

Artist Statement

There is nothing more difficult as to understand the body, flesh or stone. There is nothing harder to perceive as the sound that escapes from it. There is nothing more difficult to know than how it receives and envelopes light.

Michel Serres

I am interested in processes that value the *emerging*. Dancing known forms in dialogue with unfamiliar ones propose questions I find enticing. Tuning oneself to the process of coming into being, to this emergence of form, becomes a means to investigate the simultaneous realities of *being* and *becoming*. Process and product merge to reveal the mind and body at work in the act of composing.

I am a dedicated practitioner of improvisation as a performance form, and while I also make and value choreographed dances, improvisation underlies my creative thinking and forms the basis of my artistic beliefs. My approach values composing material as it emerges in the moment, much like extemporization in jazz music. There is no safety net in improvisation. The dancer must find the courage and willingness to work in the unknown, and to be comfortable dealing with the ensuing paradoxes that emerge. In the choreographic process, these values spark deep investigation and make discovery possible.

One of the things I value most about improvisation is that it is truly everyone's form. It is the life blood of the cosmos, evolution, all complex organizing systems, and every creative act. People think about it differently, practice it differently, value it for different reasons. It exists in all dance forms on some level, is embraced fully by some, and is understood differently by all. The most important lessons I have learned through the practice of improvisation involve responsibility and courage within a subjective landscape. Within the subjectivity of experience and the perception that shapes that experience, one has a radical responsibility to commit to the integrity of one's path while negotiating a relationship to the whole of everything else that is happening. This is not easy, and yet a worthwhile pursuit. It is something I practice in my work (and life) and make part of the process when making work for other dancers. This kind of philosophical practice doesn't come naturally to most of us. We need to practice it; improvisation as a compositional practice allows us to weave the concerns of art and life together. What happens in the studio can inform the practice of negotiating things that happen in the world. Knowing this is true keeps me practicing. It is an art practice and a life practice.

In my work I value complexity, consistently asking, "what if this AND that are simultaneous?" There is interdependence and independence—of the voice, of the body, of ideas, feelings and forms. I also believe that there is a *self* in us that is connected to the All of Everything and we can't undo that. It just is. We are in relationship to everything all the time. And, there is the part of *self* that emerges via the act of attention. We come into being based on what we choose to pay attention to, and we have much latitude to affect how we want to collaborate with our own consciousness. Many times an assumption about range is really a matter of attention. Some territory may seem out of reach or impossible, but perhaps you haven't noticed the path, or what's truly in the way. All of a sudden, with a new perspective, a way emerges. My work focuses on the openness that shows us these new ways.

Lisa Gonzales
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