



# **SOCIAL SCENE: Sold Out Watermill Center Benefit Draws Celebs & Raises over \$2 Million**

August 3, 2017

by Pat Rogers

A celebrity-drenched crowd of over 1,200 gathered at Watermill Center to celebrate its 2017 Summer Benefit 'FLY INTO THE SUN.' The 24th annual gala-the highlight of the Hamptons benefit season-raised over \$2 million, so far, benefiting its year-round artist residency and education programming, according to Watermill Center. The sold out event honored Laurie Anderson and Isabelle Huppert in tribute to the late musician Lou Reed.

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Laurie Anderson, Isabelle Huppert. Photo by BFA.com / Courtesy of The Watermill Center.

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Throughout the cocktail portion of the evening, guests mingled amidst the performance art, social photographers, art stars, friends and art installed beneath the tent for a silent auction featuring over 100 art works. Adopting the dress code of "Dark Shiny Matter," luminaries from art, architecture, fashion, music, performance and Hollywood mingled at the gala.

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William I. Campbell, Isabelle Huppert, Christine Wachter-Campbell, Martin Rubenstein. Photo by BFA.com / Courtesy of The Watermill Center.

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Rujeko Hockley, Hank Willis Thomas, Sheree Hovsepian. Photo by BFA.com / Courtesy of The Watermill Center.

To see images of who attended and scenes from the Benefit, click here:

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Upon entering the Watermill Center grounds, guests were greeted by a colorful, large-scale installation by New York based artist Jared Madere and specialty cocktails by Tequila Don Julio titled "After Hours." The durational performances begun immediately with the first featuring Somos Monstros (Raúl de Nieves & Erik Zajackowski).

Sited among the 8.5-acre grounds were over 20 site-specific works and performances curated by Noah Khoshbin and Ivan Cheng in tribute to Lou Reed's life and work, positioned throughout the Center's 8.5-acre grounds. [Click here](#) to read a Critic's View of the performance art by James Croak for Hamptons Art Hub.



Performance by Somos Monstros (Raúl de Nieves & Erik Zajackowski). Photo:  
©Maria Baranova, BFA.com / Courtesy of The Watermill Center.

Difficult to miss was a 90-foot wall featuring Jenny Holzer's iconic, minimalist text reading "She Outwits Him / She Outlives Him" on the north side. The south side of the wall served as platform for artistic expressions by Summer Program Participant artists, Jokubas Nosovas, Nikitas Broukakis and Sam Khoshbin. Taking a cue from last year's participatory project by [Bruce High Quality Foundation](#) of Brooklyn at [Watermill Center Gala 2016](#), this year's attendees were able to make their own mark by using spray paint in a variety of colors.

Performances unfolding along a tiki torch-lined path included [Storyboard P's](#) "Formless Expressions," [Kate Gilmore's](#) "Beat," [Nile Harris's](#) "Monkey on His Back (Love Laboratory)" featuring a man nearly buried under a towering pile of bananas, conceptual artist [Stephen Shanabrook's](#) sculpture of a headless man with cotton candy left for brains, and the performance piece "Salute" by Croatian artist [Vesna Mackovic](#). Also performed were works by artists Rachel Frank, [Christopher Knowles](#), Xu Zhen and others.

After cocktails, over 500 dinner guests retired to the sequestered dining tent for a family-style meal by BITE. Robert Wilson welcomed the crowd and introduced Claude Grunitzky, newly named the first President of the Byrd Hoffman Water Mill Foundation along with this year's 80 participants of Watermill Center's International Summer Program.

Inviting honorees Laurie Anderson and Isabelle Huppert to the stage, Wilson called for donations to support The Center's year-round Artist Residency Program which was dramatically embraced by [Robert Downey Jr.](#), who leaped to the stage with a bid of over \$5,000, according to Watermill Center. The evening continued with a live auction led by auctioneer Simon de Pury.



Photo by BFA.com / Courtesy of The Watermill Center.

After dinner, guests were guided back upstairs for a special performance by [Laurie Anderson](#) followed by a DJ Flat White aka Virgil Abloh. When the clock struck midnight, guests drifted into the darkened night with a final artist gift—a limited edition tote bags designed by [Jenny Holzer](#).

The evening's guests included Katharina Otto-Bernstein, Christine Wächter-Campbell & William I. Campbell, Paula Cooper, Prince Dimitri of Yugoslavia, Susan & Robert Downey Jr., Somers & Jonathan Farkas, Michael Feinstein, Wendy & Roger Ferris, Glenn & Amanda Fuhrman, Anke & Jürgen Friedrich, Countess Elisabetta Girolodi, Audrey & Martin D. Gruss, Amanda Hearst, Anne Hearst & Jay McInerney, Leila Heller, Rujeko Hockley & Hank Willis Thomas, Nir Hod, Emilia Kabakov, Daniel Libeskind, Fern Mallis, Christophe de Menil, Inga Maren Otto, Polina Proshkina and many others.



Elsa Hosk, Tom Daly, David Siegel, Zeynep Inanli. Photo by BFA.com / Courtesy of The Watermill Center.



Jean Shafiroff. Photo by BFA.com / Courtesy of The Watermill Center.

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To read a review of the performance art, read "[Critic's View: Performance Art at Watermill Center Gala Prods Consciousness through Action, Not Theory](#)" by James Croak.