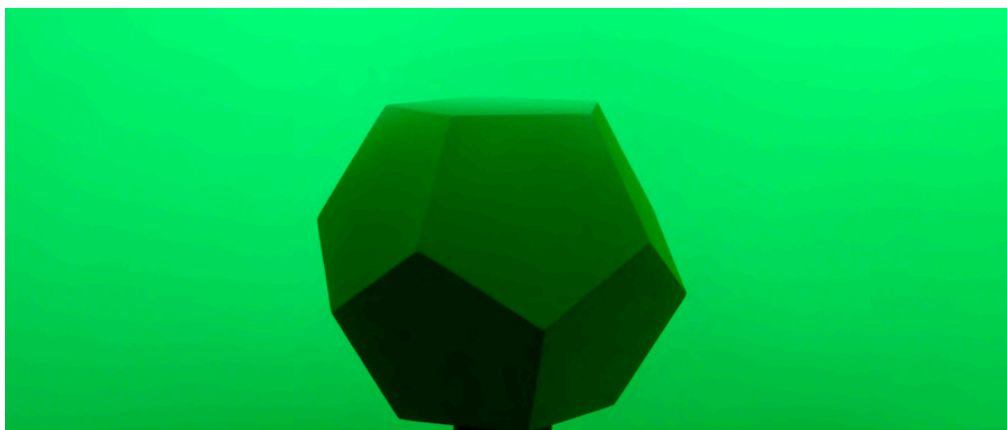


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## EXPANDED | Conversation with Adam Linder & Shahryar Nashat

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ATP diary



Shahryar Nashat – Parade, 2014

*Parade* (1917) was a ballet réaliste conceived by [Jean Cocteau](#) with scenographic designs by [Pablo Picasso](#), choreography by [Léonide Massine](#) and composition by [Erik Satie](#). [Adam Linder](#)'s reinterpretation of "Parade" was premiered at [HAU](#) in Berlin in 2013 and later on visual artist [Shahryar Nashat](#) made a film of Linder's version, which was shown, among the others, during the 8th [Berlin Biennale](#) and at [Palais de Tokyo](#) in Paris.

Francesca Verga in conversation with the Adam Linder and Shahryar Nashat.

Francesca Verga: At the Hebbel am Ufer in Berlin I saw Adam Linder's reinterpretation of Jean Cocteau's ballet Parade (1917), which carried on the idea of a collaboration – between dancers, choreographers, musicians – so that these people can gather their work up into the practice. Could you tell me more about this process of transferring knowledge? How much Parade is changed under these connections and contributions and now differs from the first idea you had in mind?

Adam Linder: *Parade* as conceived by Jean Cocteau was a collaborative affair. So in reinterpreting this work, I took his strategy as a model and collaborated with people who were in my immediate artistic context, artists that were relevant to my thinking. My wish was not to unify the decision making in relation to the separate theatrical elements (i.e. costumes, scenography etc), but to have my *Parade* as an umbrella piece for aspects of Shahryar Nashat's (scenography), Tobias Kaspar's (costume) and my practices (choreography). Both Tobias and Shahryar worked with ideas that were already existing in their work, so *Parade* became a container for the three of us to work inside of. This idea was pushed further when Shahryar decided to reproduce the work for film.

FV: Two managers that were the best living example of cubism sculptures by Picasso's fantasy are now skilfully transformed in minimalist garish green dodecagons. I think it is interesting how these concepts are translated, almost one hundred years later, in order to build up the same plot. The original *Parade*'s script by Jean Cocteau, scenography by Pablo Picasso, choreography by Leonide Massine and composition of Erik Satie, seems reinterpreted through another language – as if the story has been played, rather than reconstructed. In which way does this process affect your practice and work?

AL: Played rather than reconstructed is a great way to think about. In fact its exactly what I wanted to do. Reconstructing as a mode, in my opinion, gives too much authority to history and as a contemporary art modality exposes that artist's wish to profit on historical references. I was fully aware of this kind of historical gold mining when making *Parade*, but by making a very subjective reinterpretation I

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was playing the Cocteau script with all the audacity that the queer nature of the original work calls for. I felt by taking liberties, by being a bit frivolous with the reference, this was actually the most honest homage I could make to this work; whilst hopefully also putting forward my own craft.

FV: In your stage design one can see the publicity and branding in today's stage. Which kind of branding do you aim to address?

AL: Parade is a publicity parade for three performers selling a theatrical performance. So in my thinking, I was always working with the question of "what would be this kind of publicity parade one hundred years later in 2013?" Corporate branding is all over the "stages" of today, we see this in shopping malls, on youtube and all over our consumer goods. Additionally I was addressing an often undiscussed idea of branding in independent theatre. The Staatsballet in Berlin does corporate collaborations with Adidas, but the independent scene of the HAU Theatre where I premiered the work generally regards itself as outside this kind of market. However every work they do is completely branded with the logos of the city or state government department who funds the work. Of course this is a different kind of branding than Adidas, but actually not that different. All cultural production today is branded, its hard to escape this.

FV: Therefore mediation, branding and communication have become the makers of the piece itself. But communication is also something that makes a difference between the two managers, now that they have been merely transformed into the same green dodeca-gons. Is communication used in the piece to question corporate branding but also the self? How?

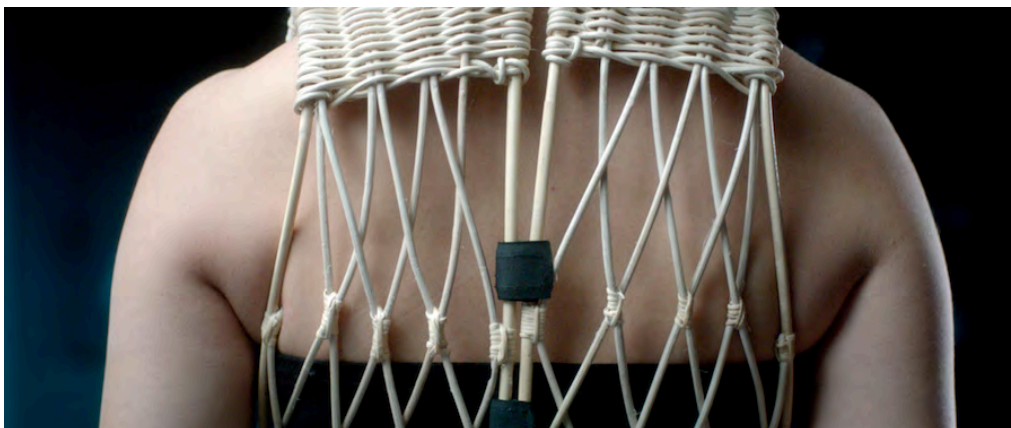
AL: Yes I was thinking about this branding from two angles – corporate and self-branding. Corporate in the sense that my Parade is situated in front of a marble facade that is monogrammed – so my theatre front looks a bit like a luxury store or a millennial cultural complex. Regardless of the fact that Parade exists in an independent theatre house, I was thinking about the absorption of all kinds of performance into our corporate lives. And then self-branding appeared in the way the three performers invest in (consciously) performing stereotypes and mimetic gestures that exemplify their characters, hopeful that the audience will be appreciative and buy the show.

FV: The costumes, originally created by Picasso, are now designed by swiss artist Tobias Kaspar. In the original play most of characters were limited in their movements by the costumes, and so they do in Parade (2013), in a way in which body curves are emphasized rather than covered. Could you tell me more about these wicker corsets?

AL: Tobias was really keen to work with a design that was current to fashion at that moment – a way of thinking about art production through fashion and marketing paradigms. So we worked with a Dolce and Gabbana campaign image. The costumes do restrict whilst also majorly emphasising desirous parts of the body. They are gendered wicker outfits that accentuate this exposure that is ultimately also "restrictive".

FV: About the scenography, garish green cubes as well as the benches remind your [ Shahryar Nashat ] work, e.g. 'Factor Green'. What is the function of this kind of 'pedestal' and bench that we often see in your work? How is it developed through Parade?

Shahryar Nashat: The pedestal series started when I wanted to celebrate the plinth, which is the prop that usually carries the artwork. In this scenario I decided to make a plinth for a plinth and so I designed these kind of inseparable siamese mirrored twin objects that would depend on and support each other. It's only later, that the museum bench became of interest, when I decided to turn it into a sculpture by means of designing it myself but also turning it into a plinth by means of having both artworks and viewers of my exhibitions sit on it.



Shahryar Nashat – Parade, 2014 – Still from video, 38 min, color/sound

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FV: In the film you made for this piece, called Parade (2014) and shown recently at Palais de Tokyo, the choreography of Adam Linder was filmed dwelling upon details that rarely can be caught in the whole live performance. That means also going through a transformative process, in this case of something strictly immaterial. How can the limits of choreography be pushed forward through this documenting process?

SN: Parade, the film, is not a documentation of Parade, the stage work. Yes, the subject in front of the lens is Adam's choreography but by using to its max the possibilities of film as a medium, Parade becomes an autonomous work, and translates the spirit of Adam's reinterpretation of Cocteau's ballet. The film adapts, whereas a documentation would merely capture. Adaptation involves editing the original material, using framing, Foley, sound design, image editing and new material, all of which push away the work from its original.

Making this film also came from the surprise that choreographers often overlook the fact that their work will not exist outside the live. There is not enough creativity in the way choreographers extend the life of their work, and most often, the means with which they document it cannot reflect the live experience, because the medium of video is not exploited. Parade is one way to circumvent this deficiency, there are many other examples but I wish to see more.

FV: So, is the film a reconstruction of the reconstruction of the original Parade? (kind of a chinese whispers)... For me, it's also the relationship with another medium that makes the "re-mediation" interesting. When the video is not just used as a technical support but – as you said – as a medium to exploit, it becomes an autonomous work, a form of contextualisation and interpretation indeed. Are you thinking to other mediums, apart from video, that could re-make works like this?

SN: Yes, I have worked often translating one medium to another. I really like the problems that it creates when this transfer happens. Something is lost and something is gained. Especially when one thinks of the way art is reproduced. E.g. I have photographed my own sculptures and shown these images as autonomous works. Or I have xeroxed images of antique sculptures to later etch them onto paper. Using such a methodic and crafty technique like etching to render the xeroxed reproduction of a sculpture can only open new critical ways to apprehend art, especially at a time where we see so much only through the internet.

FV: Have you extended the life of the original Parade or of Adam Linder's choreography? or both? I guess all these live and mediated works cannot be perceived as mutually exclusive...

SN: I believe that any reference to the past contributes to extend the life of the material for posterity. The time span between Cocteau's Parade and Adam's Parade is greater than Adam's and mine of course but I believe that the passion for the material that Adam re-interpreted and the passion for Adam's work that I built upon are a great motivation for an artist to decide to quote, revisit, reload the past.

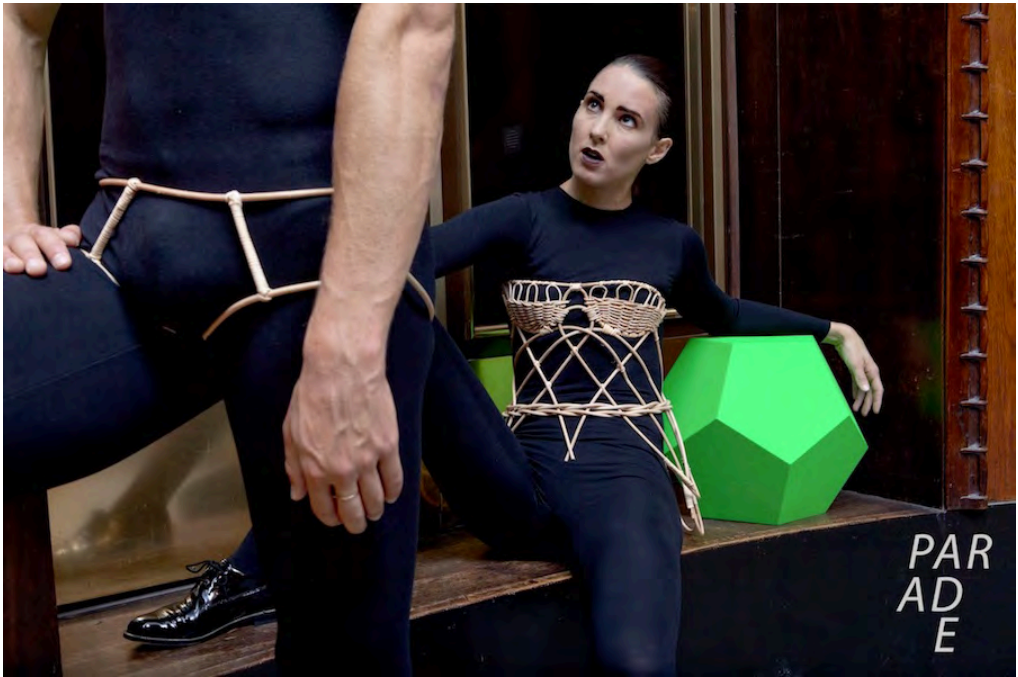


Parade (2013) – Adam Linder – image: Shahryar Nashat

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