



ART SEEN: Watermill Center Summer Benefit Features Ja Rule, Pussy Riot & BHQF While Raising \$2 Million

August 25, 2016

by Hamptons Art Hub Staff

The Watermill Center Summer Benefit grabs headlines each year for one matter or another. Some years it's because of nearly nude women or a monstrously-sized inflatable installations taking a butt plug form. Other years, it's due to celebrities in attendance such as [Lady Gaga](#), [Abramović](#) or art world tastemakers who frequent the Hamptons summer circuit.

This year, it was performers who drew the headlines with [Kanye West](#)'s last-minute cancellation and [Ja Rule](#)'s surprise performance during dinner. Kanye West had been expected to perform a new piece with Robert Wilson at this year's benefit but it was postponed until 2017 because of the work's complexity, [reported](#) Nate Freeman of *Art News*.

Still, the Watermill Center's benefit didn't seem to suffer for the change in plans. The gala raised \$2 million with around half coming from the art auction, according to Watermill Center. Proceeds support Watermill's year-round artist residency and education programs. This year's gala, entitled "FADA: HOUSE OF MADNESS" drew a record-breaking number of attendees and participating artists, reported Watermill. The benefit honored Madame Giancarla Berti in recognition of her support.

"Tonight marks the largest attendance we've had in 23 years," declared Robert Wilson as he welcomed guests seated for dinner. "This year we have 130 artist participants representing over 28 nations. Can you believe it!"

Guests entered single-file through the bamboo entrance and were met by the first art performance piece unfolding in the woods: Costume Designer [Jacques Reynaud](#)'s *Angels of Apocalypse*, which included sound installations adapted from recent recordings by Oscar nominee singer/songwriter, ANOHNI (aka Anthony Hegarty).

[Pussy Riot](#) had a presence at the benefit with their installation *Make America Great Again*, a reactionary installation piece inspired by [Donald Trump](#)'s campaign slogan. The art work by the Russian feminist political artists belted power (as well as a bit of the bizarre) installed in the pricey Hamptons benefit and surrounded by designer-dressed guests sipping the gala's signature cocktail, Maestro Dobel's Black Diamond Margarita.

A highlight of the performance art were installations created by the artist collective [Bruce High Quality Foundation](#) (BHQF) of Brooklyn. Presented under the single umbrella of "As We Lay

Dying,” BHQF created a series of works installed throughout the grounds, reflecting on the contemporary world through political and social lenses and channeled through personal perspectives. Another performance art highlight could be found as guests completed their art filled walk through performance art set in the woods by John Margarita’s *One ton tank* - a poured concrete vessel filled with water and a young man wearing a black speedo held down by weights.

Performances during dinner included Norwegian artist [Tori Wrånes](#), dance music spun by [DJ Mia](#) Moretti and an impromptu, surprise performance by Ja Rule.

Art at the silent auction was particularly strong this year. Over 125 pieces were donated by artists. They include Marina Abramović, [Donald](#) Baechler, Michael Bailey-Gates, Humberto & Fernando Campana, Francesco Clemente, Paul Cowan, [Michael](#) Dweck, Maximilian Eicke, Max Gimblett, Gregory de la Haba, [Nir](#) Hod, [Annie](#) Leibovitz, Peter Lindbergh, Kalup Linzy, [Emilia & Ilya](#) Kabakov, [Terence Koh](#), Susan Meiselas, Sarah Meyohas, [G.T.](#) Pelizzi, Enoc Perez, Kembra Pfahler, Randy Polumbo, [Ruby Sky](#) Stiler, Henry Taylor and [Dustin](#) Yellin.

To see scenes from Watermill Center’s 2016 summer benefit, view our slideshow:

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Tracy Stern. Photo Courtesy Carl Timpone: BFA.com



Maximillian Eicke, Heather Rauscher, Lauren Bell, Martin Helderbrent, Michael Eicke. Photo Courtesy Carl Timpone: BFA.com



Ja Rule. Photo Courtesy Carl Timpone: BFA.com.

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BASIC FACTS: Watermill Center’s 23rd Annual Summer Benefit took place on Saturday, July 30, 2016. Watermill Center is located at 39 Watermill Towd Road, Water Mill, NY

11976. www.watermillcenter.org.

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