



MARJORIE GOODSON

56 year old dancer challenges perceptions
with her photographic book 'MG'

Photography by Andreea Radutoiu

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year old dancer Marjorie Goodson is challenging preconceived notions of age and dance with her book 'MG', which features over 130 raw, gritty and sensual photos captured by Andreea Radutoiu.

Marjorie's dance career started with training at the School of American Ballet before she headed to California, where her ballet and jazz talent saw her forge a diverse career in dance, theatre and acting.

After 17 years, Marjorie took some time out to become a mother and work in TV. Once her daughter went off to college, Marjorie's desire to dance soared. Although she had never really stopped dancing, and she's always looked after her body, with training and physical strength being very important to her.

Marjorie reflects on that time, "I decided that it was really important that I throw myself back into the world of dance, and I really wanted to create my own art. During that time, I became what I called 'A Girl In The Wings' - where I was a mother; I was very involved in other people's causes (philanthropy) which I loved, but it wasn't my dream. It wasn't my art."

"There was this real pull; I was about 50 years old when she went off to college, and I had this incredible need to find my voice as an older woman and as a dancer."

As Marjorie began exploring her creativity, the photo project began to take shape. She explains the inspiration for the book:

"What was interesting was that this was going to be a personal book, just for me. I was terrified of even considering doing something on my own. I thought, 'Who would be interested in an older woman creating a dance photography book?' I was really terrified and tiptoeing into this art. As I started doing it and I got a little braver and I saw the images, I felt stronger in my own shoes, and literally, in my own pointe shoes."

Despite her trepidation, Marjorie decided to publish the book, which has received rave reviews and sparked a discussion about art, age, dance and body image.

"There was a relief in a way, that here was this woman my age who found a niche, if you will, to create art, to say, 'You know what, I may be this age, but I'm not gone yet and I refuse to lay down. I refuse to say 'no'. I refuse to stop.'"

"And you don't have to - art does not have to stop at a certain age, it is a continuum. It really is. As I've created this book, my voice and my passion have become much stronger. My empowerment as a woman is in full force now. I am so glad that I did it."

When Andreea and Marjorie considered the artistic direction for the photos, Marjorie was adamant about her vision.

"At that time, I was 51 and, certainly, in the dance world, one would consider that way past your prime. For me, it was very important that I approach this book as the woman that I was during that time and not trying to recapture my youth and trying to be this young dancer."

"The gritty, raw, sensual imagery, was something that I really wanted to go after, because that's where I felt I was at that time - and still sort of feel that way. So, we took it from there. I wanted something a little edgy and gritty and artful and not just pretty, I didn't want it to be pretty."

But despite the incredible, dramatic and dynamic photos, Marjorie remained surprised by the reaction to the stylish book.

"I was so terrified and just trying to own it for me. Yet, the first time I heard someone say, 'Oh! My God! This is so inspiring.' I just couldn't believe it. It never even occurred to me that anybody would be interested or that I could have done something that would have inspired someone else or who was feeling what I was feeling."

What surprised Marjorie the most was the reaction not from her peers, but from the younger

generation of dancers, "I was more focused on people more my age and them being grateful and saying, 'Oh! How wonderful that somebody our age has done this'. But it was the younger people, that I actually still dance with, that were coming up to me saying, 'Oh! My gosh! This is so amazing.'"

"I think they themselves worry about the future and they worry that once their prime is gone, once they get out of their 20s, life is, as they know it, completely over - which had never even occurred to me. They were like, 'Oh my god, when I grow up I want to be like you,' and 'Oh, you're so inspiring.' So, that was the biggest shock of them all."

Each image in 'MG' captures Marjorie's love of dance, she explains, "I love physicality, I love the music and the emotion and the expression that is non-verbal. This wonderful ability to transcend, to go to a place where I don't even know that words have been invented - it's just feeling and emotion, and it just comes together in this physical body."

"To speak this language without using your mouth is tremendous. It's just never-ending for me. I can't say enough with my body. I'm always exploring. It's this incredible journey, an emotional ride and you put it with music and it's just...I almost can't even talk about it."

So which photo is Marjorie's favourite? "The one on the cover (opposite) is one of my favourites because it captures the dance. I love the power of it - It's edgy, it's strong, it represents the ballet. But it's sensual, it's gritty. It tells the story in one picture of all the other photographs."

marjoriegoodson.com



