

# At Home in the Wine Country

ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN IN THE CALIFORNIA VINEYARDS

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Hebert  
and  
Ewald



GIBBS  
SMITH

Heather Sandy Hebert and Chase Reynolds Ewald

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**GIBBS SMITH**  
TO ENRICH AND INSPIRE HUMANKIND

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# Vineyard's Edge

"In the wine country, every nook and cranny of the land is aesthetically interesting."

— LUKE WADE

**Architect Luke Wade says tramping around open land reminds him of his** childhood in South Texas, when kids were allowed to disappear for hours or even days on a horse or with a backpack to fish, camp and build forts. Today, he and his wife, Ani Wade, create homes suitable for a wide range of ecosystems and microclimates, from redwood forests to fog-draped cityscapes to sun-drenched properties perched on the side of mountains or surrounded by vineyards on the valley floor. "In the wine country, every nook and cranny of the land is aesthetically interesting," Wade says. "That's what's so amazing about California." It makes sense, then, that every project begins with an exploration of site.

Becoming attuned to site was key to both Wades' professional development; it carries through to everything the pair designs today. They met while working for Backen Gillam Architects. Both became lead designers at the firm, whose name is practically synonymous with California's place-based architecture movement—one that elevates to an art the use of simple forms and natural materials to create unpretentious, timeless structures.

It was this background that initially led Dave and Natalie Hagan to Wade Design. The Hagans, residents of southern California, first visited Napa while on their honeymoon thirty-five years prior. Instantly enamored, they became frequent visitors to the wine country and, in 2005, charter members of Calistoga Ranch. They would visit six times a year, each time exploring hidden byways on the motorcycle they kept there, discovering favorite wines and making friends along the way. Over the course of scores of visits to wineries and private homes, the Hagans fell in love with the look of ag-inspired modern farmhouses and contemporary barns. Then, as they were contemplating buying land and building a home, they visited Constant's Diamond Mountain Vineyard, sited high in the Mayacamas Mountains overlooking northern Napa Valley. The vintners' home, designed by Howard Backen, recalls Dave Hagan, "is very simple, essentially a one-room structure, and very indoor-outdoor, with sliding doors to the outside and phenomenal views. We said, 'This is exactly what we're talking about.'"

Having never lived in a home larger than 2,500 square feet, the Hagans understood their own needs and design preferences and were able to articulate how they lived within an interior; they even wrote up a requirements document for their initial meetings. Each member of the team







**BELOW:**

With no door to the master suite, the stair forms a transitional element, the vertical cedar slats becoming a sculptural element in themselves.

**RIGHT:**

Upstairs, a fully integrated master suite is tucked up under the eaves, the folds of the all-white walls following the existing roofline in a complex work of origami. Floors are whitewashed reclaimed Douglas fir, and custom cabinets are vertical-grain Hemlock.

**OVERLEAF:**

It was important to maintain the traditional farmhouse character from the street, opening the house up in the back in a more contemporary arrangement of indoor-outdoor spaces.



# Historic Meets Modern

"We wanted to preserve the street presentation so that people who walk by wouldn't see that anything had changed." — LUKE WADE

**For almost two decades, Keith and Cherie Hughes lived on a twenty-three-acre organic vineyard amidst twelve acres of grapes.** There they became deeply attuned to patterns of weather and season, and were fully enmeshed in the day-to-day operations of producing Chardonnay, Syrah and Zinfandel wines under the Hughes Family Vineyards label.

Country life held myriad pleasures, but over time they found themselves drawn to the attractions of town. A circa 1909 Craftsman bungalow near the heart of downtown Sonoma proved too interesting an opportunity to resist—and not just because the local landmark had made an appearance in the 1973 hit *American Graffiti*. Its charming facade, its mature trees and bucolic creek, its setback from the street, and most of all, its long narrow lot offered the opportunity to experience the best of both worlds: in-town living and the utmost in privacy, historic authenticity and a dramatic contemporary addition. With the creative talent of Wade Design Architects, Earthtone Construction, Jennifer Robin Interiors and Rozanski Design landscape designers, it would also manifest the best of the indoor-outdoor lifestyle that makes the wine country so appealing.

The path to construction was circuitous due to the home's placement within Sonoma's historic overlay district. After the Hughes hired a local historic architect, commissioned a historical report and slowly worked their way through the design review process, the project was ultimately approved, along with instructions to preserve the original structure as authentically as possible while designing any addition in a significantly different style and tone. "The city felt that anything new should be of its own era," Cherie said.

For first-time visitors to the house, this results in a surprising reveal. The traditional porch, with its custom-made hanging swing, and the intimate parlor, with its cozy seating and restored fireplace, are very much 1909, albeit refreshed in a more contemporary sensibility. That approach is carried out as well in the upstairs study and two guest suites tucked under the dormered eaves. Beyond the parlor, though, the true nature of the project unveils itself. First, a dramatic vaulted living room with adjacent kitchen is flanked by built-in banquette seating against a white stone-clad wall. This leads to the dining area, which provides a glassy connector to a more contemporary building housing the owners' suite at ground level and an upstairs office, guest room and gym.





**RIGHT:**  
Perched on a ridge above the town of St. Helena, a house designed by Zack | de Vito Architecture and built by Fairweather & Associates nestles between dramatic rock outcroppings and existing trees. The living spaces face out over the valley while the bedrooms enjoy more intimate views. Custom details abound throughout the house, as in the front and back doors, designed by Zack | de Vito and built by Fairweather & Associates, and the built-in bed and integrated side tables in the master bedroom. Both hot tub and pool are mere steps from the master suite.

**OVERLEAF:**  
The main volume, clad in cedar, has a roof that cantilevers out toward the view, creating a covered outdoor entertaining space with a full dining table, built-in cooking facilities, including a wood-fired oven, and an island with waterfall countertop.





**LEFT:**  
Quartz countertops define the cooking area at one end of the great room, while a custom steel and wood live-edge dining table grounds the airy space. Steel beams define the volumes and extend from inside to out. Wine storage is presented as art.

**OVERLEAF:**  
The bedroom volume and main facade is sheathed in Cor-ten weathering steel, which naturally patinas to a rich red. A small, recessed deck outside an office area on the upper level perches over the pool below.



An iconic barn set within a Zinfandel vineyard serves as a focal point from the main house, especially when lit at night. It is also a destination, guesthouse and entertaining venue. Field Architecture's design was executed by Grassi & Associates, with Surfacedesign's landscaping plan tying the structural components together. Interior designer Penny Shawback, her son and partner Damon Savoia and Damon's wife Julie married the reclaimed barnwood exterior and beamed and trussed interior with minimal contemporary-leaning furnishings. The studio-blown glass chandelier was designed by Damon Savoia and sparked the founding of his custom lighting company, Longhouse.

