




THE NEW ARCHITECTURE OF WINE

HEBERT

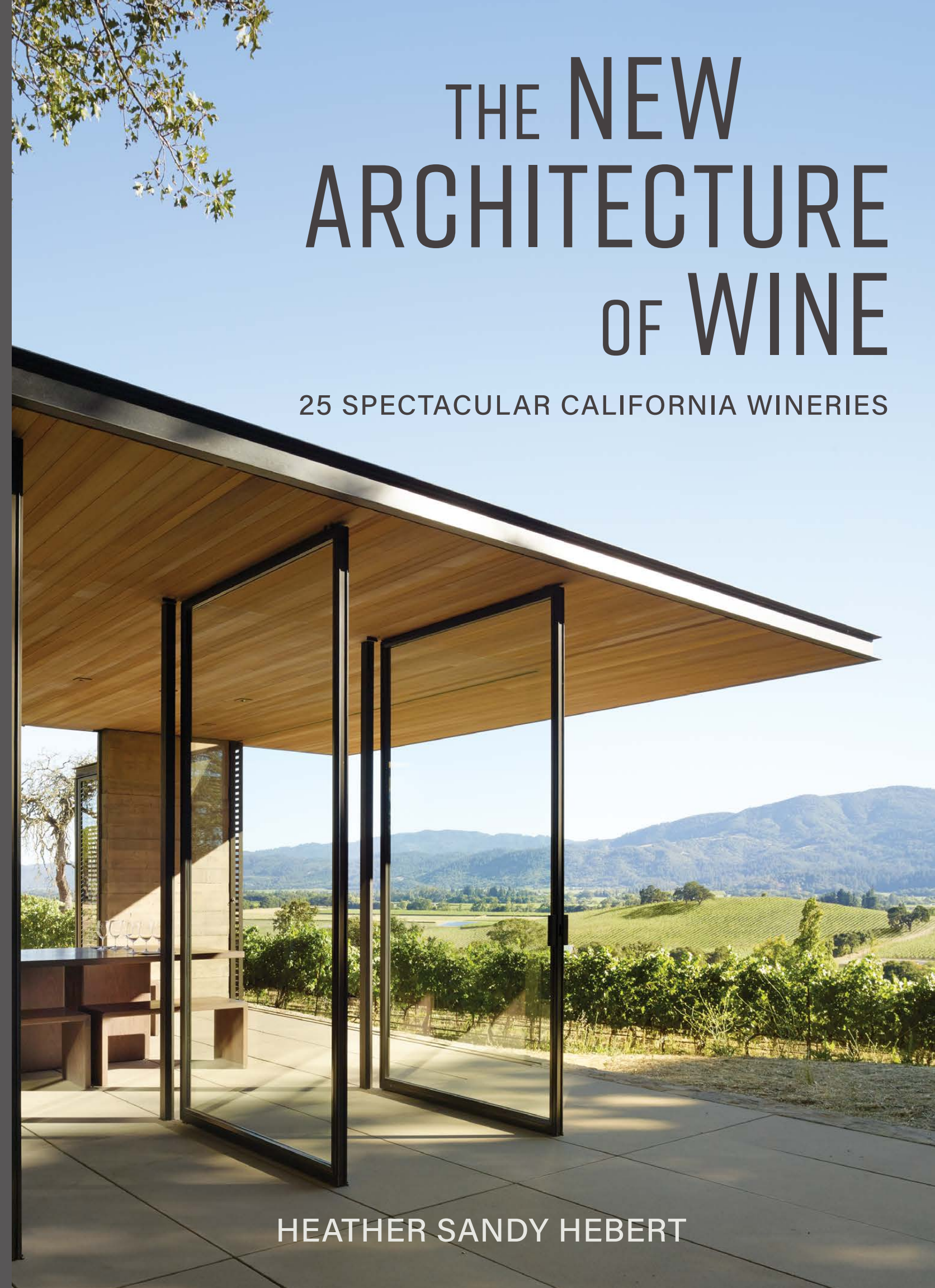
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THE NEW ARCHITECTURE OF WINE

25 SPECTACULAR CALIFORNIA WINERIES

HEATHER SANDY HEBERT

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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: 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.

SUSTAINABILITY +
LOVE OF
THE LAND





THE DONUM ESTATE

A GIFT FROM THE LAND

LOCATION: **CARNEROS**

ARCHITECTURE: **MATT HOLLIS ARCHITECTS**

Carneros occupies a unique place in the California wine country. Cooled by bayfront breezes, it's where Sonoma County touches the San Francisco Bay. This is Pinot Noir country, and home to the Donum Estate.

Anne Moller-Racke's history on this land spans decades, and this is where her heart lies. She came to Sonoma County in 1981 from her native Germany to help run Buena Vista Winery. During her early years in California, she trained with industry icons such as Andre Tchelistcheff, and she was later instrumental in establishing Carneros as an AVA. When she became Buena Vista's vice president of vineyard operations in the early 1990s, she managed land that included what is now the Donum Estate, and she planted its original vines in 1997. When the Moller-Racke family sold Buena Vista in 2001, they retained the Carneros vineyards and renamed the property the Donum Estate. This would become Anne's project and her life's work.

Ten years later, when the family sold the Donum Estate, Anne stayed on as president and winegrower, remaining inextricably connected to the land, but now with the freedom and capital to expand and improve it. The new ownership group had visited and fallen in love with the Donum Estate wines, and

Anne's Burgundian approach to winemaking—the concept of estate, tending small individual blocks, and attending to the details of the land. Devoted to the quality and integrity of the land, the new partners kept the mission of the Donum Estate intact. It is, according to Anne, a seamless and supportive partnership.

Allan and Mei Warburg, today's owners, worked with Anne and a vineyard team to carefully study how to best develop the land. They had fallen in love with the authentic, rural nature of this former dairy farm, and it was important to them that they honor the land's roots. They hired Matt Hollis, founder of San Francisco-based Matt Hollis Architects, to carry out their vision.

They wanted to celebrate what they call "the important connection between art, nature, and the human hand." The Donum Estate would soon house not only a new winery and hospitality center, but an astounding sculpture collection. Since 2015, Allan and his wife have built a collection of forty large-scale sculptures, which have been installed one by one amid the vineyard landscape. An eclectic mix of contemporary work by both established and emerging artists from the East and West—including Ai Weiwei, Keith Haring, Jaume Plensa,

Board-and-batten siding in a variety of widths lends a bit of irreverence to the simple farmhouse shapes.





PREVIOUS OVERLEAF: Williams Selyem, which is quite unlike anything else in the wine country, speaks its own architectural language derived from its owner's reverence for wine.

ABOVE: The winery is inspired by the shape of the wine barrels, but the owner and architect also wanted to capture the passion, style, and meticulous attention to detail that goes into the making of their Pinot Noir.





OPPOSITE: The view from the entry leads straight through to the cave, where the work takes place.

ABOVE: Justin Smith's lab is the kitchen, which he calls his "insane space."

Once the farmhouse was complete, they rolled right into the renovation of the barn. All of the materials had to be pure and unadulterated. Jason Kesler, who trained under Steve and took over as winemaker upon Steve's retirement from Kistler Vineyards at the end of 2017, took the lead on the design of the barn. He envisioned it as an expression of Kistler's unique wine-making process.

Upon entering the renovated barn, the very first impression is the aroma, which transports the visitor to the very heart of the wine-making experience. An almost physical presence, the aroma comes from the old barn wood, carefully saved from the original barn and repurposed to line the interior walls of the barn's soaring central space. The original intent was to use salvaged wood inside and out, but some of the barn's original siding was beyond saving. So the team changed their approach, reserving the salvaged wood (a combination of siding and timbers from the original barn and other salvaged timber) for the interior. New wood siding on the exterior is topped by the original metal roof. Outside comes inside, and old meets new.

When it came to the exterior, the team asked themselves, "What would a farmer do?" The answer was simple: he or she would go to Home Depot to buy siding. So that's what they did, and the result is beautifully simple and straightforward. The contrast between the new siding on the exterior and salvaged on the interior strikes just the right balance, and the mixture of salvaged sources creates a sense of randomness that makes it interesting.

Jason and Naomi advocated passionately for the 14-foot crimson doors that are arguably the barn's most distinctive feature. It took fortitude to hold onto this aspect of the design, but they had faith that the doors would become a defining feature. They were large, expensive, and heavy. The team met those challenges by using painted aluminum doors in place of the original steel, which allowed them to pick up the distinctive color from Kistler's Pinot Noir labels. The doors indeed have become the project's signature element.

"We were flexible when we needed to be, and inflexible when we knew it was important to stand firm, like holding out for those red doors," says Naomi.

The wine-tasting experience here includes a lesson in geology. Monitors take visitors through each of the vineyards, so they see the source of the wine they are tasting at the moment they taste it. A custom table runs the length of the barn's lofty central space, made of salvaged wood with a white strip of Corian embedded down the center, so visitors can more accurately see the color of the wine in their glasses when they hold them up. Windows set at just the right height provide views into the adjacent barrel rooms. No detail was overlooked.

In the barrel rooms on either side of the central space, gravel floors and stone walls encourage the growth of native yeasts and natural molds that make the Kistler wines distinctive. The process requires an intense amount of labor and a strong dose of faith, allowing nature to do what it will do. Many winemakers lose their courage partway through, but pushing through the entire process yields magical results, and in winemaking as well as architecture, dedication pays off.



PREVIOUS OVERLEAF: Salvaged from a number of sources, the varied widths and thicknesses of the reclaimed barn boards on the barn interior create a random pattern that is perfectly imperfect. The vertical orientation calls attention to the soaring interior volume.

ABOVE: Several inviting terraces step down the hill from the Trenton Roadhouse toward the idyllic pond and newly reconstructed barn.



The 14-foot height of the distinctive entry doors is a classic proportion for barn doors, allowing forklifts carrying barrels to enter unimpeded.