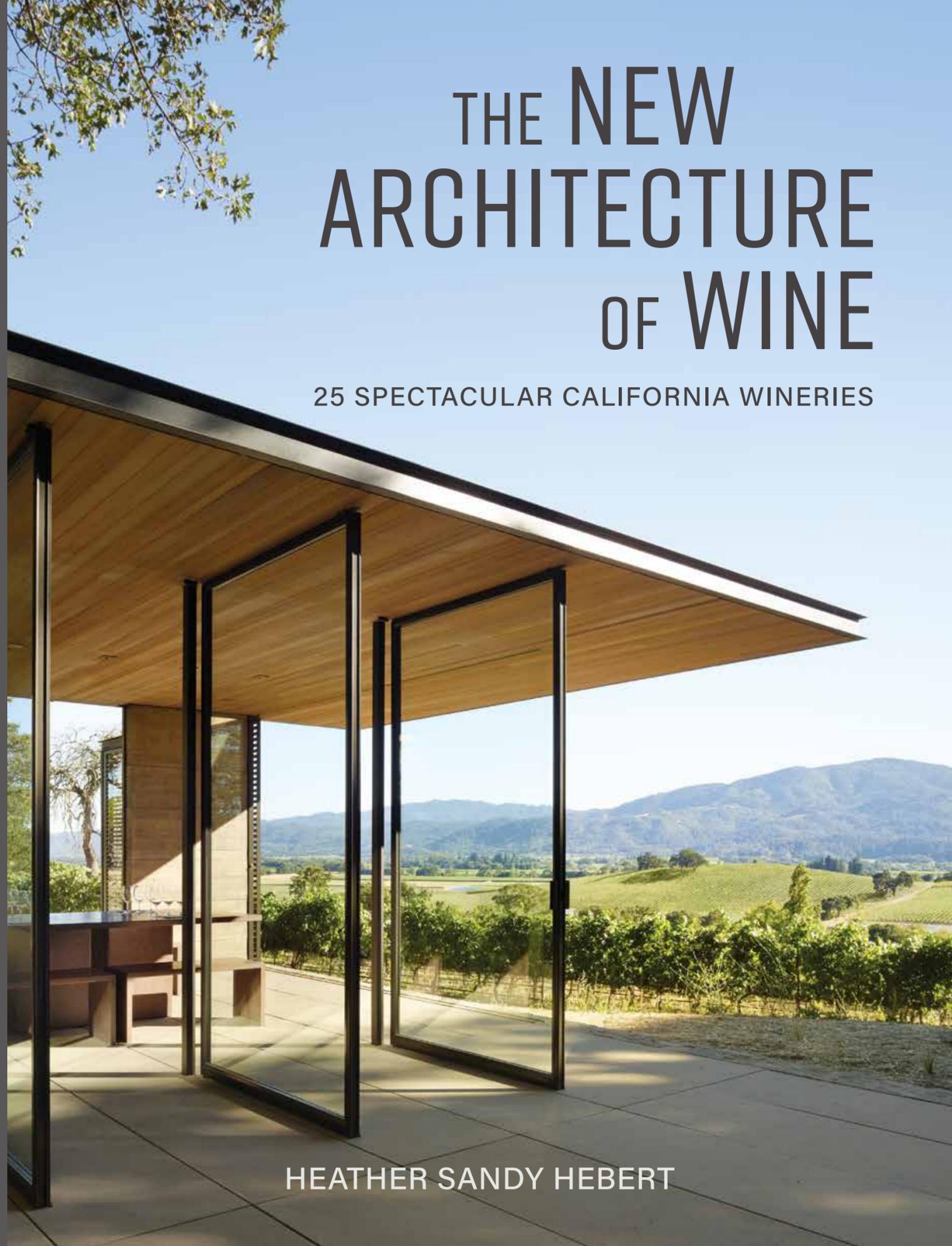




THE NEW ARCHITECTURE OF WINE

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THE NEW ARCHITECTURE OF WINE

25 SPECTACULAR CALIFORNIA WINERIES

HEATHER SANDY HEBERT

A photograph of a modern architectural courtyard. A long, wide concrete walkway leads from the foreground towards the background. On either side of the walkway are dark, minimalist structures with flat roofs. The ceiling of the structure on the left is made of horizontal wooden slats and is illuminated from below, casting a warm glow. The structure on the right has a similar wooden ceiling with vertical supports. The background shows a landscape with trees and hills under a clear sky.

THE NEW
ARCHITECTURE
OF WINE

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25 SPECTACULAR CALIFORNIA WINERIES

HEATHER SANDY HEBERT



GIBBS SMITH
TO ENRICH AND INSPIRE HUMANKIND

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INTRODUCTION

We live in what Esther Mobley, wine editor for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, has called the “Golden Age of Wine.” Long gone are the days when new-world wine had to prove itself against the pillar of old-world wine. The 40th anniversary of the famous Judgement of Paris, in which California wine asserted itself on the world stage, has come and gone. A new, second generation of vintners experiment and expand the definition of winemaking and the wine-making experience in California. And the lifestyle of California’s wine country speaks to visitors from all over the world—old generation and new—in a common language based on immersive experience of the land and seasons, a commitment to sustainability, artisanship, and community and a sense of ease that comes from living your values.

Those values speak loud and clear in the new architecture of wine. In the last decade, winery architecture has come into its own in California. In place of the imitations of old-world estates or expressions of grandeur made for the sake of grandeur alone, California vintners and their architects are creating wineries as expressions of the place that California’s wine country has become now, in its own right. Whether a modern expression of California’s agricultural vernacular, a cutting-edge structure rendered in glass and steel, or a piece of wine country history reimagined in a contemporary style, the new architecture of wine expresses what the California wine country experience is right now.

No other type of commercial architecture embodies and expresses the passion of its inhabitants, their communion with the land, and their personal stories quite like winery design. Perhaps that is why most winery architects also specialize in residential design. These designers are adept at capturing their clients’ aspirations, passions, and personal stories and expressing them through the medium of the built environment. This book is about the relationships between winemakers and the architects they trust to tell their story.

Howard Backen has distilled the essence of the agrarian winery building as it fits within the California landscape, so it is fitting that the first two wineries



we visit in this book are designed by his firm, Backen & Gillam Architects. A charming man with an easy laugh that erupts frequently, Howard is still going strong at 82. Besides his architecture, perhaps his most lasting achievement is his role in defining the relationship between architect and client as far more than business. His clients become his lifelong friends. And a younger generation of architects is continuing that narrative. In story after story throughout this book, the relationships between architects and winemakers are those of trust, admiration, and shared enthusiasm for land, place, process, and artistry. Their work together is a mutual endeavor to live consciously and express what the land wants to say.

Winemaking is a ritual, an event at once agricultural, industrial, and artistic. Wineries are not just places to process grapes into wine. Nor are they places simply to visit to drink and buy wine. They are an opportunity for guests to immerse themselves in the world of winemaking, for a little while at least, and become a part of its community. This is what makes the architecture of wine so compelling. For everything here has a story behind it, which is part of the shared narrative of the California wine country.

Cycles of time within wineries are an important part of the ethos. Vineyards are developed, harvests come and go, each year providing the winemakers with a better understanding of their potential. Buildings must be built to last; then when and if needs change, they must be adapted to reflect the developing nature of the wine industry, winemaking process, and the visitor experience.

After spending a year taking a journey through some of the best new winery design in California, I have learned that every winery has a story and that no two stories are alike. More than any profession I have ever come across, the industry is about people: family and community knitted together in a passionate effort to create artistry through the land. So, while this book is a celebration of architecture and wine, it is also mostly about people.

I hope you enjoy the journey as much as I have.



MELKA ESTATES

ELEGANT DESIGN IN AN UNDERSTATED PACKAGE

LOCATION: **ST. HELENA**

ARCHITECTURE: **SIGNUM ARCHITECTURE**

Sometimes the most elegant design solutions come in small, understated packages. Such is the case at Melka Estates, just off Napa Valley's Silverado Trail. A simple form derived from the agricultural vernacular of the California wine country, the dark barn-like structure is nonetheless a dramatic fixture set against the green and gold hillsides of the Napa Valley. Humble and unassuming yet arrestingly beautiful, it is a perfect expression of the dynamism and the humility of both its owners and its architect.

Philippe and Cherie Melka and their architect, Juancarlos Fernandez, are perhaps three of the most recognized names in the Napa Valley, known for their talent, their intense commitment to their craft, and their humility. Maybe that is why they get along so well.

As business partners, the Melkas' pedigrees are lengthy. A native of Bordeaux, with a degree in geology and a master's degree in agronomy and enology from the University of Bordeaux, Philippe is as connected to wine and the land as it is possible to be. He began his career at the top, at Chateau Haut Brion, then worked with Moueix Company, Chateau Petrus, and numerous wineries in Italy and Australia. Armed with a degree in microbiology, Cherie began her wine-making

career at Ridge Vineyards, training under the legendary Paul Draper and working as the winery's enologist for five years. In 1991, their worlds came together with a chance meeting. While interning at Dominus, Philippe was visiting Ridge Vineyards to meet Paul Draper and taste his legendary wines when he walked into the lab and met Cherie. "Paul Draper was our matchmaker," laughs Cherie.

After spending a year and a half in France, the couple returned to the United States. Cherie worked with Beaulieu and Silver Oak Cellars. Philippe founded his company, Atelier Melka, and has spent over twenty years as a wine-making consultant to some of the Napa Valley's most prestigious family wineries, including Lail Vineyards, Dana Estates, Raymond, BRAND Napa Valley, and others. They cofounded Melka Estates in 1996, but it wasn't until 2017 that their wine venture had a home of its own.

The wine-making community in the Napa Valley is close and connected, as it is in the wine-making regions of Sonoma County and California's central coast. Since moving to the valley, the Melkas had lived in downtown St. Helena, raising two children and becoming deeply ingrained in the community.



PREVIOUS OVERLEAF: Melka Estates, with its simple yet arresting design, is a perfect expression of the dynamism and humility of both its owners and its architect.

ABOVE: A contemporary play on the traditional barn vernacular, the building is painted a deep shade of charcoal and grounded by the heritage oak that lies directly on axis with the structure's central breezeway.

But by 2011, they were looking for “less house, more land.” A hillside site fronting the Silverado Trail, planted with two acres of Cabernet Sauvignon, offered just what they were looking for. They began by building a house on the hillside—a prefab modular home by Bay Area–based Blu Home—overlooking their vineyards and the valley floor. Next, they worked with Juancarlos to renovate an existing barn on the property to serve as a hospitality space with an airy upstairs tasting area, and a large ground-level space for events. Juancarlos brought in Blasen Landscape Architecture to tie the structures together with landscape.

“Juancarlos was our touchstone for everything here—the house, the renovated barn, the new production winery, the landscape,” says Cherie. “We don’t make any design decisions without him!”

They continued making their wine elsewhere until 2014, when they approached Juancarlos about building a new production facility on the site. Completed in 2017, the new winery is a simple barn-like structure with an emphasis on functionality and efficiency. Set parallel to the adjacent Silverado Trail, it is comprised of two prefabricated buildings painted a deep shade of charcoal. A landscaped berm lining the front of the site runs visual interference between the winery and the adjacent roadway. “The stealth dark color and the simplicity of the design reflects Philippe’s humble and reserved personality, but at the same time it makes a bold statement, similar to the wines produced within the building,” says Juancarlos.

The new winery totals just 2,000 square feet of interior space and 1,400 square feet of covered exterior space. Three separate HVAC systems allow the wine-making team to move the wine from place to place as it progresses through fermentation and barrel aging—a French approach to the wine-making process. Mobile cooling units can be relocated from place to place. “In a small winery, it’s all about efficiency,” says Cherie.

Set on axis with the hospitality building, the two prefabricated structures that comprise the production facility are augmented on nearly every side with covered space formed by extrusions of the standing seam roof. Over the hospitality-facing facade, a deep overhang creates a covered crush pad that Juancarlos calls “a modular cave.” Two screened breezeways, one original and one added about a year later, provide flexible indoor-outdoor space along long facades to the east and west. A motorized shade protects the western facade from the intense afternoon sun.

An existing oak tree to the east defines the winery’s central point—the intersection of two strong axial relationships. Set on axis with the grand oak and perpendicular to the road, a breezeway between the two structures forms a vaulted cavern equally well suited for production or events. In fact, the flexible spaces within the barrel rooms, under the extruded roofline and between the hospitality and production buildings, provide a variety of areas for entertaining, which the Melkas do often. “We have amazing events here,” says Cherie.

The Melkas made their first vintage on-site in 2017, a fall season that saw some of California’s worst wildfires ever erupt in Napa and Sonoma counties. It was a tough first harvest, but everything was saved. “We waited twenty years to do this,” says Cherie. “It was a long road getting here, but we’re really happy.”



The standing seam metal roof extends over the crush pad, forming a protected area for both winemaking and events.



ABOVE: The production winery's simple form is simultaneously comfortable within the landscape and dramatically set apart from it.

LEFT: Cherie found the light fixtures in the central breezeway at Erin Martin Design in downtown St. Helena and loves the way they turn in the breeze.

OPPOSITE: Under a concrete bench, a backlit screen echoes the portrait detail of Philippe that appears on the Melka Estates wine labels.





PROGENY WINERY

A SPIRITUAL CONNECTION TO THE LAND

LOCATION: **MT. VEEDER**

ARCHITECTURE: **SIGNUM ARCHITECTURE**

Progeny Winery's new hospitality building is a small, light-filled jewel box set within the mountainous terrain of the Mt. Veeder AVA. Located on 260 acres high in the hills, up a driveway that measures exactly a mile, the land feels a world apart from the valley just below. "It's 7 minutes from Highway 29," says founder Paul Woolls, "and yet when you get here you feel like you're in another country."

Paul and Betty Woolls have owned this land—a former cattle ranch—since 2007. In fact, they went into contract the same weekend they were married. Betty already owned a successful winery on Howell Mountain but this piece of land, brought to their attention by a friend, was too beautiful to pass up. Mt. Veeder's steep slopes and minimal topsoil are rugged and challenging, but renowned for producing intense, age-worthy wines. When the couple purchased the land, they didn't know if it held enough water to grow grapes successfully, but they went ahead with the purchase anyway. "We decided if we found water, we'd plant a vineyard," Paul explains. "If not, we'd have a really wonderful place to walk around."

They found water. "And here we are," says Paul with a smile.

The couple planted their first vines in 2009, harvested their first crop in 2012, and introduced their first vintage in 2015. In 2016, they completed construction on their winery production facility. Elegant in its simplicity, the production facility sits unobtrusively against a stand of trees, a straightforward design solution comprised of two prefabricated structures sited and detailed by architect Juancarlos Fernandez of Signum Architecture. Just as the production winery was completed, construction crews broke ground on the new hospitality building.

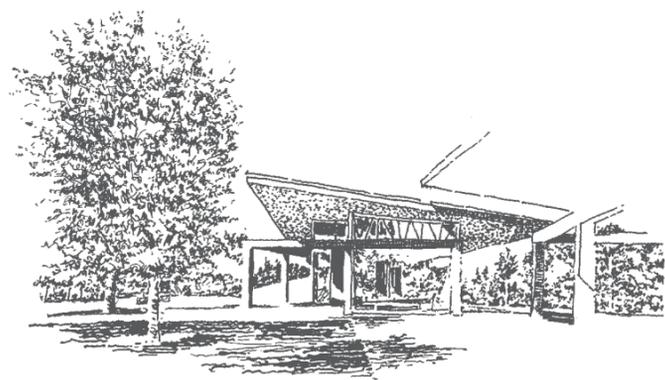
For the hospitality building, the couple turned again to Juancarlos Fernandez. "They had a tremendous amount of faith in my instincts," says Juancarlos. "They admired contemporary architecture, and they knew they did not want a barn. Other than that, they were open to new ideas." There was a great deal of trust and alignment between client and architect. Paul recalls: "We gave him a bottle of wine, he came up to the site—I think he was on his bike—and he sat and looked for a long time."

Architect and client studied the land together to determine the best site for the new building. They considered building it near the massive oak tree that provides the inspiration for both the winery's name



PREVIOUS OVERLEAF: Progeny Winery is set upon a knoll overlooking rolling hills and vineyards high up in the Napa Valley's Mt. Veeder AVA.

ABOVE: Set askew from the skeleton and roof, the two structures feel like small glass jewel boxes dropped at an angle into their concrete frames, shielded from the sun by broad overhangs.



OPPOSITE: Slim structural posts, interspersed with posts of rusted steel salvaged from the ends of vineyard rows, allow the roofs to float above the walls.

ABOVE: The concept was to split the building into two structures, with rooflines just four feet apart, that seem to merge into a single building when viewed from a distance.

and its label, which features a sketch of the centuries-old tree. The sketch gives equal weight to the branches, which reach skyward, and the roots, which dig deep into the earth, emphasizing the concept of the land as progenitor. But even with its views of the Napa Valley to the east, the site was best suited for quiet inspiration, so they simply placed large picnic tables beneath the oak tree and left it otherwise untouched. They decided to set the new hospitality building on a knoll just up the hill from the production winery, overlooking the property's undulating vineyard-covered hills.

Juancarlos conceived the initial design and presented it to Paul and Betty. "I presented this crazy idea for the winery, and they loved it," Juancarlos recalls.

His concept was to split the building into two smaller structures. The two buildings—with roof lines separated by just four feet—loosely represent Paul and Betty. One houses the tasting areas and kitchen, while the other holds private offices. From a distance, the roof lines seem to join together, in perfect harmony with the adjacent hillsides, and with each other. The roof lines, which appear long and low when seen from afar, soar above the diminutive structures, held aloft by a concrete exoskeleton that brings to mind a modern-day stonehenge. The concrete skeleton and roof are set on axis with Mt. Veeder to the west; the structures within are oriented toward the vineyard view to the northwest. Set askew from the skeleton and roof, the structures feel like small, glass jewel boxes dropped at an angle into their protective concrete moment frames, shielded from the sun by broad overhangs.

Juancarlos wanted to create something new and something old at the same time. To that end, the raw concrete will age more quickly than the glass-walled structures, giving the concrete structure a sense of gravitas over time. The structural concrete frames were formed by custom-mixing the concrete into a nearly liquid form, an incredibly tricky process. Since the skeleton literally holds everything up, there could be no air pockets between the concrete and the steel set within it. "The margin for error was about zero," says Juancarlos. The construction team left no room for error, creating a mock-up before embarking on the actual frame. Leaving nothing to waste, the team placed the concrete mock-up within a grove of trees near the production winery, on axis with the vine rows. Two low concrete walls directly on axis with the arch forge a connection between the winery and hospitality buildings, and invite visitors to take a walk in the vineyards.

Slim structural posts, interspersed with posts of rusted steel salvaged from the ends of vineyard rows, allow the roofs to float above the walls. They also create a tactile connection between the building and the steel posts anchoring the vineyard rows just beyond the expansive terrace. Clad in white and light wood, and flooded with natural light, the interiors are cleanly furnished, giving Progeny the serene, zen-like quality of a gallery.

"I like the simplicity of modern design," says Paul, whose mid-century home in LA was designed by architect Richard Lim in the 1960s. "There is a oneness with the site that comes with very good architecture that is almost spiritual. I felt that spiritual connection in my LA home. I feel it here too."



Architect Juancarlos Fernandez envisioned the interior as a gallery space, a clean and elegant backdrop for the wine and views.



OPPOSITE: The furnishings, by Anthony Flesher Interiors, are clean, polished, and inviting.

ABOVE: Expansive glass doors fold back to connect the private dining area to the views of the infinity pool and vineyards.



Set just off the demonstration kitchen and private dining area, an infinity-edge pool reflects the adjacent vineyards and provides an artful transition between the contemporary design and the landscape.



HALL WINES

A CELEBRATION OF WINE, ART AND PEOPLE

LOCATION: ST. HELENA

ARCHITECTURE: SIGNUM ARCHITECTURE

When Kathryn and Craig Hall first sat down to discuss the design for their new winery with Jarrod Denton, cofounder of Signum Architecture, they asked him to create something different, something no one had ever seen in the Napa Valley. They also wanted to honor their site's roots in the valley's winemaking tradition, provide a museum-quality backdrop for their world-class collection of contemporary art, and build a winery that expressed their devotion to sustainability and love of the land. Above all, they wanted the winery to reflect their personality, and become a place to entertain on a grand scale.

"We love to entertain," says Kathryn Hall. "It's in our DNA."

The best architects love a challenge, and the Halls had certainly provided it. Jarrod responded with a winemaking campus that pairs a meticulous reimagining of a historic structure, with a seminal structure that is at once a production winery, art gallery, hospitality center, and setting for some of the valley's most notable events, such as Auction Napa Valley. He also succeeded in designing California's first LEED Gold-certified winery, finishing just ahead of his partner, Juancarlos Fernandez, whose LEED Gold-certified design for

CADE Winery was completed a week or so later.

Kathryn Hall grew up amid her family's vineyards in nearby Mendocino and had long dreamed of creating a destination in the Napa Valley to celebrate her love of wine, art, and entertaining. In 2003, she and Craig took the first step toward pursuing that dream by purchasing a plot of land with deep winemaking history: it housed the historic Peterson-Bergfeld Winery and a collection of other structures. Set in the heart of the Napa Valley just below the town of St. Helena, the prominent site offered them the opportunity to create an iconic destination amid the many wineries on the valley floor.

Originally constructed in 1885, the Peterson-Bergfeld building is one of California's best-known ghost wineries—pre-prohibition wineries that remain as vestiges of wine country history. By 2003, the winery was in a state of disrepair, completely encapsulated in a derelict warehouse structure. Undaunted, the Halls were determined to bring it back to life. Although the building's condition dictated that only key historic elements could be salvaged and preserved, the team carefully documented the details of the existing building and rebuilt it with modern materials and methods to



The Hall Wines campus is replete with intentional juxtapositions: old and new, rustic and contemporary, hard-edged but softened by the trees and grasses that surround the structures.

PREVIOUS OVERLEAF: Graham Caldwell's *Red Rain*, an installation of steel and blown glass, and *Pinwheels* by Jim Drain and Ara Peterson, hang in the double-height production winery.

OPPOSITE: A walkway leads visitors to the glass entry doors which are rimmed in Corten steel—left to acquire patina,—then unexpectedly backlit in Hall's signature red.

match the original. Since no original drawings remained, they worked from period photographs. The historic stone base remained, but the barn-like structure above was newly constructed by local artisans and stained by hand to look as if it had always been there. Used for special events, it establishes a centerpiece for the campus, honors the heritage of the property, and provides a counterpoint for the strikingly contemporary new winery building.

Hall is not a singular structure, nor is it a singular experience. It is, rather, a carefully curated set of experiences within the landscape and the built environment. The design is replete with intentional juxtapositions: old and new, rustic and contemporary, and hard-edged but softened by the trees and grasses that surround the structures. In fact, the landscape, and the artwork carefully placed with in it, form the connective tissue that binds the buildings together into a cohesive whole.

The journey begins before visitors set foot on the property, when the 35-foot *Bunny Foo Foo*, rendered in polished stainless steel, first comes into view from Highway 29. Designed by Laurence Argent, the sculpture is playful, personal, and entertaining, an immediate indication that Hall has been built for the celebration of both wine and art.

Once visitors arrive, the journey is carefully choreographed. A massive heritage oak tree sits directly on axis with the entry door, connected by a walkway that is tapered ever so slightly to draw visitors toward the entry. Glass entry doors are rimmed in Corten steel, that was left to age to a rough, chalky texture and then are unexpectedly backlit in Hall's signature red. The entry space is small, one of a series of points of tension and release that mark the journey through the architecture. Multiple contemplative spaces become the architectural equivalent of breathing room to take in the artwork.

In direct juxtaposition to the rustic historicism of the Peterson-Bergfeld building, the winery is starkly contemporary—a glass structure composed of two horizontal planes. The roof seems to float in space, but it is actually a 30-foot cantilever, supported by just two columns and free from horizontal beams that might disrupt the sweeping views of the Mayacamas Mountains. This magical illusion is made possible by structural glass fins set perpendicular to the glass that wraps the space.

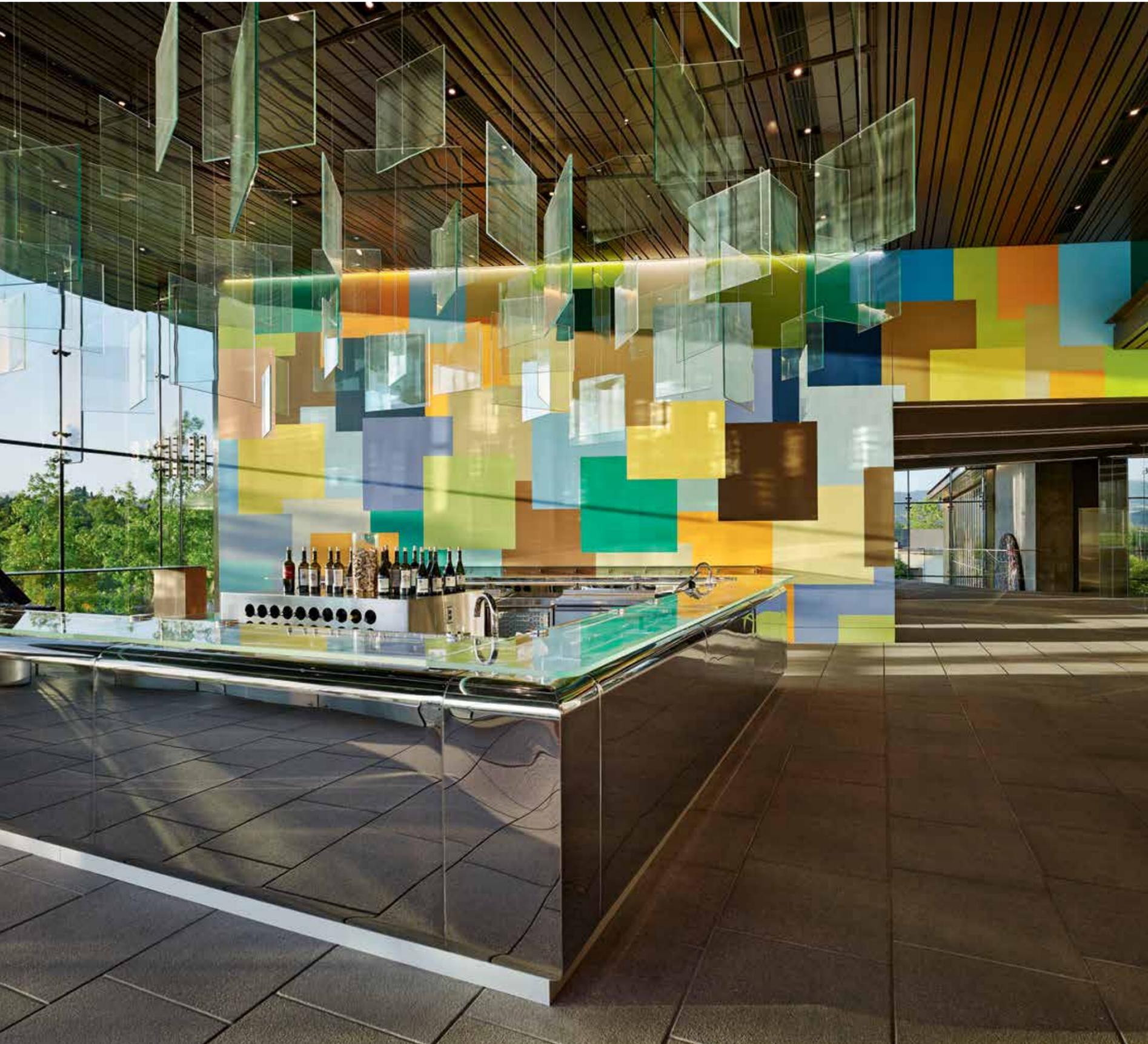
The lack of elevation changes on the flat site challenged the team to create a sense of elevation within the building itself. By elevating the main tasting area to the second floor and rendering it nearly transparent, the team captured the sweeping views of the vineyards and the mountain range just beyond. Tucked underneath the tasting room, an intimate gathering space for special tastings is enclosed and hushed, opening onto a members-only lower terrace.

Jarrold emphasizes that this project was one of his most deeply collaborative, with architect and artists working hand in hand to create this highly evolved envelope for their art pieces. Each of the dozens of pieces was commissioned specifically for this site, just as the architecture was designed specifically to house the





The view from the production winery, past Jim Campbell's light installation *Exploded View* and through the VIP tasting rooms to the courtyard beyond is the architect's favorite.



One of Kathryn Hall's favorite collaborations between architect and artist is in the main tasting room, where artist Spencer Finch's colorful mural and installation of dozens of glass squares both capture and reflect the views visible from Jarrod Denton's glass box.

artwork. Sculptures by Jaume Plensa, John Baldessari, Francois-Xavier Lalanne, Patrick Dougherty, and many others live within the landscape.

One of Kathryn's favorite collaborations between art and architecture is in the main tasting room. To direct the eye to the views beyond the glass walls, Jarrod painted the interior surfaces a dark shade, creating a frame for the views. Artist Spencer Finch conceived a mural for the rear wall that mirrors the colors of the landscape, and he hung dozens of individual glass squares from nearly invisible wires over that tasting bar. Each of the squares moves subtly and independently in the breeze from the open doorways, creating an organic sense of movement in direct contrast to the space's hard edges. Within this glass box, everything illuminates, or reflects, the surroundings. Viewed from the courtyard as the sun sets in late afternoon, the entire western facade becomes a reflection of the landscape.

Jarrold Denton loves an immersive experience, and he is tirelessly attentive to detail. But most telling of all, he thoroughly enjoys returning to his projects to experience every detail. The winery structure is comprised of a series of moments, each one better than the next. On a tour through the building, Jarrod pauses on the landing overlooking the entry to look back at the view of the heritage oak. He declares, "This is my favorite moment," only to override himself with, "No, this is my favorite moment," again and again.

On the mezzanine he stops, looking out at the views framed by the three private tasting rooms that fan out across from the large production area. Set at the center of the winery, these three spaces provide a deeply engaging experience, where visitors can look out to where the grapes are grown, hear and smell the grapes being processed on the adjacent mezzanine, and taste the end product. But though it's close, this is not Jarrod's favorite moment.

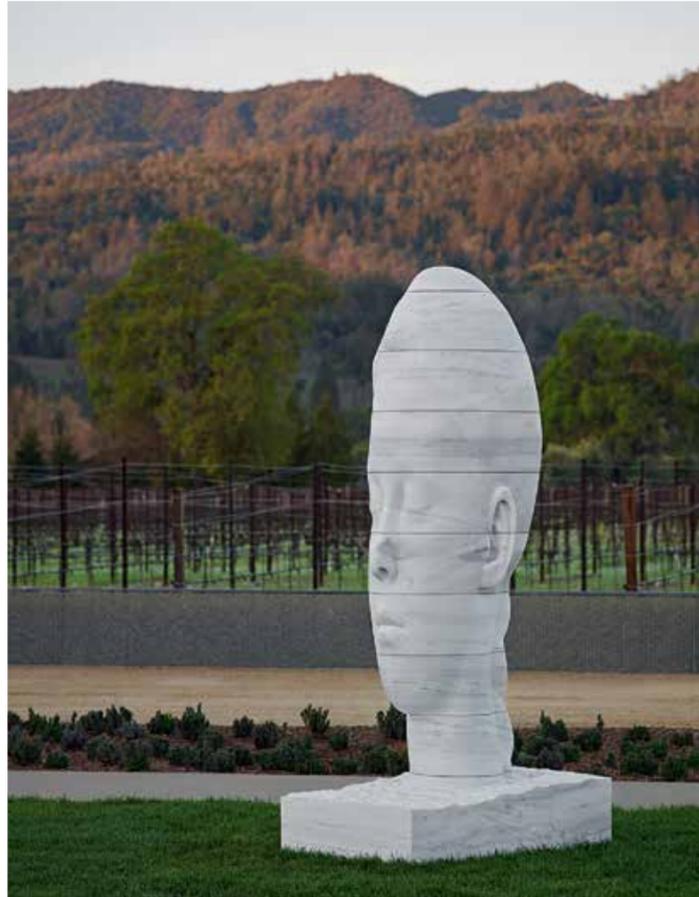
He walks through to the glass doors to the mezzanine that floats above the fermentation tanks and says decisively, "This really is my favorite moment, and it's in the production area. The workers share the same access to views and art installations as the visitors and club members do." Constructed to facilitate a gravity-fed process, the double-height production space opens to the through views and is filled with artwork. Graham Caldwell's *Red Rain* and *Pinwheels* by Jim Drain and Ara Peterson hang above the tanks. Jim Campbell's installation, *Exploded View*—comprised of 1,728 LEDs—crosses the glass boundary between the production and hospitality spaces, effectively knitting them together.

The Halls take their hospitality seriously. In early meetings, they had described the ideal winery guests: they stay five hours then have an amazing experience that they take home with them and share with their friends. On a later visit, Jarrod stopped to talk with a group visiting from Tennessee. When he mentioned that he was the architect, the group raved, telling him they had been there for four or five hours, met new friends, and planned to go home and tell all their friends about it. His comment: "They nailed it."

Ray, a host and ambassador at Hall Wines, sums up the experience: "Wine-making takes place in the vineyard; this place is about our personality, about who we are."

The curtain walls allow visitors to walk right up to the glass as if there were no walls at all, a dramatic, if a bit disconcerting, effect.

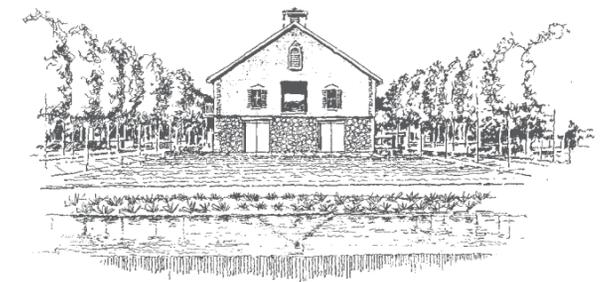




OPPOSITE ABOVE: *Sanna*, by Jaume Plensa, a larger-than-life head sculpted of marble and steel, keeps watch over the central courtyard.

OPPOSITE BELOW: The 35-foot *Bunny Foo Foo*, rendered in polished stainless steel by artist Laurence Argent, lets visitors know they have arrived.

ABOVE: Originally constructed in 1885, the Peterson-Bergfeld building is one of California's best-known ghost wineries.





The design of Hall Wines was a deeply collaborative effort, with architect and artists working hand in hand to create a home for the wines and the art collection. The result is in equal parts a winery, a museum, and a place to entertain on a grand scale.



CADE ESTATE

STEWARDS OF THEIR ENVIRONMENT

LOCATION: HOWELL MOUNTAIN

ARCHITECTURE: SIGNUM ARCHITECTURE

Set high atop Napa Valley's Howell Mountain, CADE Estate is the second of three wineries in the PlumpJack Group portfolio of wineries. Partners Gavin Newsom, Gordon Getty, and John Conover make their guiding philosophy of environmental responsibility very clear: "At CADE Estate, we believe that winemaking should honor the land, both aesthetically and environmentally."

CADE Estate has the distinction of being just the second LEED Gold-certified winery in the Napa Valley. While building a LEED Gold-certified winery was initially Gavin Newsom's idea, his business partners were quick to agree. "We are stewards of our environment," insists John Conover, partner and general manager of the group's three wineries. "We are just passing through, but what we build is not."

Looking for a complement to their first winery, the group purchased the fifty-four-acre property that would become CADE Estate in 2005. At 1,800 feet, the steeply sloped site was set high above the fog line, with unparalleled views of the valley. The group needed an architect who shared their environmental ideals, and who would take risks to carry out their bold vision.

As is so often the case in the wine country, the group found their architect through a trust-

ed friend. Builder Mark Grassi, who was already on board to build the yet-to-be designed winery, introduced them to Juancarlos Fernandez of newly established St. Helena-based Signum Architecture. Juancarlos had never designed a winery but had already built a reputation as a brilliant architect. Tending toward minimalism, his design philosophy combines a sustainable sensibility with an attention to detail and propensity for thinking outside the box that proved to be the perfect fit for the PlumpJack Group.

John Conover is quick to sing his architect's praises. "You know when you meet someone and there is an instant connection? That was Juancarlos." He trusted him implicitly to take risks and carry out the group's vision. When asked to describe his feelings about the project, Juancarlos is succinct and to the point. "It is one of the great joys of my career. Of all of the projects I've taken on, this is absolutely my favorite."

The design brief was driven by two core doctrines: design sustainably and treat every decision as an opportunity to do something different. Juancarlos added a third: create a sense of discovery.

The experience at CADE begins with the steep, winding driveway carved from an existing logging

road. As the road curves around on itself, the solid form of the production building comes into view. The concrete, glass, and steel structure speaks directly to the masculinity of Howell Mountain and the muscular nature of the wines produced there. The winery's many vertical elements commune with the large fir trees that surround it. The inverted roofline hides solar arrays and white roofs that reflect the sun's heat and contribute to the building's LEED Gold rating.

In contrast to the production building, the hospitality building remains hidden, tucked nearly out of view. Visitors are directed down a discreet walkway, their view of what lies ahead intentionally blocked by a freestanding wall until they round a corner and come face-to-face with one of the most dramatic views in the Napa Valley. Juancarlos points out the tension created when the space closes in and then opens up to reveal the full scope of the view, intensifying the experience.

Juancarlos calls the production and hospitality spaces "brother and sister buildings," related in design and materials, but set apart by their varied scale. The journey through and between these sibling structures is attenuated. After entering through the portal into the transformative experience on the terrace, visitors soak in the immersive experience of wine, architecture, and views. A decomposed granite walkway winds around the hospitality structure and up past the views of the adjacent vineyards to the production building.

The large winery production building was carefully placed to fit between the existing trees. The team proudly points out that only two trees were removed to construct the entire building and, as Juancarlos describes it, "one was dead, and one was a leaner." The curved wall that defines the entry to the production building was designed as a direct response to the natural bowl that cradles the winery.

The buildings are comprised of weighty masses, but the attention to detail is extraordinary if subtle. Every architectural decision had a functional purpose and every choice conveys meaning. Craftsmanship that might have been overlooked is brought to the foreground to be acknowledged and admired. Door openings in the concrete walls are saw-cut to show the patterns of the aggregate within. Board-formed concrete wainscoting creates a subtle change of texture at eye level and is echoed in the board-formed patterning on the steel cave doors.

The team wanted to leave the land as they found it, with minimal human intervention. Materials were chosen to age in place, taking up residence alongside the rocks, oaks, and manzanitas that populate the hillsides. Textured concrete provides heft and Alaskan Red Cedar has aged to meet the weathered palette of its surroundings. There is no manicured landscape; the site was hydroseeded with exactly what had existed before construction commenced. Only the manzanitas planted along the curved concrete wall, native to these hillsides, were brought in.

Since they were at the forefront sustainable winery design, Juancarlos invented the approach as he went along. As one LEED inspector pointed out on a visit to the construction site, it was important that CADE succeed in order to provide an example to others that a winery could be designed and constructed to exacting LEED standards.

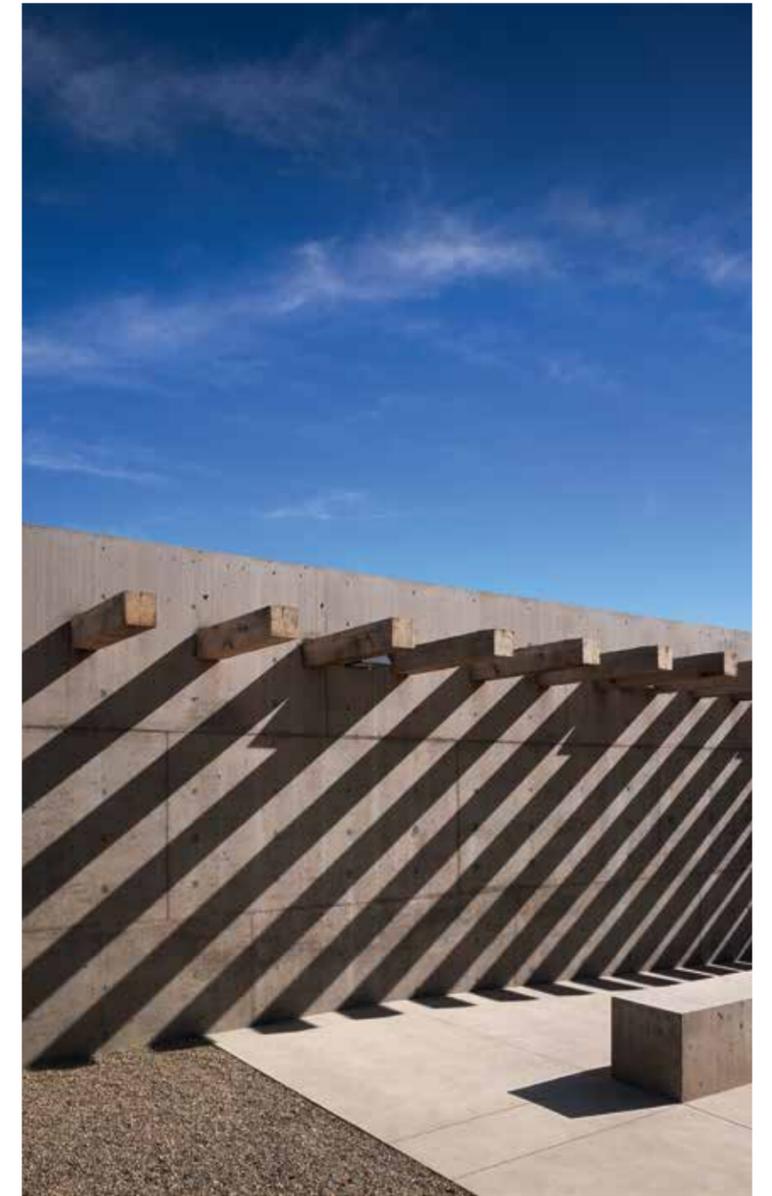


PREVIOUS OVERLEAF: The unique shape of the cave walls, with their oval portals and overlapping ceiling planes, faintly echoes the shape of the shield that forms the distinctive PlumpJack Group logo.

ABOVE: The industrial nature of the materials, chosen to age in place, speaks directly to the rugged mountain site.



On the tasting terrace, visitors soak in the immersive experience of wine, architecture, and views.

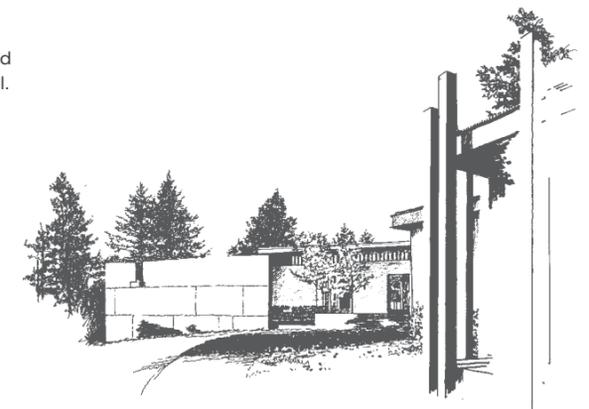


Juancarlos was adamant that production function not be sacrificed to create a showcase, and John agreed. Function is paramount, and beauty grows from the efficiency with which each design element fulfills its purpose. Vertical bands of structural glass let in light and, along with rooftop solar panels, minimize energy usage. Massive concrete walls hide water tanks and provide passive cooling in the non-conditioned winery. Trex, used throughout the production facility, insures against mold and rot and decreases the number of trees used in construction. Recycled materials used throughout both buildings minimize the winery's ecological impact.

Every design decision conveys meaning, though that meaning is sometimes hidden from view. The unique shape of the cave walls, with their oval portals and overlapping ceiling planes, faintly echoes the shape of the shield that forms the distinctive PlumpJack Group logo. Of course, most will not notice this, but it's there nonetheless, part of the ethos of the place.

OPPOSITE: The diminutive hospitality building shows a solid front upon approach, so visitors experience the full force of the view only as they step through the threshold.

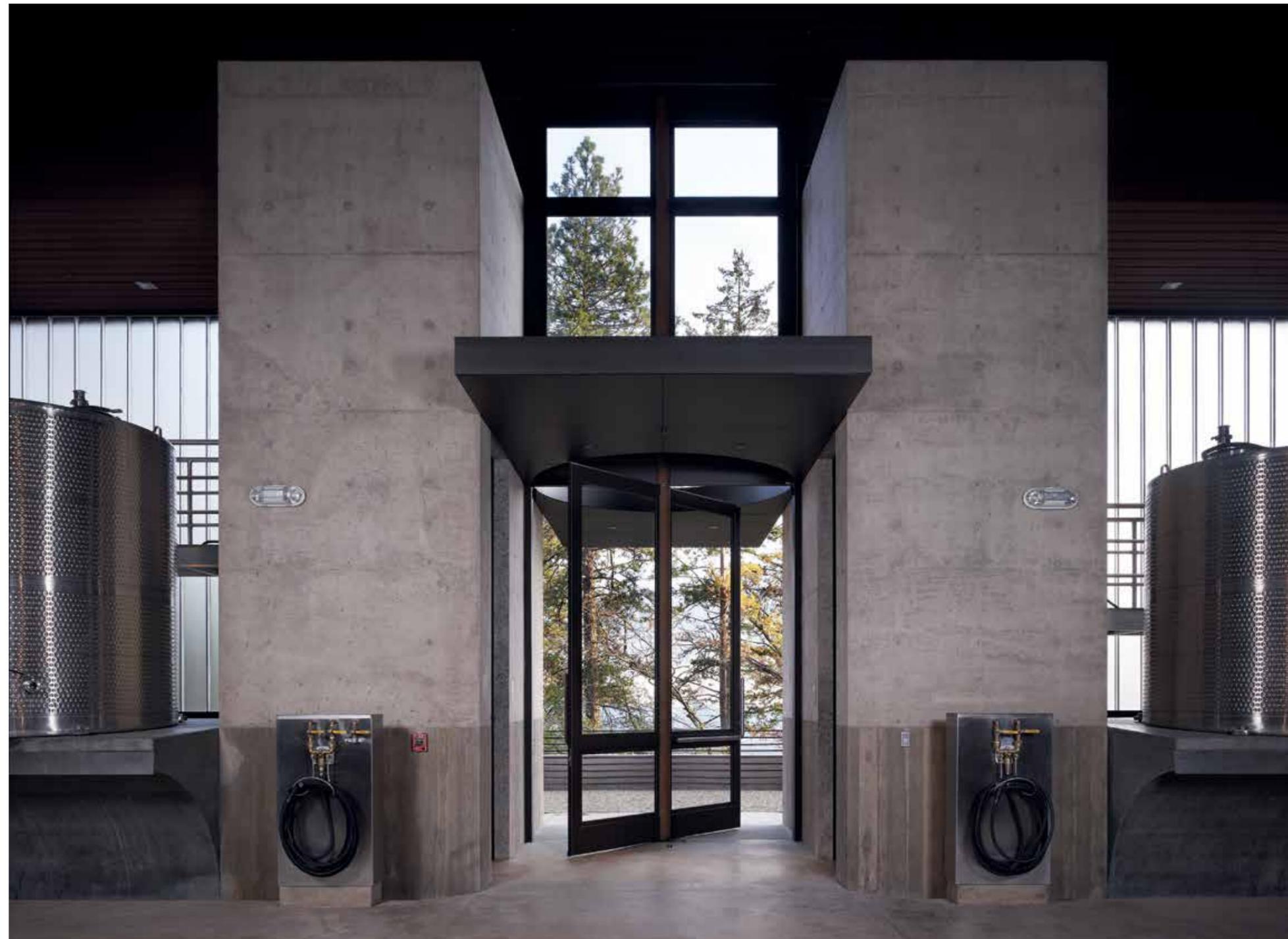
ABOVE: A line of posts creates a play of light and shadow on the entry wall.





ABOVE: Drains, a necessary element of every production winery, are tucked under concrete tanks set on platforms cantilevered out over the production floor, keeping the floor seamless and clear for work.

OPPOSITE: The production winery's massive steel door pivots in a circle, echoing the oculus in the overhang above.





The inverted roofline of the production winery removes the roof element that typically makes up a third of a building's architectural proportions, reducing its visual impact on the site.