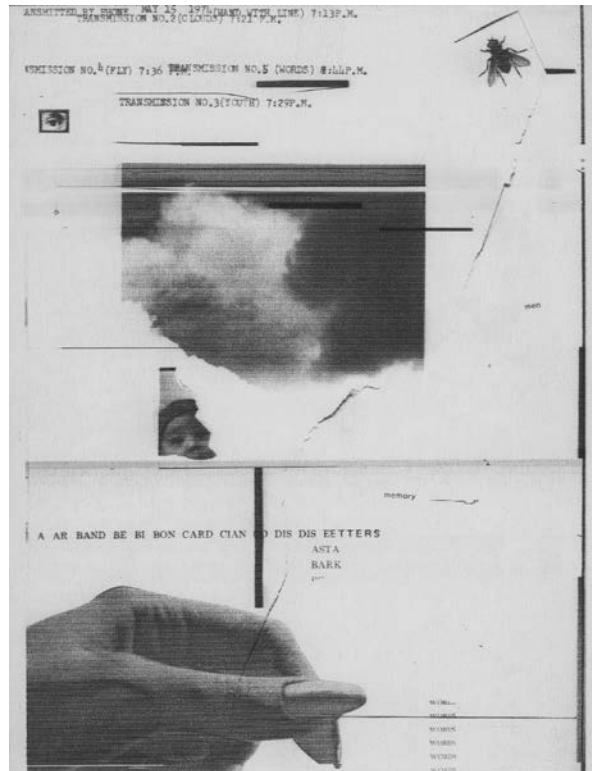


The New York Times



Untitled, Fireflies series, May 15, 1974

June 18, 2015

Before there was email or the Internet, there was the revolutionary fax machine. In a statement accompanying this show, the photographer William Larson describes seeing a demonstration of the technology in 1969, in which an image of "a well-known celebrity" (Muhammad Ali) was sent from Chicago to Philadelphia. The transmission took six minutes, and Mr. Larson, witnessing the event in Philadelphia, was impressed by the picture's high quality. After this, he obtained a Graphic Sciences DEX 1 Teleprinter for the Tyler School of Art at Temple University, where he taught. From 1969-1978, he made electro-carbon prints on view here.

The works resemble grayscale collages, photomontages or miniature versions of paintings by artists like Robert Rauschenberg, who silk-screened photographs onto canvases. (Mr. Larson also mentions the Bauhaus innovator Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's photomontages, called photoplastics). Mr. Larson's prints include photographs, fragments of text that function like concrete poetry and abstract patterns made, for instance, by crumpling paper and feeding it through the machine.

Sound could also be registered visually on the print, appearing as a network of fuzzy horizontal lines. One work here includes text typed into the machine. Sound could also be registered visually on the print, appearing as a network of fuzzy horizontal lines. One work here includes text typed into the machine that indicates that the audio traces were made by transmitting Santana's song "Evil Ways."

Unlike painting or photography, media that have an uncanny ability to absorb and transform new technologies, the DEX 1 Teleprinter shows its limitations as a creative tool, even in this one show. These works don't reach the level of sophistication or skill of Moholy-Nagy or Hannah Hoch's photomontages. But they show 20th-century art's obsession with merging sight and sound, text and image and, ultimately, time and space. They also come at a moment when interest in art made with early digital technology is thriving.

—Martha Schwendener