

## ARTICLES

# A Choreographer Bills His Dances as “Services”

Adam Linder stresses the labor of dance whenever he offers up his “choreographic services” to museums.



Emily Wilson January 23, 2019



Adam Linder, “Full Service” (2018), installation view, Wattis Institute; “Choreographic Service No.5: Dare to Keep Kids Off Naturalism” (2017), duration variable, four dancers: Leah Katz, Justin F. Kennedy, Noha Ramadan, and Stephen Thompson (photo by Allie Foraker)

SAN FRANCISCO — Since 2013, Adam Linder has offered up his “choreographic services” to various cultural institutions, including the Museum Sztuki Warsaw, MOCA Los Angeles, and the Liverpool Biennale. Recently, at the [CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts](#) in San Francisco, Linder and his dancers performed all five of their services (galleries can hire one or several): “Some Cleaning,” “Some Proximity,” “Some Strands of Support,” “Some Riding,” and “Dare to Keep Kids Off Naturalism.”

For three weeks, the dancers performed all afternoon, from 12 to 6pm, with an hour break for lunch. Large copies of the contracts for their services hung on the wall of the gallery, and the dancers clocked in and out, underlining the idea that this is labor. Sometimes, while the dancers were gliding, miming dusting and sweeping, they were performing to an empty room, except for the employees at the Wattis, sitting behind a desk at the entrance of the gallery.

Linder started dancing at eight years old, got recruited to the Royal Ballet School of London when he was 15, and went on to work with choreographer [Michael Clark](#) (described by the *Independent* as “British dance’s true iconoclast”) and [Meg Stuart](#)’s dance company [Damaged Goods](#). After dancing for five hours on a Friday afternoon at the Wattis,

## POPULAR

- 1 [Explore Ancient Athens Online Through 3D Models, Created by One Animator Over 12 Years](#)
- 2 [Over 150,000 Botanical Illustrations Enter the Public Domain](#)
- 3 [Uniquely Cinematic Shot of Mice Fight in London Subway Wins Wildlife Photography Award](#)
- 4 [Inside a Museum and Library Dedicated to Kurt Vonnegut](#)
- 5 [Remembering Patrick Cowley, Pioneer of Dance Music and Occasional Composer of Porn Soundtracks](#)

## SPONSORED

- 1 [Yale Center for British Art Presents \*Victorian Radicals: From the Pre-Raphaelites to the Arts and Crafts Movement\*](#)
- 2 [Americas Society Presents \*Feliciano Centurión: Abrigo\*, the Artist’s First Solo Exhibition in the US](#)
- 3 [Apply for the SVA Curatorial Practice MA Program](#)
- 4 [Boston University Announces Tuesday Night MFA Lecture Series for Spring 2020](#)
- 5 [Karyn Olivier: \*Everything That’s Alive Moves\*, on View at ICA Philadelphia Through May 10](#)



Linder sipped a beer at a brewpub near the gallery and talked about how fulfilling the terms of the contract and performing whether or not there is an audience are sort of the point.



Adam Linder, "Full Service" (2018), installation view, Wattis Institute; two dancers: Brooke Stamp and Leah Katz (photo by Dustin Soriano)

"I think it's cool that no one sees this for long stretches of time. I think it's very empowering — otherwise, I'm just a show pony," he said. "I'm not denying a performative electricity of the viewer, but this allows me to learn how to disengage from that power relationship."

During the three weeks, the dancers performed the services on a rotating schedule, and sometimes multiple were carried out at the same time. During "Some Riding," Linder and another dancer went about the front of the gallery reciting essays by Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer and Catherine Damman about performance and embodiment, while a single dancer in "Some Cleaning" mimed sweeping in the corner. At the same time, two dancers in "Some Proximity" were gliding around the back room.



Adam Linder, "Full Service" (2018), installation view, Wattis Institute; "Choreographic Service No.5: Dare to Keep Kids Off Naturalism" (2017), duration variable, four dancers: Leah Katz, Justin F. Kennedy, Noha Ramadan, and Stephen Thompson (photo by Allie Foraker)



While some elements of the performance directly reference physical labor, others feel like sly commentaries on a visitor's experience at a museum. In "Some Strands of Support," Linder and another performer groom and caress a statue made by San Francisco artist [Charlie Leese](#), and in the most non-narrative performance of all, "Dare to Keep Kids Off Naturalism," four dancers created different scenarios, lying under what looked like Persian rugs while hugging the wall. Visitors to the gallery stood around the room, or sat on the floor, some of them eating their lunch or a snack.

Watching these "Choreographic Services," you're aware of the dancers as workers — that they are using their bodies for labor. In his writeup about the show, curator Anthony Huberman says, "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."



Adam Linder, "Full Service" (2018), installation view, Wattis Institute; "Choreographic Service No.5: Dare to Keep Kids Off Naturalism" (2017), duration variable, four dancers: Leah Katz, Justin F. Kennedy, Noha Ramadan, and Stephen Thompson (photo by Allie Foraker)

Linder says he got the idea for the first choreographic service, "Some Cleaning," while rehearsing in the studio, and thinking about particular gestures with cleaning. He felt like explicitly framing dance as a service would be the best way to work with the economics of dance.

For a while, Linder has been thinking about the difference in how dance and visual arts are valued — buying a ticket for a performance versus buying a piece of art and taking it home to put on the wall.

"There's this idea of paying for a service — you don't buy the work, you don't obtain it, but you buy a window into seeing it," he said "I was like, 'If I'm going to work with dance outside of a theater, I might as well take the structure of it and be transparent about that as a service.'"





Adam Linder, “Full Service” (2018), installation view, Wattis Institute; “Choreographic Service No.2: Some Proximity” (2014), duration variable, two dancers and one writer: Justin Kennedy, Josh Johnson, and Jonathan P. Watts/Michele Carlson (photo by Allie Foraker)

Dance is a sort of rarified labor, Linder says. It can’t be possessed or bought and sold. What the clients who hire his choreographic services get is the talent and work and skill of the dancers — and it doesn’t matter if people show up or how popular the performance is. The dancers just need to do what has been agreed on in their contracts. As Huberman writes, “His audience is there to witness, not to consume.”

*Adam Linder: Full Service took place at the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts (360 Kansas St, San Francisco) in November. The work is traveling to Grand Duke Jean Museum of Modern Art (3 Park Drail Eechelen, 1499 Luxembourg) in February.*

#### TAGS

Adam Linder

CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts

San Francisco

#### RELATED

Two Queer Artists Recreate San Francisco’s Shuttered Dyke Bars

April 19, 2019

A Portrait of Martin Wong Between Text and Image

April 17, 2015

Artists Try to Light US Map on Fire, Burns Gallery ... or Something

February 11, 2013

#### SHARE

