



(Long) Island OASIS

Jack Lenor Larsen's East Hampton sanctuary, LongHouse Reserve, celebrates its 25th anniversary with a new documentary, new plantings and installations, and its inaugural scholarship program. by PAULA DE LA CRUZ

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHONNA VALESKA COURTESY OF LONGHOUSE RESERVE; LARSEN: GARY MAMAY (UNTITLED); OPPOSITE PAGE: ROBERTO DUTESCO (PLAY IT BY TRUST)

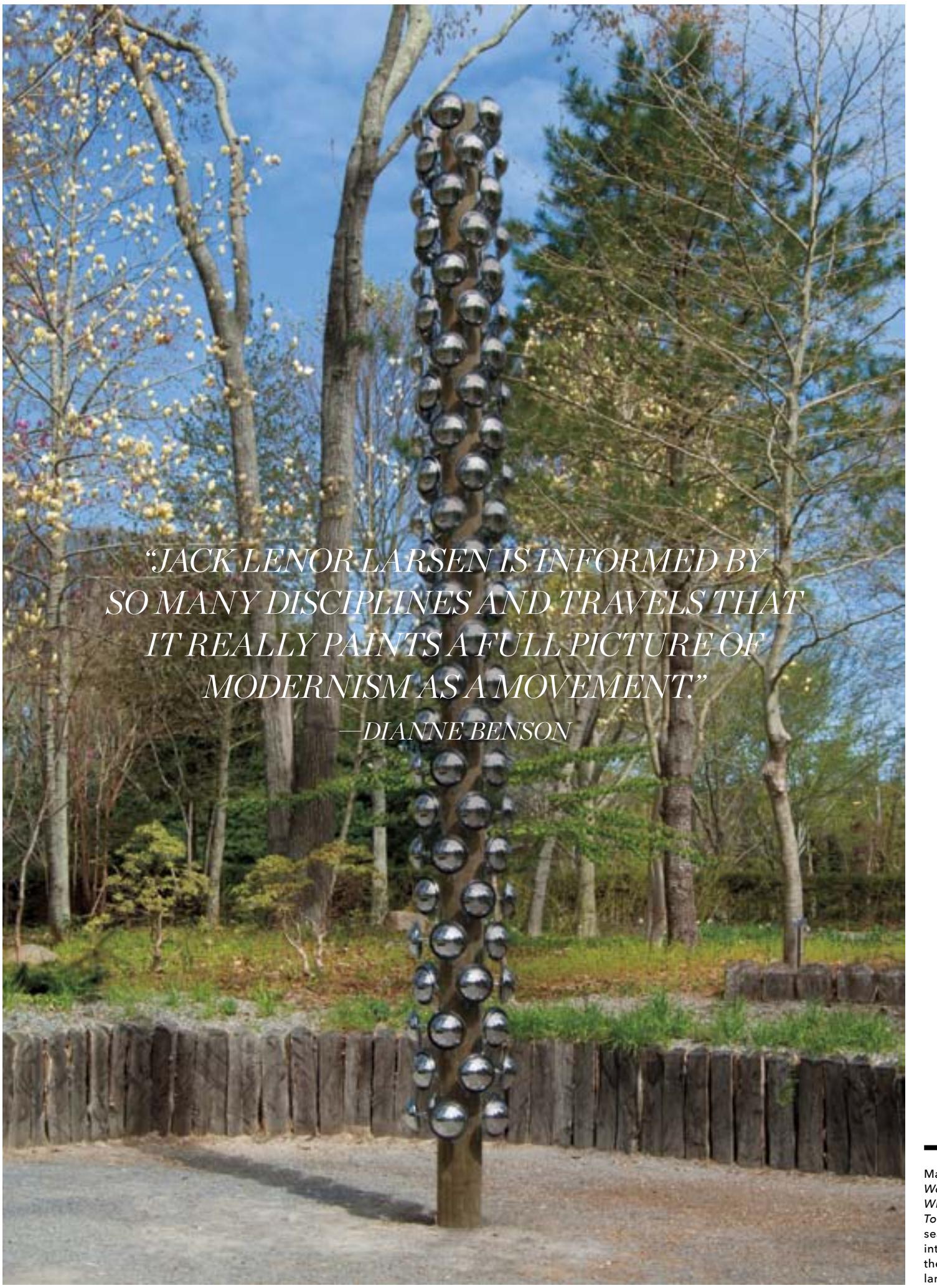
In the mid-1980s, when Jack Lenor Larsen first started designing LongHouse with his architect, Charles Forberg, he explained that he wanted the house to be modern, but it didn't need to be a white box. "After all, the pursuit of the modernist is not to be bound by tradition," says Larsen of his East Hampton estate that "is a case study in nonconformity—a personal house and garden—encouraging visitors to consider wider options."

Larsen speaks with absolute clarity about the principles of modernism because he has lived by them for many decades. Choosing to be a modern man allowed him to channel his infinite curiosity into founding a woven textile empire, planning gardens, building object and furniture collections, and connecting to people of many cultures around the world. Today, at 89, he still wakes up full of ideas about how to celebrate each season of LongHouse Reserve, the gardens he created as a public space 25 years ago. "No matter how good a garden is," he says, "it's not enough of a draw to keep people coming back."

The front downstairs gallery was inaugurated on April 30



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
At East Hampton's
LongHouse Reserve,
visitors can wander
among works like Jun
Kaneko's meditative
Untitled, 2009, 2013,
an installation of five
dangos (Japanese for
"dumpling"); a detail
from Ilya and Emilia
Kabakov's *Arch of
Life*, 2016; Yoko
Ono's *Play It by Trust*,
1999. OPPOSITE PAGE:
Textile designer Jack
Lenor Larsen.



"JACK LENOR LARSEN IS INFORMED BY SO MANY DISCIPLINES AND TRAVELS THAT IT REALLY PAINTS A FULL PICTURE OF MODERNISM AS A MOVEMENT."

—DIANNE BENSON

Marko Remec's *Would That I Wish For (Tall Totem)*, 2016, seamlessly integrates into the surrounding landscape.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GARY MAMAY

with its first exhibition of masterworks—a series of furniture, textiles, and ceramics. Many of the works are iconic, like an Arredoluce Triennale lamp, a Knoll Petal table from the '60s by Richard Schultz, and a side table by Warren Platner. Other pieces aren't as ubiquitous, like Edward Wormley side tables and a dining set by Wharton Esherick, a furniture designer often referred to as the link between the Arts and Crafts Movement and the resurgent interest in furniture-making following World War II. There are a few original textiles by Anni Albers, as well as Larsen's own designs. "Combining colors of low-value contrast is more interesting," Larsen remarks as he passes by one of his textiles in light blues and faint pinks. "Most people combine opposites, like purple and yellow, and it's very strident."

When Larsen first started building his home—an airy version of Japan's Ise Shrine, a Shinto temple dating back to 4 BC—he encouraged Forberg to work like a craftsman, one step at a time. "The idea was not to be conventional," says Larsen, who applied the same principles to planting the garden, where green enclosures change to accommodate sculptures or emphasize a perspective. When some hornbeams died near the *Black Mirror* fountain by Ed Drohan, Larsen didn't replace them because he thought the long views looked better.

"Jack's taste is so exquisite," says Dianne Benson, president of the board of trustees of LongHouse Reserve and a close friend of Larsen's. "He's informed by so many disciplines and travels that it really paints a full picture of modernism as a movement."

Benson met Larsen in the '70s, when her friend Issey Miyake thought that Benson—who was the first to sell Miyake clothes in the US at her New York City store Dianne B—had a similar aesthetic. In 2001, she joined LongHouse Reserve's board and planned its first fundraising event, where Edward Albee and Elaine Stritch read *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Many successful events followed, and when she started raising funds this year to produce a documentary about Larsen and LongHouse—available on DVD in late July—Benson was touched by the outpouring of support. And it wasn't just neighbors and supporters—everyone working at LongHouse became a part of it out of a passion for its role in the Hamptons community. Says Matko Tomicic, LongHouse Reserve's executive director, "It's a real team, with arts, garden, and education experts carefully curating our programs."

Larsen and his art curators are adding seven new works to its impressive sculpture collection this year, including the original *Legs*, a 16-foot-tall piece by Larry Rivers that Rivers first made for Smith Haven Mall in Long Island in 1969. Sag Harbor residents might recall the 2012 controversy around *Legs*, when it was displayed outside the home of Janet Lehr and Ruth Vered, and the village ordered them to remove it. More introspective pieces include *The Invisible*, by Los Angeles artist Enrique Martinez Celaya, and *Six Lines in a T II*, a moving sculpture powered by wind and gravity by George Rickey. This year, LongHouse is expanding its education program by offering its first scholarships to one East Hampton high school senior, one Long Island high school senior, and one college student pursuing graduate studies or other experiences exemplifying LongHouse's mission. The garden will inaugurate a new arbor with two kinds of apple trees, as a nod to Washington, Larsen's home state.

Larsen stops by a hanging of *Olympia*, a single- and double-cloth linen of Egyptian cotton and goat hair he created in 1958. "These pieces represent the best of the modern period, avoiding best-known works," he reflects.

A staunch defender and supporter of crafts, Larsen was one of the founders of the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York in 1956. He is disappointed that crafts are going out of favor, and that most objects in our lives today don't tell a story and we can't use them to express our individuality. "Working along craftsmen from around the world, I really knew intimately the faraway places I visited. Otherwise you might as well watch them on TV!" he quips.

"We are working to fight conformity," Larsen concludes, and points out that his favorite collections are objects that he can use as "props" that give joy and creativity to life. "Ceramics, cut flowers, even clothing separates can quickly change a room, or a person." In his dining room, upstairs from the gallery, Larsen displays with the same care both a nesting collection of abalone shells and antique black Japanese lacquered plates, designed to disappear under bright fruit in a dimly lit room. A collector's mind is one of boundless curiosity, and it understands that one life is not enough to do everything. Jack Lenor Larsen's collections honor our quest to navigate life gracefully and fully, but always one step at a time. 133 Hands Creek Road, East Hampton, 329-3568; longhouse.org ■

SAVE THE DATES

June 14

LongHouse is celebrating its 25th anniversary all season long with seven new garden sculptures and a new gallery exhibiting modern masterworks; its ninth annual student exhibition takes place on this date from 4 to 6 PM.

June 25

Enjoy Planters: On + Off VIII, judged by Martha Stewart on LongHouse's squash court from 4:30 to 7 PM. Visitors will choose the popular People's Choice winner.

July 23

LongHouse's summer benefit, Serious Moonlight, will fête the gardens' jubilee year and award winners.

August 5

Cultures converge when Eve Queler and Friends perform opera alfresco.

August 11

Catch a screening of Laurie Anderson's new film, *Heart of a Dog*, followed by a concert for dogs on August 12.