



All photos by Wyatt Counts

A CELEBRATION OF AGE AND ART

At eighty this year, Jack Lenor Larsen is still at the top in the textile design world. **Tory Jones** reports from the party that marked his birthday

Textile design's maverick innovator Jack Lenor Larsen (MCT Autumn 05) turned eighty years old this summer. At the Longhouse Reserve, his renowned home and 16 acre sculpture garden in East Hampton, New York, there was much cause for celebration: along with JLL's birthday it was also the Longhouse's 15th anniversary and benefit event, this year honoring Yoko Ono with a medal for her contribution to the arts and her continuing crusade for peace.

JLL, a longtime believer in artistic collaboration, consulted with co-chair Tina-Maria Birch and floral/installation artist Eve Suter on thematic colour and concept: silver

and gold for the tent pavilion and environs, and full colour throughout the gardens.

No stranger to the Longhouse Reserve, Suter has been designing the benefit since 2003, after the designer Clodagh introduced her to the place in 1999. Swiss-born Suter studied at the Lullier Horticulture School, Geneva, and in the 90s she travelled to Japan where she met Mami Kawasaki, founder of the Mami Flower Design School in Tokyo, and stayed for seven years.

A self-avowed minimalist, Suter said that this year's collaboration with Tina-Maria and Jack pushed her to a "maximalist, bigger and more colourful expression in the installation."

Every area of the reserve, which is home to sculptures by Dale Chihuly, Dennis Openheim and Sol LeWitt, among others, was transformed for the event, starting with flowing, intensely-hued flags at the entrance, to ribbons tied among the pines.

At the entrance of the Longhouse, which is based on a famous Japanese shrine at Ise, and close to the sculpture *Floating Rain* by Takashi Soga, Suter created sculptural bound fabric poles recalling the work of former 2006 LH Reserve medal award honorees Christo and Jean Claude.

Yoko Ono's 16-foot configuration of a chess game entitled *Play it by Trust* is



surrounded by an interlaced willow hedge. For the occasion, white ribbons had been tied throughout it, echoing *The Wish Tree*, a newly planted Black Tupelo tree that Ono has donated to the grounds. She asks that guests write their wishes on scraps of pastel paper to be tied to the tree, which will be collected every season for Ono's archives.

In the main tent pavilion, Suter used bamboo and a silver/gold metallic fabric designed by Japanese textile artist Jun-ichi Arai, woven together into an undulating structure that hung from the tent ceiling. Outside she used the same fabric on bamboo poles to create three twenty foot tall

wind sculptures. There were also bamboo trees topped with silver and gold *mizuhiki*, a paper twine which in Japan denotes affection and is tied into knots. *Mizuhiki* is closely associated with the concept of *musubu* – meaning 'connection' or 'tying' – which was featured in the main tent's table settings: thin bamboo branches were tied with cord, their ends pointing upwards to convey happiness.

As the sun set, the guests gathered for dinner under the reflective and wafting Arai fabric, Jack Lenor Larsen was fêted with birthday wishes and Yoko Ono was presented with the Longhouse Medal, a carved porcelain sculpture by artist Marc Leuthold.

Facing page: Far left:

Wind sculptures with Jun-ichi Arai's fabric

Left: Jack Lenor Larsen with Yoko Ono

This page: Top left and right: Eve Suter's colourful work at the Longhouse

Top centre: Eve Suter and Jun-ichi Arai's main tent decorations

Below left: The reception dinner and presentation

Above: Jack Lenor Larsen with artist Eve Suter