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In the summer of 2016, under an immaculate blue sky and on top of a dry, windy hill overlooking the treeless, rolling vineyards of northern California, an alien structure landed. The hill is in the middle of the Donum vineyard, within the celebrated Los Carneros viticultural area and the jewel in the crown of The Donum Estate, one of the smaller but most prestigious wineries in California. And here a gigantic 8m-high polished-steel heart (pictured below) was being pieced together, a newly commissioned work by the British sculptor Richard Hudson.

The seamless, curvaceous, mirrored surface of *Love Me* reflects the endless sky above and the undulating fields of grapes all around, giving visitors a multiple perspective on this wine-lover's paradise. As well as reflecting the local miracle of soil, climate and topography that makes the terroir, the heart's hand-hammered steel skin – the careful work of Chinese craftsmen – pays homage to the artisanal cossetting that transforms Donum's grapes into

# VINE ART MOVEMENT

At wineries from Sonora to Oxfordshire, site-specific installations by renowned artists are enticing visitors beyond tours and tastings to a profound engagement with the landscape.

**Emma Crichton-Miller** reports





Main picture: The view across The Donum Estate with, from far left: *Love Me*, 2016, by Richard Hudson, and *King and Queen*, 1987, by Keith Haring. Inset: *Donum's Contemporary Terracotta Warriors*, 2005, by Yue Minjun



award-winning Pinot Noir and Chardonnay wines. The heart's arrival marked a new art-focused phase in the life of this winery, triggered by the purchase of the estate by Hudson's long-term patron Allan Warburg, a keen art collector. But it also represents a growing trend throughout the wine districts of the world to draw visitors not just to the winery, but into its heart.

Increasingly, fine hospitality has become a key part of a visit to a vineyard, with celebrated chefs preparing food to show the wines off to their best advantage, and luxurious accommodation offered to extend the experience beyond a few hours. Sculpture offers yet one more lure for guests, enticing them into a more profound engagement with the landscape that gives rise to the wine. And when the vineyard owner is also an avid art collector, the project moves to another level, with the landscape, the wine and the collection evolving in harmony together.

Warburg has lived most of his life between his native Denmark and Beijing, the centre of

his business operations. In 2011, he and two friends bought this exclusive winery from its owner, the German company Racke. The vineyards had been carefully managed since 1985 by Anne Moller-Racke, who had come from Germany over 30 years previously with her now ex-husband to make wine in Los Carneros. Her ambition has always been to make the finest possible Pinot Noir and she remains Donum's president and winegrower (Warburg's first priority was to ensure the quality of the wine). However, one day, standing at Donum looking at the scenery, glass of wine in hand, he thought: "This would be a wonderful place to put sculpture – of a quality to match the wine, bought and commissioned from all over the world." As he says: "I want this to be a global place."

In 2015, visitors were invited for the first time to stroll through the landscape, admiring the vines and encountering artworks such as Yue Minjun's 2005 series of bronze *Contemporary Terracotta Warriors* and the iconic 1987 Corten-steel piece *King and Queen* by the American Keith Haring (both pictured on previous



## At Château La Coste near Aix-en-Provence stands Louise Bourgeois' Crouching Spider, which draws sculpture lovers the world over

pages). Ai Weiwei's 2011 *Circle of Animals – Zodiac Heads* stands in the centre of a grove of transplanted ancient olive trees, while works by Danh Vo and Anselm Kiefer are soon to be installed.

Then there's *Soma* (2016), commissioned from Indian artist Subodh Gupta and made from his signature stainless-steel cooking utensils, which brings wine and art together in a giant sculpture of a Donum wine bottle. Indeed, so embedded has the art become in the Donum project that Warburg has even commissioned Ai Weiwei to design the bottle labels with a Zodiac head to identify the vintage (and not just for the wines from this fabled estate, but for those from Donum's Russian River and Anderson Valley vineyards too). A signal of Warburg's internationalism, this is also a clear indication that the art and the wine are indivisible, mutually reflective.

Warburg is not the first person to have been struck by the sympathy between sculpture and the highly crafted landscapes of vineyards. Near Donum, the late Margrit Mondavi, wife of Robert Mondavi, pioneered the display of art alongside winemaking at the Mondavi winery in Napa Valley from the 1960s. As recently as 2015, a new 7m-high copper sculpture in honour of her late husband was commissioned from artist Len Urso. In France, in 1990, Daniel and Florence Cathiard purchased Château Smith Haut Lafitte in Pessac-Léognan – one of the oldest Bordeaux wine properties – and have transformed it, not just through their innovative bio-precision approach to winemaking, but by the introduction of sculpture throughout the estate to enable visitors to appreciate the difference that their strategies are making. For €30, visitors can take an Art and Vine tour, encountering works ranging from



Clockwise from far left:  
 the Château La Coste estate  
 with *Crouching Spider*,  
 2003, by Louise Bourgeois;  
 the curved winery designed  
 by Jean Nouvel; and  
*Pavillon de Muséum*, 2008,  
 by Frank Gehry

Jim Dine's monumental cracked and battered *Venus Bordeaux* and Charles Hadcock's serenely mathematical *Torixon II* – a homage to the 2009 vintage – to one of Barry Flanagan's exuberant giant flying hares, entitled *Hospitality*. Then, in Italy, in 1999, husband and wife team Lorenza Sebasti and Marco Pallanti, who run the beautiful Castello di Ama winery in Chianti near Siena, which was founded in 1976 by a collective that included Lorenza's father, set up Castello di Ama per l'Arte Contemporanea. Today, with their own curator, they

are able to offer visitors a glorious natural landscape enhanced by site-specific installations from such international luminaries as Michelangelo Pistoletto, Daniel Buren, Giulio Paolini, Kendall Geers, Anish Kapoor, Chen Zhen, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov and Hiroshi Sugimoto. With four opulent suites in the 18th-century Villa Ricucci available to hire, and a serious restaurant, every kind of pleasure can be indulged at the highest level.

Some wineries even sell their art. In California, the Paradise Ridge Winery, overlooking the Russian River Valley in Sonoma County, hosts selling exhibitions in Marijke's Grove – four acres of wooded glebs, with paths linking the life-size sculptures sited among gnarled oaks.

For a new genre of passionate art collector-meets-vineyard owner, however, the sculpture becomes less a grace note and more an intrinsic element of a holistic work of art. In a bowl of land north of Aix-en-Provence in southern France, surrounded on three sides by oak, almond and pine woods, with long views over to the blue hills of the Luberon, lies the 200-hectare estate of Belfast-born property investor and hotelier Paddy McKillen. In 2002, he bought Château La Coste, and since then he has transformed what was a respected but ageing vineyard into a state-of-the-art biodynamic winery. There was a pretty 17th-century house for his family, but McKillen realised that if the wine venture were to be successful, he needed something more to draw visitors. A conversation with artist Louise Bourgeois raised the possibility that he could display her 2003 *Crouching Spider* (pictured far left). The renowned Japanese architect Tadao Ando came up with the sleek, minimalist cement and glass art centre, complete with restaurant, set into a glassy pool, where the spider stands, drawing architecture and sculpture aficionados from around the world (who can now stay in the recently opened, discreetly luxurious hillside hotel, with its pool, library and bar).

Since then, a roll-call of leading artists and architects has been invited to respond to the location, embedding an artistic sensibility into every aspect of the estate.



**Artists have been invited to transform not just the experience of visiting vineyards, but the making of the wine itself**

Veteran Korean artist Lee Ufan has created a meditative gallery space in a specially designed building, while Englishman Andy Goldsworthy has made an underground room, like a beehive of interwoven oak branches, in the side of a hill. Frank Gehry's 2008 deconstructed chunky wooden pavilion (pictured on previous pages) for the Serpentine Gallery has found a new home in a meadow as an exuberant open-air concert and conference hall, while a totemic yellow sculpture by Franz West stands far away in a glade of trees. Works by Tracey Emin, Richard Serra, Alexander Calder and Paul Matisse entice visitors to walk through the estate, Sean Scully's spectacular *Wall of Light Cubed*, a five-sided "drawing" in orange, blue and grey marble, alerts guests to the variety of textures, forms and colours that animate the landscape, while the Renzo Piano photographic pavilion is situated alongside the site of a Roman villa, reminding people of the area's ancient history.

But art and wine perhaps most elegantly coalesce here in Jean Nouvel's spectacular curved winery (pictured on previous pages), while the old winery has been converted into a gallery designed by French architect Jean Michel Wilmotte. Nouvel has also designed the vast new gallery that will house the three monumental steel towers, entitled *I Do, I Undo, I Redo*, by Louise Bourgeois, which was the first work of art to be shown in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall when it opened in 2000.

As a grand gesture, this is hard to beat. One winemaker, however, has taken the unusual step of inviting artists to transform not just the experience of visiting vineyards, but the wine itself. In a wild bit of hilly country in Provence, Château Peyrassol represents the personal dream of healthcare entrepreneur Philippe Austruy. Wine has been made here since the 14th century, when the Knights Templar built the picturesque fortified chateau that survives today and created

vineyards and olive groves amid woods full of deer and wild bear. The commandery passed from the Knights Templar to the Knights of Malta, with whom it stayed until the French Revolution, when it fell into the hands of the Rigord family, who sold it, in 2001, to Austruy. A lover of wine, Austruy is also a lover of art – indeed his wife, Valérie Bach, runs an eponymous contemporary art gallery in Brussels.

Austruy had been restoring the vineyards at Peyrassol since 2001, planting new vines, redesigning the terraces and olive groves, patching the ancient buildings (in which 10 new guest rooms opened in 2015) and installing the latest winemaking equipment. Then, in 2005, Austruy launched the second phase of his transformation: slowly filling the landscape with art, primarily sculpture, some of it, like Gavin Turk's giant open door, commissioned for the site. There are works by leading French 20th-century sculptors Jean Dubuffet, César, François-Xavier Lalanne and Bernar Venet; others by Antony Gormley, Barry Flanagan, Jaume Plensa (example pictured above far right), Lee Ufan, Keiji Uematsu and Wim Delvoye. In May 2016, Austruy opened a contemporary gallery, partly embedded in the hillside, with sharply angled walls of rusted Corten steel and a roof terrace that reaches out into the vineyards, to house works too fragile for permanent display outside, and where he can host temporary exhibitions. It is marked out by two gigantic, overlapping, pointed arches



Clockwise from left: the Château Peyrassol estate with 2 Angles, 17.5° et 15.5°, 2016, by Bernar Venet; and Domaine Jardin des Sculptures, 2004, by Jaume Plensa. A bottle of Bertrand Lavier 2014



of steel (pictured top left) rising up from the inner courtyard of the gallery – a sculpture by near-neighbour Bernar Venet.

In a final flourish of admiration, Austruy has invited Venet and fellow sculptor Bertrand Lavier to collaborate with his blenders to produce wines restricted to 3,000 bottles each, in their own names, with bottles and labels designed by the artists. Visitors who venture to this charmed landscape are not charged to wander the patchwork of sweet-chestnut woods, domestic parterres and rolling vineyards. So seductive is the whole choreographed experience, however, that it is hard to resist the temptation to stay, eat and drink the ethereal Peyrassol par Bertrand Lavier (€30 per bottle, pictured left) or the aromatic Noir de Bernar (from €10.95 per bottle). +

**ESTATES OF THE ART**

**Castello di Ama**, Località Ama, 53033 Galole in Chianti, Siena (+3905-7774-6031; castelodiama.com). **Château La Coste**, 2750 Route de la Cride, 13610 Le Puy Sainte Réparate (+3304-4261-9292; chateau-la-coste.com). **Château Peyrassol**, RN 7 Commanderie de Peyrassol, 83340 Flassans-sur-Issole (+3304-9469-7102; peyrassol.com). **Château Smith Haut Lafitte**, 33650 Bordeaux Martillac (+3305-5783-1122; smith-haut-lafitte.com). **The Donum Estate**, 24500 Ramal Road, Sonoma, CA 95476 (+1707-939-2290; thedonumestate.com). **Paradise Ridge Winery**, 4545 Thomas Lake Harris Drive, Santa Rosa, CA 95403 (+1707-528-9463; prwinery.com). **Robert Mondavi Winery**, 7801 St Helena Highway, Oakville, CA 94562 (+1707-226-1395; robertmondaviwinery.com).