

Wine and art: A different kind of pairing

Lynette Majer

Food is not the only thing paired with wine in our Northern California wine country — art is featured in several wineries in Napa and Sonoma. And why not? Wine and art, considered by many as two of the finer things in life, seem to go together naturally, each satisfying a sense, taste and sight. And there's no better time of year to enjoy wine country than now — February can serve up some delightful weather, perfect for a day trip or weekend.

DONUM ESTATE WINERY

If you're using a navigation app to get to this Carneros property, a bit off the well-beaten path that is Highway 121, Google will tell you you've arrived well before you have, which will be beyond obvious, so push on to the large yellow sign on the left, and farther beyond, a monumental sculpture of a female face (*Sanna* by Jaume Plensa). Then you will have really arrived.

The art: the Donum property is home to over 40 large-scale sculptures, strategically placed throughout the property; some are site-specific commissions, and all are from internationally renowned artists, like Ai Weiwei, Louis Bourgeois, and Keith Haring, to name just a few.

Jaume Plensa, the artist of *Sanna*, created the nearly 40-foot sculpture from a portrait of an 8-year-old Swedish girl. Its total white color evokes an otherworldliness, and her closed eyes a spirituality and serenity. For Plensa, his series of giant heads represent the future, as none of the girls and young women exist as they were captured in their portraits; beauty is fleeting —alive and evolving.

Some sculptures are interactive, like the recently installed and commissioned site-specific *Sonic Mountain (Sonoma)*, by Doug Aitken, which is a giant wind chime that visitors can walk through and move the chimes. The artist says he sought to create “a living artwork ... that would change continuously and be performed by the natural environment.” Indeed, the sculpture is situated in a eucalyptus grove where each of the 365 chimes capture the famous Carneros breezes to produce a melodic symphony.

The Care of Oneself, by Elmgreen and Dragset, is situated near the bank of a pond. As such, the shiny stainless steel sculpture depicts a classically styled figure carrying what appears to be an image of himself, which he has saved from drowning — essentially one part of himself saving the other. The viewer also sees oneself reflected in the shiny stainless steel of the figures, thereby becoming a part of the art.

The viewer is also reflected in *Love Me* by Richard Hudson, a 25-foot-plus heart with a mirrored surface on top of a hill, that was created especially for Donum. Its hilltop placement reflects the entire property from all sides, “creating many paintings within the piece,” art within art. Hudson also created a cavity in the heart to denote a pregnant woman’s belly, and invoking a sense of time and life being endless.

The wine: Situated on a former dairy farm with sweeping views of San Pablo Bay, the almost 200-acre property (20 acres planted) is well suited for Pinot and Chardonnay. Donum also sources from its vineyards in Russian River Valley and Anderson Valley, which winemaker Dan Fishman uses to produce exquisite lean but rich Chardonnays and fruity, full Pinots.

Donum Estate Winery: *Daily, 10 a.m.–4 p.m., reserved tastings \$95 and up (includes guided art tour), 2400 Ramal Road, Sonoma, 707-939-2290, thedonumestate.com*