

## Mårten Spångberg Artist Statement 2021 and CV

Perhaps the question must be asked if we can afford to create art that does not engage in its environment, or whether it is precisely through commitment that art can create new autonomous zones? Is it possible that we must realize that the freedom that art since long has insisted on is a form of freedom authorized by forces that also sanctioned large-scale destruction of our planet?

Mårten Spångberg (1968, lives and works in Berlin, freelance) is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work emanates out of a fundamental devotion to choreography and dance. His work is driven by a strong interest in change and a deep sense of dedication to choreography and dance as phenomena. His work can therefore not be defined or recognised by its appearance or style, but is instead gaining signature through how it unfolds, deconstructs and generate new form. Research and a relentless questioning is central to his practice that over more than 25 years constantly has renewed itself. As an artist its initially not Spångberg's interest to "use" art in order to tell a story, express something or engage in activism, instead his work is guided by a long-term research into art as phenomena, its capacity to generate specific forms of change (contingent transformation) and arts inherent political potentiality. Rather than making political art, making art political.

On a superficial level this can make Spångberg's work come out as somewhat inconsistent but can also be traced back to a concern with structures in front of appearances. Dance has always been his predominant expression but as an advocate for choreography as expanded practice (a term he coined in 2009) his work has taken very different expressions from architecture to cinema, installation and fictional writing, music and socially engaged art.

For Mårten Spångberg choreography is an open-ended set of strategies through which different expressions can gain traction. Therefor working on feature films or writing fiction is a matter of utilising a choreographic mind-set and at the same time allowing choreography to transform through the resistance and incompatibilities of a "foreign" medium. It is however important to note that Spångberg's work is not conceptual but instead is to be understood as concepts, i.e. specific non-causal apparatuses with which the viewer engage.

Spångberg's theoretical writing on dance and artistic research has further contributed significantly to the understanding of the art form, its forms of dissemination and relations to accountability, social and political potentiality. After studies in music, musicology, theatre/dance studies, philosophy of science and aesthetics Mårten Spångberg created his first works for the stage in 1994 together with a collective he initiated in Stockholm. Since 1999 he has created performances in his own name from solos to large scale choreographies. His 2003 solo "Powered by Emotion" has become a contemporary classic and a signature piece in respect of reconstruction.

"Slowfall" from 2007, was a solo that redefined his practice in respect of considering dance as an object, which further implied rethinking notion of presence and attention vis a vis dance, next to functioning as a starting point for a research into the hegemony of a performative regime, a dependence on language and consequently the transformation of art into information, contemplation into knowledge, potentiality into possibility, openendedness into reason.

In 2014 he created "La Substance, but in English" commissioned by MoMA PS1 in New York, a work that became the starting point for a series of productions that together redefined choreography in respect of thinking through landscape and browsing. In particular "Natten" (2016), a seven-hour long performance, brought notions of attention to a different level approaching choreography as experience rather than organisation.

Already "Epic" from 2012 introduced ecology as a central concern in Spångberg's work, however ecology not first of all in relation to climate crises but rather as a concept or resistance that enables different kinds of form and modes of relation - mental, social and environmental. In particular "The Internet" (2015), "Digital Technology" (2016) and "The Nature IRL" (2017) has been acknowledged in respect of transformative ecologies. Central to this series of works was further to challenge ecologies of viewing and experiencing. Audiences were therefore often placed directly on the floor and the duration of the works were 3 – 7 hours.

"Natten" meant a turning point in Mårten Spångberg's work that since has been intimately linked to ecology and the post-Anthropocene. "Gehard Richter, une piece pour le theatre", premiered 2017, was a piece that further grounded Spångberg's work in ecology. The piece, which was the first major production where

Spångberg more extensively used spoken text, was a lamentation or mourning where mental, relational, aesthetic and environmental ecologies collapsed in favour of a shared processes of empowerment, or a collective sense of abstract hope.

“Gerhard Richter” further marks an interesting turning point as it was the first work that was through and through choreographed, i.e. constructed as one set dance organised in relation to and aligned with the music. In 2018 – 2019 Spångberg’s work has gained an even stronger relation to ecology, both as a real concern with climate crises and global ecological issues but also as a concept. “Culture” for two female dancers were presented outdoors as the sun goes down, without use of electricity or other theatrical infrastructures, could be described as an “essay” concerned with how modernity determined our understanding of the division between nature and culture, spirit and reason and hence the condition of experience. The trajectory continued with a larger scale dance piece for four dancers to music by Simeon Ten Holt. “The Climate”, to an extent influenced by Emanuel Coccia’s book “The Life of Plants”, was an attempt to consider formal dance, not through representation and hence passive reception but as the unfolding of a space to be with, a landscape to which climate we all contribute and participate in.

Mårten Spångberg devotion to dance and choreography has also resulted in extensive teaching, curating and organising international festivals, seminars and conferences, publishing as well as writing reflective and political texts. In 2011 he published Spångbergianism, followed in 2013 by Spångbergianism II and in 2016 a collection of short stories Natten.

He has also published a number of anthologies e.g. “The Swedish Dance History #1-4”, “Post-dance” and “Movement Research”.

Between 2002-2010 Mårten Spångberg and the architect Tor Lindstrand operated as “International Festival” a collaboration that critically researched the relational dynamics of choreography and architecture, often through open-source forms of engagement. International Festival was a commission based operation that created large scale works for contexts such as Steirischer Herbst, Tate Liverpool, Venice Architecture Biennale, Haus Der Kulturen Der Welt, Van Abbe Museum, Tanz Im August, Kaai Theater and Performa. Together with Xavier Le Roy he created choreographic works for Haus Der Kunst, Hayward Gallery, K20 and National Gallery of Contemporary Art Korea, in the context of the exhibition “Choreographing You” curated by Stefanie Rosenthal.

Mårten Spångberg was head of the dept. of choreography at the Univ. for Dance in Stockholm (DOCH) 2008-2012, where he established the MA program “mychoreography”.

An important part of his work at DOCH was to, in collaboration with the dean Efva Lilja and professor Lena Hammergren, develop definitions for artistic research and establish a dynamic research milieu for PhD students. These efforts were foundational for the initiation of Uniarts in Stockholm 2014.

Mårten Spångberg was in 2007 accepted as a PhD candidate in artistic research at DOCH, in a joint venture with the Royal Institute of Technology, School of Architecture and the Built Environment, a position it was necessary to discontinue as director for the dept. of choreography.

Next to the engagements to define and establish methods and discourses vis a vis artistic research, Mårten Spångberg has a lot of experience of supervising students and researcher on all levels.

In 2008 Mårten Spångberg was granted three years support from the Swedish Research Council for the project “Choreography as Expanded Practice”, a large scale international project that culminated in a conference in collaboration with Foundation Tapiez and MACBA (Barcelona).

Mårten Spångberg has been funded by The Swedish Art Council, The Swedish Art Grants Committee, The City of Stockholm, The Norwegian Arts Council. His projects have been commissioned and co- produced by Tanz Im August, Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Impulstanz Vienna, TanzQuartier Vienna, Steirischer Herbst Graz, Tate Liverpool, MDT Stockholm, Black Box Oslo, MoMA PS1, Performa, Mousonturm Frankfurt, Santarchangelo Festival, Ballet Frankfurt, Stockholm Royal Opera, Kaai Theater, Hayward Gallery, Siemens Kultur Program, Haus Der Kunst, HKW Berlin, Tanz im August, and many other.