchos artistas empiezan con una idea en la cabeza y luego la ponen sobre el papel. Yo no trabajo así. Puedo que tenga un punto de partida, que suele ser en forma de una pregunta que empieza con “¿Y si...?” o con una instrucción como “Vamos a probar esto....” Pero, sinceramente, si supiera cómo va a quedar la fotografía final, no me preocuparía por hacerla, ya que mi interés en este proceso consiste en ir más allá de mi imaginación, no documentar una idea previamente formulada.



La Kendra Dennard, 2012.

Currently, you are working on a film: The 18th Parallel, codirecting with Jodi Kaplan, exploring the connection between dance and prayer in indigenous cultures around the world, except Europe, how is this cooperative project, what are you discovering, what are you investigating... tell us about it.

I studied Anthropology in college, and expected to become an ethnographic filmmaker. I was primarily interested in the religious experiences of indigenous cultures, and on assignment in Africa in my early 20's I realized that dance was an integral part of their prayer. The reason Jodi Kaplan and I call our project the "18th Parallel" is because I wanted to pursue this inquiry along two fixed latitudes, so that we could uncover the inherent similarities of rituals in diverse cultures, picked somewhat randomly. We picked that latitude because 18 is a spiritual number in Judaism and is derived from the Hebrew word "chai" meaning "life".

In HELD, a dance inspired in your photography, in which you photographed parts of the live performance from the stage, creating images and developing "the invisible moments" at the same time... A new way of shooting, a new visual syntax and play with the viewer...How was the experience? the result?

My collaboration with the Australian Dance Theatre in the creation and performances of *HELD* was a most unexpected experience. It started with a photo session in Adelaide, Australia, during which I created moments that the dancers would perform as part of the dance.. There were two banks of my strobe lights on each side of the stage, firing every time I took a shot. The 250 photos that I took each night were projected, unedited, instantaneously on the stage as part of the show. After our opening at the Sydney Opera House, we toured Europe and the UK, performing at Sadler's Wells in London, Theatre de la Ville in Paris, and the Central Theater in Seville, among other venues. I loved the concept that during the dance I was plucking a split second out of the flux, giving that moment the solidity of a photograph by screening it for 10 seconds, before it disappeared.

It was like catching a fish, then throwing it back in the water....

En la actualidad estás trabajando en una película, The 18th Parallel, que codiriges con Jodi Kaplan y en la que exploras la relación que establecen entre la danza y el rezo diversas culturas indígenas del mundo. Cuéntanos qué estás descubriendo, qué estás investigando...

Estudié antropología en la universidad, donde quise dedicarme al documental etnográfico. Me interesaban sobre todo las experiencias religiosas de las culturas indígenas, y cuando estaba con un encargo en África a mis veinte años, me di cuenta de que la danza era parte integral de sus rezos. El motivo por el que Jodi Kaplan y yo hemos titulado nuestro proyecto The 18th Parallel es porque me interesó explorar esta cuestión a lo largo de dos latitudes prefijadas, para que pudiésemos descubrir las similitudes inherentes de los rituales en diversas culturas escogidas en cierto modo al azar. Optamos por esa latitud porque el 18 es un número espiritual en el judaísmo y deriva de la palabra hebrea "chai", que significa "vida".

¿Cómo fue la experiencia de HELD, un espectáculo de danza inspirado en tu fotografía y donde fotografiaste parte de las actuaciones en directo en el escenario para crear imágenes y revelar simultáneamente los "momentos invisibles"? ¿Cómo fue el resultado?

Mi colaboración con el Australian Dance Theatre en la creación y la puesta en escena de *HELD* fue una experiencia de lo más inesperado. Empecé con una sesión de fotos en Adelaida, Australia, en la que creé momentos que los bailarines después interpretarían como parte de la danza. Puse dos hileras de focos estroboscópicos a cada lado del escenario, que se encendían cada vez que disparaba. Las 250 fotos que hacía cada noche se proyectaban, sin editar, de manera instantánea como parte del espectáculo. Despues del estreno en la Sydney Opera House, hicimos una gira por Europa y el Reino Unido; actuamos en el Sadler's Wells de Londres, en el Theatre de la Ville de París, y en el Teatro Central de Sevilla, entre otros escenarios. Me encantaba el concepto de que, mientras bailaban, yo arrancaba una fracción de segundo de aquel flujo y le daba a ese instante la solidez de una fotografía al proyectarlo durante diez segundos para que después desapareciese.

Era como pescar un pez y después volver a arrojarlo al agua...



Ha-Chi Yu, 2013.



◀ Paul Zivkovich, 2014.

In the next few months a new book will come out: Moving Still what is it about? What is new, and what kind of projects do you have in mind for the future?

Moving Still is the third volume of my photographs, following *Breaking Bounds*(1992) and *Airborne* (1998), all in collaboration with William A Ewing, and published by Thames & Hudson in the UK, and Chronicle Books, in the U.S.

Moving Still is my first book of color photography, and represents my work over the past 20 years.

The imagery is less about "impossible moments" and more about enigmatic scenarios.

In a series I call *One to One*, we glimpse the dancer in a private moment, not performing for the camera.

In this series, which will be exhibited as 5 foot prints, it appears to me as though time is not stopped, but is passing before your eyes. Perplexing scenarios slowly unfold, yet the mystery is not revealed.

Another new series in the book, involves mirrors and reflections. I love that fact that reflective surfaces not only incorporate perspectives other than what the camera offers, but also that these reflective surfaces are completely out of my control.

I have also started working on various projection installations, in which my still images are animated by moving projectors, in some cases dropping from ceiling to floor, travelling across corners with accelerating velocity. The scale of the dancers become monumental and these "moving stills" organically fuse the antithetical concepts of stillness and movement. In the film *Trio for Image, Projector and Camera*, my still images will travel up and down walls, and across the ceiling, animated by a moving projector and captured by a moving camera.

Dentro de pocos meses sale un nuevo libro, *Moving Still*. ¿De qué va? ¿Qué novedades podemos esperar? ¿Qué tipo de proyectos tienes en mente para el futuro?

Moving Still es el tercer volumen de mis fotografía, después de *Breaking Bounds*, de 1992, y *Airborne*, de 1998, todos en colaboración con William A Ewing y publicados por Thames & Hudson, del Reino Unido, y Chronicle Books, de Estados Unidos.

Moving Still es mi primer libro de fotografía en color y representa el trabajo que he hecho durante los últimos veinte años.

Las imágenes tratan menos sobre los "momentos imposibles" y más sobre escenarios enigmáticos.

En la serie que he titulado *One to One* atisbamos al bailarín en un momento privado, sin que actúe para la cámara.

en esta serie, que se expondrá en forma de copias de un metro y medio, me da la sensación de que el tiempo no se ha detenido, sino que pasa ante nuestros ojos. Se van abriendo ante nosotros escenarios sorprendentes, pero el misterio no acaba desvelándose.

Otra de las nuevas series que figuran en el libro incorpora espejos y reflejos. Me gusta el hecho de que las superficies reflectantes no solo incorporen perspectivas distintas a las que ofrece la cámara, sino también que esas superficies escapen completamente a mi control.

También he empezado a trabajar en varias instalaciones con proyecciones, en las que mis imágenes son animadas por proyectores en movimiento, en algunos casos cayendo del techo al suelo o circulando por esquinas a gran velocidad. La escala de los bailarines se vuelve monumental y estas "fotos fijas móviles" fusionan de manera orgánica los conceptos antitéticos de reposo y movimiento. En la película *Trio for Image, Projector and Camera*, mis imágenes estáticas se desplazarán arriba y abajo por las paredes y a través de los techos, animadas por un proyector en movimiento y capturadas por una cámara en movimiento.