

ARTS | EAST HAMPTON

# Back to a Changing Garden

Art and nature dance under the same sky at LongHouse Reserve, a 16-acre property.

IT'S A SPECIAL YEAR for Jack Lenor Larsen. At age 89, he is celebrating the 25th jubilee of LongHouse Reserve, his 16-acre sculpture garden in East Hampton. The estate's sandy dunes, wooded glens,

and walking paths — bursting this time of year with daffodils, crocuses, tulips and Eurasian fritillaria — keep almost casual company with works of modern and contemporary art. The sculptures are all so deftly placed within the landscape that it is difficult to imagine them fitting elsewhere.

Mr. Larsen, a renowned textile designer, author and art collector, shares his garden with the public. “I wanted LongHouse to introduce people to an alternative lifestyle, to encourage them to be inventive and nonconformist,” he said.

Rotating exhibitions reinvigorate LongHouse's collection, which incorporates items on permanent display or on loan by artists like Dale Chihuly, Willem de Kooning, Buckminster Fuller, Kiki Smith and Lynda Benglis.

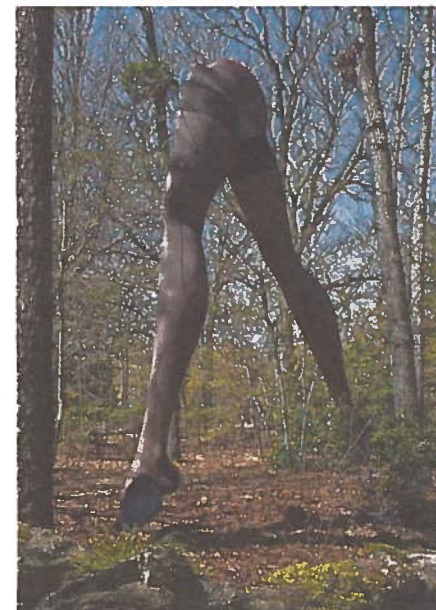
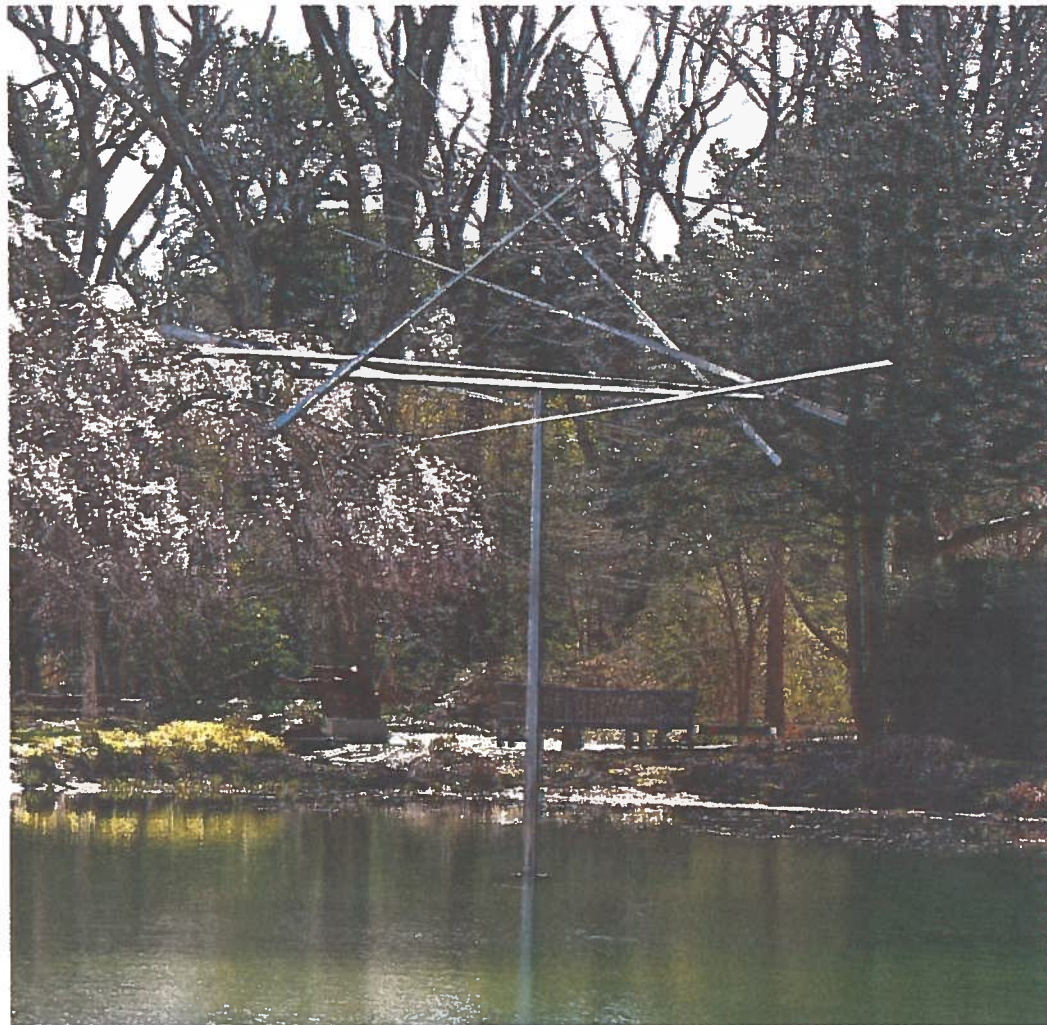
The 2016 exhibition, “Rites of Spring,” brings contemporary form to centuries of mythic celebrations that welcome rebirth and renewal. Sandro Botticelli's grand painting “Primavera” (c. 1482), in which Venus presides over three graces, comes to mind. But where Botticelli embedded nature in art, the eight artists newly featured at LongHouse embed art in nature.

Take the lithe stainless steel limbs of “Six Lines in a T II” (1964-79), by George Rickey (1907-2002), a treelike sculpture that is set in LongHouse's Peter's Pond. “Six Lines” stands tall, as if protecting a seasonal family of delicate lilies and lotus plants. Its intersecting arms gently sway and churn in prevailing winds — whatever it takes to court the splendid nearby cherry tree that is currently abloom with sensuous pink blossoms.

Then there is Venus incarnate — a pair of 16-foot-high, black-stocking legs leaping across the wooded Kreye Canyon. Larry Rivers (1923-2002), who created “Legs” (1969), aptly conveys Venus's daunting sexual power, unlike Botticelli's demure goddess of love and renewal.

An especially poignant allegorical work by Russian-born artists Ilya and Emilia Kabakov sits within an open, sun-drenched grassy knoll. “The Arch of Life” (2016) is modest compared with this renowned couple's more monumental installations. Yet five figures set upon an arch carry the full weight of their vision of paths and resilience: An egg hatches a human head; a vulnerable youth shows bravado as he crawls on hands and knees wearing a lion mask; a third figure bearing a light-filled box on his back represents hope through adversity; and a fourth torso, sorrowfully draped over two sides of a wall, suggests the universal plight of those unable to survive. The final figure, surrounded by the weight of his agony, is in a state of collapse.

Another symbolically figurative work, “The Invisible” (2015), a bronze by Enrique Martinez Ceyala, portrays a crying boy standing, hands clenched, in “Black Mirror,” a square pool designed by Mr. Larsen. Though figurative works tend to spark narratives, this one, tied to loss and the fragility of youth, weds art to nature as



TOP, PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARKO REMEC, LEFT, AND WENDY VAN DEUSEN, ABOVE, PHOTOGRAPHS BY GARY MAMAY

Clockwise from top left: Marko Remec's “Would That I Wish For (Tall Totem)” (2016); George Rickey's “Six Lines in a T II,” in Peter's Pond; Larry Rivers's “Legs”; and Ilya and Emilia Kabakov's “The Arch of Life.”

a boy's tears continuously drip into the pool.

This mythic constancy prevails in Jun Kaneko's “Untitled,” an installation of five dangos (a word that means “dumplings” in Japanese). These monolithic ceramic works, softly molded geometric forms set within a graveled court, are shiny constructions that sport abstract painted patterns reminiscent of minimal painting and postmodern design.

Marko Remec's “Would That I Wish For (Tall Totem)” (2016) interprets the totem pole as a monumental urban pillar. Rising 20 feet from a depression within Grey Garden, it consists of a utility pole covered with industrial semi-dome mirrors that reflect a glut of visual stimuli — on this

**The reserve is intended to inspire invention and nonconformist living.**

day, the limbs of budding trees and the flash of a red fox sauntering by. The mirrors also reflect paranoia of covert surveillance and an obsessive-compulsive need to eyeball all one can about the behavior of others. In this respect, Remec's work bows to the culture of narcissism, inviting viewers to take multiple selfies and exponentially replicate them online.

Finally there is Neil Noland's “Green RE: Genesis/Lake Eden/Black Mountain”

(1986), a steel accordion-pleated sculpture. It sits quietly where it can bask in the whims of sun and shadow, coaxing us to slow down, to look at a single work of art from different angles, and to have in this frenzied world what Mr. Larsen wishes for us: a chance, for a moment, to live a nonconformist life.

**LongHouse Reserve** sculpture garden and landscape art center, with its exhibition “Rites of Spring,” is open to the public through Oct. 8 on Wednesdays and Saturdays, from 2 to 5 p.m. In July and August, it is open Wednesdays through Saturdays, from 2 to 5 p.m. 133 Hands Creek Road, East Hampton. Admission: \$10; seniors, \$8; high school and college students with ID, free. Information: 631-329-3568; longhouse.org.