

Lars Fredrikson

(Stockholm, 1926 – Vevouil, France, 1997)

Artist, teacher and tireless experimenter with both matter and sound, Lars Fredrikson is today the object of progressive rediscovery, especially in France, where he moved at the start of the 1960s. With studies in chemistry to his name, after the war he worked in a research laboratory of the Swedish army before enrolling as a radio officer in the merchant navy. But it would be his arrival in Paris to attend the academy of art that defined his practice, characterised by a protean approach that escapes all definition. Moving to the south of the country would soon make him an influential point of reference for the new generation of artists, especially after having set up the first course on sound and on electro-acoustic research at the École Nationale des Arts Décoratifs in Nice, of which he would be the director from 1971 to 1991.

From his scientific training, he maintained a particular attention towards the potential offered by the technologies of his time. Through the constant production of semi-handmade devices for reception and transmission, Fredrikson also made an early analysis of communication society and its media, such as the television, radio and fax machine. The surpassing of the specificity of each medium makes it impossible to classify his work within the arena of a single artistic trend. Ignoring traditional divisions, he in fact achieved an extraordinary synthesis between the audio and visual dimensions: he sculpts sound, paints while subverting the rules of figuration, and draws with light, drawing inspiration from bodily rhythms.

Early on in his time in France, he produced collages on paper with cut-outs from magazines, deconstructing the images in a chaotic accumulation of chronicles and trends. Around the same time, he focused on the production of small watercolours in which the gestural abstraction shows an explicit link not only with Kandinsky's legacy but also with the calligraphic elegance of Oriental cultures. Towards the end of the 1960s, he developed a number of frequency synthesisers that allowed him to generate random interferences of white flashes on the television screens in time with a number of sound impulses. In the works with sound, which would take up much of his energy, he deliberately puts viewers to the test, challenging them with installations that diffuse through space the lowest and most imperceptible frequencies. After having readapted a fax machine, he went as far as to capture the variations of the sounds around him and make them visible thanks to a pattern drawn automatically onto electro-sensitive paper. The two works in the collection, titled *Inox* (1971), belong to a series of large panels in stainless steel with reflective surfaces. Fredrikson intervenes on these supports with folds, scratches and hammer blows: the perception of the image which is reflected – that of the public and the space around the work – is thus distorted and transformed, just like the sound as it reverberates over the uneven surface.

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