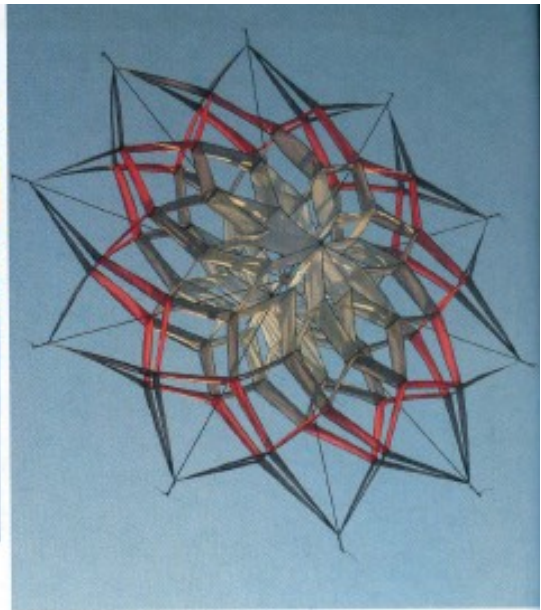


Great Dane!
by Jon Burkhardt
photos by Bernhard Dingwerth
and Jon Burkhardt



It's true, what they say about Fanø: from the center of the field, look right and it's the biggest kite festival you've ever seen; then look left, and it's the second biggest kite festival you've ever seen. On a good day, you're left searching for words: astounding, amazing, unbelievable are some that come to mind.

Not every day of this week-long event is perfect, of course. Fanø is an island off the west coast of Denmark in the North Sea, which generally means that you need to be prepared for heavy winds. And temperatures that feel somewhere between cool and cold. In June 2009, the 25th anniversary of the first Fanø international kite festival, this certainly was true. Knowing this, the real kite experts focus on big inflatable pieces that don't mind the strong winds at all. But on a perfect day with 10 - 12 mile per hour winds, everything flies in a truly joyful spectacle.

The beach is 10 miles long; folks drive onto the hard packed sand, park their cars, tie down a bunch of kites, and wander among all the other friends and their creations. The big thrill this year was the incredible display of imagination in so many different kinds of bols created by Willi Koch, some of which are commercially available, others not. Line laundry of all sorts and shapes was prominently featured, and the inflatable lady bugs were bouncing all over the beach.

Karen and I were guests of Premier Kites, who had rented a very modern house just behind the dunes. Besides ourselves and Val and Al of Premier, the cottage included Wolfgang Grimsel and his wife Constanza,

Jon Trennepohl, and, as the weekend approached, more and more fliers. More beer, more wine, more food! It got to be quite a wonderful party. We had been looking forward to going to Fanø for many years, and the 25th anniversary was absolutely magnificent.

The grandest part of Fanø is the friendships that you renew and make. Spending quality time with kite friends that you have known and have just gotten to know is a real joy. Fanø is a festival that deserves to be on everyone's MUST DO list. 