

ZAHRA  
July 2 2023

I spent the evening watching videos of dance work that Zahra created during the time when we worked together at Dance West Network (formerly MiBC).

For company, I first lit a candle. One of her candles, top quality, sandalwood.

In her work, there are often huge swaths of material, quiet worlds she waits inside of and scoops herself back into. She slithers out of this material opening around her like the soft bed of a clam shell. She is a small, contained body with limbs unfurling like octopus' legs. Her face has an elasticity that moves through emotions – of strangeness opening into full delight. She is not one thing, but multiple beings, in relation. There are small shifts of movement that reveal a different intention than anticipated. She reveals humor in repetition. She subverts expectations with total charisma. She makes a point to relax her entire body to let it fall 5 feet into the wood floor to then catch herself on the rebound. Zahra pushes her way towards her ideas of next. She wears all white. Only her socks show dirt – evidence that she landed at all. She folds herself back under gauzy material that continues to move subtly with her breath.

Zahra did want the world to change and to be changed and to keep changing. This morphing was at the center of her questions and demands in her living, in her dancing.

In her words, **“the continual fluid process of generating identity in relation to the perceived world alongside the freedom to dismantle it the moment it began to crystalize. ~ The only certainty is flux, a space somewhere between dissolution and emergence.”**

Somehow Zahra has become a mirror or a portal to better perceive what is also not here. What is not here is something easily resolved.

This confounding is revealing, it offers a place of growth.

You wonder if she knew she was loved. But you are certain that she knew. It just maybe wasn't the only answer she needed or wanted to find. Or maybe it was spirit that called, and her answer was swift.

Even though Zahra died one year ago, the word that comes to mind when I think of her – as I look at this candle flickering away in its own little flame - is rebirth.

-Jane Gabriels