

This is a survey exhibition of all five Choreographic Services by Adam Linder. It's called *Adam Linder: Full Service*.

Dancers are performing all day, every day. Their names are Josh Johnson, Leah Katz, Justin F. Kennedy, Adam Linder, Noha Ramadan, Brooke Stamp, Enrico Ticconi, and Stephen Thompson. The art critics performing in *Some Proximity* are Michele Carlson and Jonathan P. Watts. The five contracts come with a display device designed and made by Shahryar Nashat.

Here is the schedule of performances:

September 2018

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
11 <u>Services</u> 1, 2, 3	12 <u>Services</u> 1, 2	13 <u>Services</u> 1, 2, 3	14 <u>Services</u> 2, 3	15 <u>Services</u> 1, 2, 3
18 <u>Services</u> 4, 2	19 <u>Services</u> 1, 2	20 <u>Services</u> 4, 2	21 <u>Services</u> 4, 2	22 <u>Services</u> 4, 2
25 <u>Service</u> 5	26 <u>Service</u> 5	27 <u>Service</u> 5	28 <u>Service</u> 5	29 <u>Services</u> 5, 1

Instinct and intelligence. If one were to try and reduce human subjectivity down to two words, that's a start. On one hand, there is the body and its physicality, its biology, its impulses, its emotional states, its primal animality, and its automatic decisions. On the other, there is the mind and its ideas, its rationality, its opinions, its biases, its psychology, its methods, and its cunning calculations.

But not quite. It's not instinct *and* intelligence, because the two can't really be kept separate. It's certainly not instinct *versus* intelligence, because one doesn't necessarily antagonize or compensate for the other, even though they are often evoked in those terms. Perhaps it's instinct *dancing with* intelligence, because both are distinct but entangled languages that are always in motion, always negotiating.

But that's not quite it either, because the body and its expressive force is also a *form* of intelligence, not the yin to its yang. Like the mind, the body learns a language, accumulates and stores memories, and develops a maturity and an expertise.

Etymologically speaking, choreography means "to write with dance," and Adam Linder has many ways to write with dance. In London, he trained with the Royal Ballet, worked with the Michael Clark Company, and spent time in late-night house music clubs. While his work is performed in the context of the stage and the theater, it has also found its way into art biennials all over the world, as more and more of them incorporate performance and dance.

Linder has looked at people like Serge Diaghilev, the founder of the Ballets Russes, but has also absorbed the histories and legacies of postmodern dance as well as those of conceptual art: its rejection of style, affect, and, God forbid, ornament. The Judson Dance Theater group demanded that style, technique, and spectacle be replaced by pedestrian and everyday movement, and Yvonne Rainer's "No Manifesto" (1965) called for a rejection of virtuosic and expressive choreography in favor of a "de-skilling" that, the argument went, was more authentic, democratic, and anti-elitist. *No to eccentricity*, she wrote.

Despite all of that, dance is often brought into the white cube of the art museum as a way to spice things up. Even when “conceptual” in nature and form, performance is seen as an effective way to enliven an exhibition, to generate some buzz, to get some social media traction. In the art context, dance hasn’t been de-spectacularized, but has been asked to deliver something extraordinary, something you don’t see every day, something that will get its own special hashtag.

The art historian Claire Bishop calls this the “industrialization of performance”: It is goal-oriented, user-friendly, outsourced, and placed on heavy rotation. Performers work in shifts, meeting an endless demand for “being dynamic,” keeping up with a 168-hour cyberwork-week. As unsalaried art workers with nothing but the labor of their own bodies to sell, performers feel the pressure to say yes to every invitation.

Adam Linder demands that we value dance differently.

Adam Linder, “Choreographic Service No.1: Some Cleaning,” 2013, Duration variable, Pictured: Enrico Ticconi at Kunstverein Hannover.



As a choreographer, Linder considers the dancer to be his most valuable material. More specifically, what he's after is the dancer's corporeal intelligence—that instinctual-slash-intelligent virtuosity that precedes language and exceeds concept.

He calls it *the juice*. It comes from a body's accumulated life experiences in all of their impossible-to-measure forms. The juice is what's left in the aftermath of money, language, or concept working to condition and contain everything. It's what exceeds, what holds everything together, what Fred Moten calls the "invaluable." There's always more of it.

Nothing can ever entirely capture the character of a gesture, the rhythm of a step, or the temperament of a glance. Language can try, but words either fall short with too little or strangle with too much. Money can try, but once it does, those things lose their inherent value—in the way paying for love or justice does. People might try paying for talent, but its intensity is ultimately non-exchangeable.

Adam Linder, "Choreographic Service No.2: Some Proximity," 2014, Duration variable, Pictured: Justin F. Kennedy at Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw.



Adam Linder, "Choreographic Service No.3: Some Riding," 2015, Duration variable, Pictured: Frances Chiaverini and Adam Linder at Institute of Contemporary Arts, London.



And yet money and language both play a central role in Linder's work. He is careful to not underestimate their importance in how value is created, but is equally careful to position them as nothing more than tools made available to what is ultimately far more valuable—the human subject and its many capacities for intelligences.

Linder provides dance as a *service*, making it possible for people or organizations to witness the many talents of a human body by hiring specific dancers to perform specific activities for a specific amount of time. It's not about "the body," as an abstraction, but about *these* bodies: They are of specific body types, genders, and skin colors; they come equipped with a specific accumulation of corporeal memories and experiences; and they move together, borrow from each other, and write with dance in ways no other bodies do.

Linder offers his services to clients via a contract. With its cold language and its focus on hard cash, a contract lacks ornament, sex, and flair. It's the perfect contrast to dance.

In exchange for providing a service, Linder asks for money, sure, but only to support the artistic (and physical) labor that goes into it, not because he's selling anything. He doesn't consider dance as something to be possessed in the way an object can be bought and sold. To maintain their value, his services must remain his own property, because what's being exchanged for money is not an object but a virtuosity, a body's learned instinct and intelligence.

Adam Linder, "Choreographic Service No. 4: Some Strands of Support," 2016, Duration variable, Pictured: Andrew Hardwidge and Adam Linder at Liverpool Biennial.

Adam Linder, "Choreographic Service No. 5: Dare to Keep Kids Off Naturalism," 2017, Duration variable, Pictured: Leah Katz, Justin F. Kennedy, Noha Ramadan, and Stephen Thompson at Kunsthalle Basel.



Linder doesn't consider his work to be a critique. It often gets cited as an example of "institutional critique," but his concern is not the institution and breaking down the power structures that enforce and are enforced by it. No, his project is the virtuosic skills, the corporeal intelligences, of a human body. The juice.

(... although institutions do sometimes get caught by stray bullets.)

Say a museum feels it's a bit boring or sleepy. One solution might be to hire Linder's Choreographic Services, just as it might hire the services of a graphic designer or a plumber to help solve another kind of problem. Perhaps having dancing bodies in the galleries will help attract a larger audience! And in many museums and cultural institutions, the activity that is often most highly valued is the one that draws the largest audience. People come to see a performance or an exhibition, and they become the customers that performers (and museums) hope to please. The more customers, the better.

So has the museum become a place for *customers* instead of *audiences*? Has an artwork been reduced to an exchange between an artist and a customer? Linder's approach extracts his work from that dynamic by turning away from *customer* and toward *client*.

By providing a service, under contract with a client, he not only avoids the precarity imposed by the fluctuating likes and dislikes of any customer, but he also removes the emphasis from how public or popular his performance might be. Instead, the focus is redirected to how skillfully the bodies might be fulfilling the activities promised in the contract.

His audience is there to witness, not to consume.

In that sense, a Choreographic Service isn't for an audience but for a single client. That client might choose to invite hundreds of people to see it, but the performance itself—along with the group of dancers performing it—isn't working for them and isn't subject to the whims of their preferences. If you were to hire *Some Cleaning* (2013), for example, a single performer would choreographically clean, renew, or recalibrate a space of your choice—like a mime working as a maid. And just as a maid is often dismissed, the performer can handle being dismissed. So if you choose to read a book or host a dinner party, feel free. Either way, dance is being written.

Or you could hire *Some Proximity* (2014), where two dancers work with an art critic to serve you some vernacular criticism. The art critic visits nearby exhibitions, makes critical observations and notes on what he or she sees, and relays those notes to the dancers, who then choreographically interpret them with their voices and movements. The notes accumulate on the gallery walls over the duration of the service, providing a loose score to which the dancers can refer back at any time. The critic uses a language that sounds more like gossip or anecdote than academic analysis, which helps it feel closer to the body.

If *Some Cleaning* uses the mime, *Some Proximity* uses the glide: A move that grew out of break dance, Russian folk dance, or even the infamous Moonwalk, the glide is a walk that is a couple of degrees higher in affect than walking. It's a hyperbolic walk. A greasy walk. A juicy walk.

Once again, an audience is welcome, but not necessary—the bodies will be working (and gliding) no matter what.

Some Riding (2015) doesn't reflect its context but reflects itself: Two dancers recite two essays about embodiment and performance that Linder commissioned from the writers Catherine Damman and Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer—placing the piece's theoretical underpinnings *inside* the work itself, not on the wall label or in the catalogue. The bodies perform with *adagio*, or a slow and gradual movement, but insert a *popping* to it, a robot-like bounce, giving the cadence of their reading a dancerly punctuation.

In *Some Strands of Support* (2016), two dancers work to tease, tame, coerce, or poke at an upright object or statue of the client's choice (I chose an abstract steel sculpture by the local artist Charlie Leese). The bodies of the dancers move in oscillations, like a siren or a temptress. They are providing the service of "haircare" to the object, caring for or carefully grooming it. But it's also full of ritual, fantasy, and desire, and it's entirely plausible that the object is in fact there to service the dancers—to arouse and get them off.

Who is servicing whom? is a question that hovers above all of Linder's work—and it's not just a question about sex or money, but a political one about our ability (or lack thereof) to determine who and how we serve.

Finally, *Dare to Keep Kids Off Naturalism* (2017) is where Linder's rebuttal to the "anti-aesthetics" of Judson Church is most evident and sharp-toothed. "Let's do ornament *seriously*," he says. Four dancers, sometimes in elaborate costumes, work together to create different scenarios. They move through a range of registers and styles with skill and finesse, but without allowing any clear narrative to emerge. The service's contract promises eight explicitly "anti-natural" situations: hustling, lubrication, animatronics, carpeteering, among others, and the dancers flirt with the walls, wear robotic prosthetics, and crawl beneath (what look like) Persian rugs, as if under some kind of spell. A musical score seems to provide a set of cues, but perhaps it's not.

This service is where Linder most forcefully argues that theatricality does *not* amount to entertainment and that "de-skilled" does *not* necessarily mean "more authentic." I dare you, he says, to value talent, virtuosity, and expertise—even in the face of a culture (at large) that often considers it elitist or undemocratic to do so. We live in a country, remember, where voters are convinced by candidates because they seem relatable, not because they seem to have command of the issues.

The Wattis Institute has hired all five of Linder's Choreographic Services. Each one is presented over the course of three weeks, across two galleries. All are shared with the general public, except for a sixth "footnote" service, *Some Trade* (2018), which has been hired by a local collector and takes place in a private home in Pacific Heights. At the Wattis, each service is performed successively, but they also overlap and reappear in different combinations, creating new hybrids and juxtapositions of bodies and movements.

The sociologist Steffen Mau has pointed to two central modes of generating attention in today's "evaluation society": one is popularity or publicity, and the other is expertise. The two often find themselves in conflict, and when an emphasis is placed on one, the other tends to fall into the background.

It is of extraordinary importance to talk about how to increase and democratize access. And yet some go so far as to argue that a focus on craft is decadent, that exceptional skill is only exciting for a specialized audience—and how can we talk about aesthetics, anyway, when so many are suffering from injustice, starvation, and war? It's a valid and even urgent point, of course, but it also sets up a false choice. In times of crisis and despotism, it seems crucial to value art and expression, and to encourage the pursuit of eccentricity and virtuosity in all of its many forms.

In Adam Linder's work, dance and dancers (and art and artists) emerge legitimized and empowered, not marginalized. Contained within these performances is a set of embodied instincts and intelligences that, even if (and partly because) they can't be measured and can't be bought, are valuable to us all. "For me," he says, "a performance is the performers." Let's witness and learn from them.

—Anthony Huberman

Adam Linder: Full Service is on view at CCA Wattis Institute from September 8 to 29, 2018.

In February 2019, this exhibition travels to Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean.

Adam Linder (b. 1983, Sydney, Australia) lives and works in Los Angeles. He makes works for the theater and provides Choreographic Services. In 2016, Linder was awarded the Mohn Award for artistic excellence in the Hammer Museum's Made in L.A. Biennial. Linder also participated in the 2016 Biennale of Sydney and the 2016 Liverpool Biennial. Recent solo or two-person shows have included South London Gallery, London (2018); Kunsthalle Basel (2017); the Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin (2016); and the Institute of Contemporary Art, London (2015). Additionally, his works have been commissioned, presented, and hired by HAU Hebbel-am-Ufer Theatre Berlin, Serralves Museum Porto, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, Museum of Modern Art Warsaw, and 356 S. Mission Rd. Los Angeles, among many others. A monograph, *Adam Linder: Who is Surfing Who*, was published by the Hammer Museum in 2018.

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