

## LYUBEN (KOSTOV) FARZULEV

Born 1952

### About the Artist:

Lyuben (Kostov) Farzulev [\[1\]](#) graduated from the faculty of fine arts in Veliko Turnovo's University "ST. ST. Cyril and Methodius", in 1989 with a major in mural painting. He was one of the founders and secretary of "Section 13" of the Union of Bulgarian Artists created in 1993, which was a transformation of the former Studio of Young Artists branch of the Union. After a first withdrawal of the young "unconventional" artists from the Union after 1989, the creation of "Section 13" offered a space for incorporating the new practices into established institutional life.

Lyuben Farzulev (Kostov) was an important figure in Bulgarian contemporary art of the late 1980s and throughout the '90s. He created some of the iconic works, which marked the earliest happenings and alternative exhibitions. For the exhibition "Earth and Skye" – the first semi-institutional presentation of the new practices on the rooftop of the UBA building in Sofia in 1988 – Farzulev (then Kostov) presented "Top Secret". It was one of a series of wooden machines he created in the late 80's and over the following decades. A giant apparatus with a mysterious purpose built around an old peasant's cart, "Top Secret" was a commentary on the deteriorated military capabilities of the disintegrating Communist regime.

Another very popular work by Farzulev (Kostov) was the "Machine for Painting," which was installed and operated in the park in the city centre of Sofia in December 1988. A complex system of wooden wheels and ropes, the machine would take in paper sheets at one end, paint over them mechanically and spit out the "paintings" at its other end. This was one of the first works of Bulgarian art that actively sought contact with its public in an urban environment. For Lyuben Farzulev (Kostov), it was a means of recruiting the viewer as co-author, but also of making a more general comment about art and the artist.

In December 1989, a happening was organized outside the Archeological Museum in Sofia. Alongside works by other artists, Lyuben (Kostov) Farzulev showed his political action "Toppling of Article 1". In it he arranged a large number of wooden tiles on the ground before pushing one of them over to create a domino effect.

## LYUBEN (KOSTOV) FARZULEV

Sometime in the early '90s, Farzulev (Kostov) also began creating space compositions of brightly colored textiles and ropes, which he flew above streets and town squares. In 1992, he made the "Comet" – first shown outside the Drama Theater in Pleven and then in front of the French Institute in Sofia. This was followed by the "Time Trap" (1994), shown in front of the National Theater in Sofia, and others. To the general public, Farzulev's flying installations became the most visible and attractive contribution to Bulgarian contemporary art placed in urban environment and meant for the city dweller.

In 1994, Lyuben Farzulev (Kostov) was one of the three selected artist to present Bulgaria at the 22nd São Paulo Biennial.

**LYUBEN (KOSTOV) FARZULEV**

**1. *Moving “Wooden Machine for Gorging”*, 1993**

Installation – wood, rope, plates, food

170cm x 200cm x 110cm

**Edition:** Unique

**Ownership history:** The Artist



LYUBEN (KOSTOV) FARZULEV, *Moving "Wooden Machine for Gorging"*, 1993





**LYUBEN (KOSTOV) FARZULEV, *Moving “Wooden Machine for Gorging”*, 1993****About the Work:**

Farzulev's hand-made wooden machines are complex engineering constructions with an often absurd or painfully ironic meaning, exuding an understated da Vinci-like genius for innovation. Placed in the context of late-20th century progress and technology, they seem to be extolling the virtues of parallel worlds. But a great many of them, such as “Wooden Machine for Clapping” and “Wooden Machine for Family Gratification,” both from 1992, are commentaries on real-life phenomena – the emergence of new power structures in post-1989 Bulgarian society and the world-wide AIDS epidemic.

*Moving “Wooden Machine for Gorging”* consists of a wooden table with four plates with food on them. There is a chair on one side of the table and a big wooden hummer on the opposite side. The installation functions when the viewer sits on the chair. The viewer's weight sets the seat of the chair in motion with a shift of 6 cm. From there the motion is transferred through a device placed under the table to a lever with a wooden hummer attached to it. The movement of the seat which was 6 cm at the start of the motion, now increases to 80cm. The device under the table is connected to a cross on the table with 4 plates placed on it. As a result, when the viewer sits, the wooden hummer is set in motion and smashes the plate placed in front of the seated viewer with an impact force of a 100 kg. When the viewer stands up, the system of levers and the counterbalance resets the installation, bringing back the hummer, and the cross turns positioning a new plate.

The inspiration for this works comes from the folktales the artist read as a child:

“As a child I couldn't help but notice that big part of the folktales always ended the same way – The princess and the prince got married and had a most wonderful feast. The narrator of the story was their guest too, he dined with them and drank mead; it run down his mustache but did not get into his mouth. - I was always perplexed how can you eat and drink and nothing gets in your mouth!? Well, when I turned 40 I finally figured it out. It is possible, in Democracy.”

☐ The artist was initially known as Lyuben Kostov, and changed his name to Farzulev only recently.