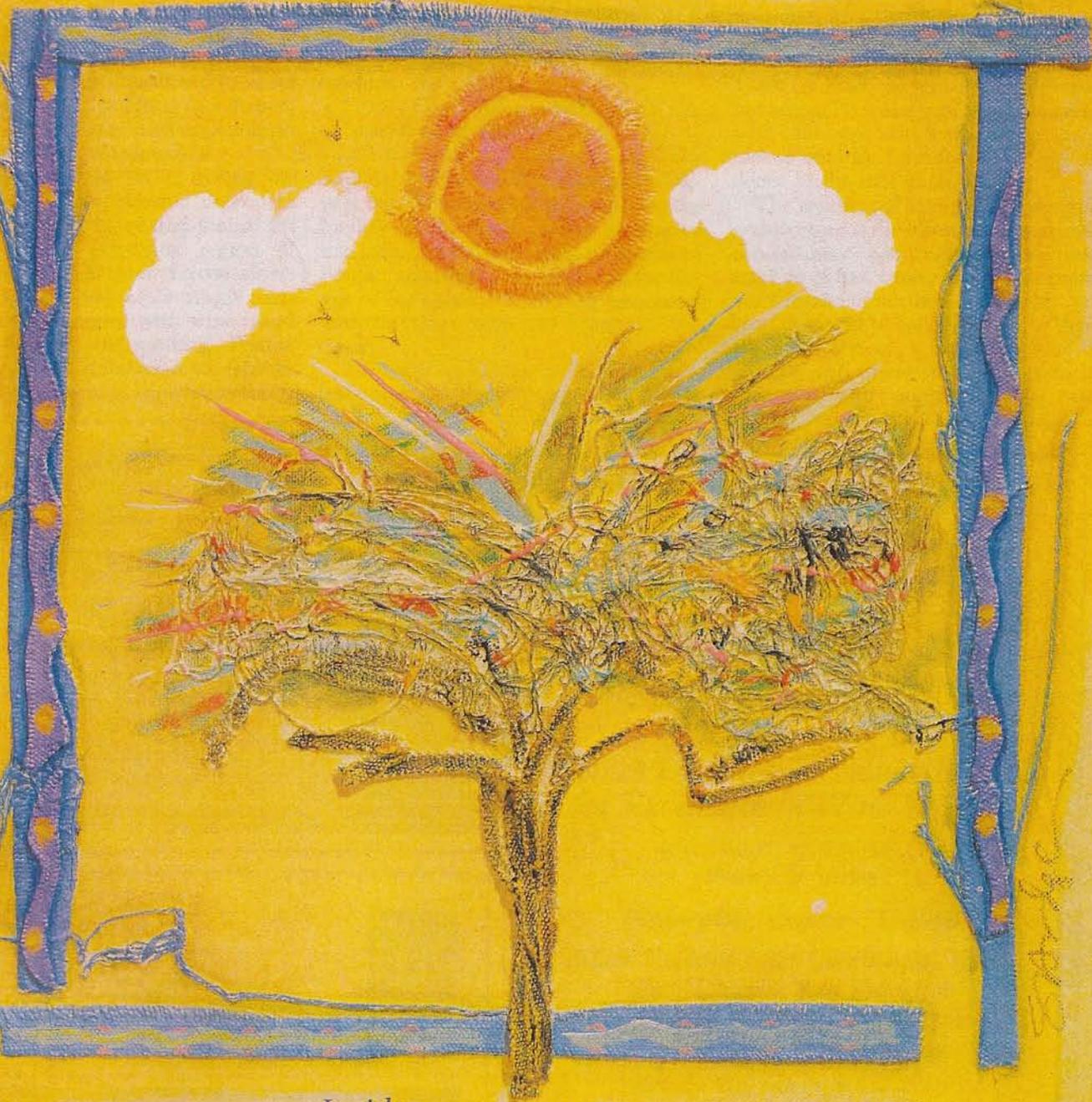


SEPTEMBER, 1990

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Inside:

- ★ 35th Annual Marketing Issue
- ★ Exclusive Wine Varietal Chart
- ★ Are You a Wine Wimp?
- ★ Dr. Peterson on Organic Winemaking

Winery design can be a key sales tool

It is difficult to find a vintner in Northern California who will dismiss the value that architecture plays in the development of a winery's image, to attract visitors to the tasting rooms, and as a contributor to premium wine sales. A wine's value and appreciation is easily influenced by such subjective factors as the opinions of others, personal experiences, and the sensory information of taste and sight. As a personal product, premium wines characteristically reflect the preferences of the maker. The subjective qualities of the wine are considered good for the wine industry, resulting in a diversity of products, stories, and appearances for discriminating consumers.

Sometime around 1650, during the reign of Louis XIV, Arnaud de Pontac scribed his family name and that of his château in the Bordeaux region of France, Haut-Brion, onto the containers of his "premium wines." During a period of history rampant with wine fraud (mixing, diluting, and spoiling), Pontac laid the foundation for what we refer to today as estate bottling, appellation designations, and the use of the château to register the commitment of the vintner to the quality of the wine. These innovative marketing techniques were successful to Pontac, resulting in his name and the image of his château becoming associated with the finest wines of France at the time.

English can be a medium for prose, or a medium for poetry. The difference between prose and poetry is not that different languages are used, but that the same language is used, differently. In an ordinary English sentence, each word has one meaning, and the sentence too, has one simple meaning. In a poem, the meaning is far more dense. Each word carries several meanings; and the sentence as a whole carries an enormous density of interlocking meanings, which together illuminate the whole.

—From Christopher Alexander's "A Pattern Language"

This technique was repeated three centuries later by the wine merchants of Bordeaux.

Attempts to classify wines during the middle 1800s resulted in the designation of "château wines," or those wines produced and bottled on estates with notable architectural edifices. The wine merchants and landowners of the Bordeaux region, seeking to improve the designation and notoriety of their wines, hastened to add stately mansions to their estates. The "Classement of 1855" listed only five wines with the château designation. Nineteen years later the classification listed 700 châteaux, which rose to 1,300 by 1893. As writer Hugh Johnson has noted, "It was a poor vigneron indeed who could not afford at least one turret tacked onto his farmhouse, to lend credence to the title châteaux."

The creation of thoughtfully designed architecture is the ultimate "signature of commitment" a vintner can make in the creation of fine wines. Most of the premium wineries of northern California have been designed to call attention to themselves, to convey a message about the vintner, and to reveal a glimpse to the character and quality of the wine



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William Turnbull designed his small Napa winery as a statement of preservation of agricultural qualities

produced. In reference to his landmark Napa Valley winery, Robert Mondavi proudly states, "This is my own. It is as my home. These are my grapes. This is my winery. This reflects me and my artistic endeavor."

Mondavi's message is consistent with the remarks heralded from other winemakers, "We grow grapes. We are tangible. These are our vineyards which we love and care for. This is the winery within which we craft our wines. These are our buildings. We are committed to the production of our quality wines for many generations."

Wineries are notorious for creating what author Fritz Steele refers to as, "Place envy, the feeling of wanting to be the people that you see when you are visiting a new setting. You feel envy for them and their place, even though you may in fact live in one that is far more interesting and better suited to your own style. You want to be able to try out the setting enough to get to know it and to know yourself in it." Wineries host a multitude of fantasy-releasing enzymes: the heritage and culture of wine and its production, simple or culturally-refined buildings in the agrarian landscape, or stories and legends tied to a place. Ask a gas station attendant in the wine country north of San Francisco to which winery visitors most often ask for directions and you're likely to be told, "Falcon Crest."

Wineries are unique from other product industries in that they can benefit immensely from the direct sales of their wine to visitors. Sonoma and Napa counties combined constitute one of the major tourist destinations in California with over 8,000,000 visitors per year. The increase in the number of wineries in the Sonoma and Napa counties, from 67 in 1970 to 348 in 1989, has resulted in more aggressive sales and marketing tactics: tasting rooms, tours, restaurants, special events, concerts, art exhibits and galleries, and destination creating architecture.

Marty Adams, manager of the Kunde Family Estate Wines, considers the profit potential from the tasting rooms to be enormous. States Adams, "It makes it easier to rationalize the embellishments to what otherwise might be ordinary wine producing buildings. Sales directly from the tasting room result in three different profits. You receive the winery profit, the wholesaler profit, and the retail profit. Wine sales for tasting rooms can reach \$2 million per year." Jay Stuller, author of "Through the Grapevine—the Business of Wine in America," notes that the Sattui Winery "sells nearly all of its wine, more than 24,000 cases annually, right out of the winery and at retail prices."

The intention of wineries with tasting rooms is not only to stimulate on-site

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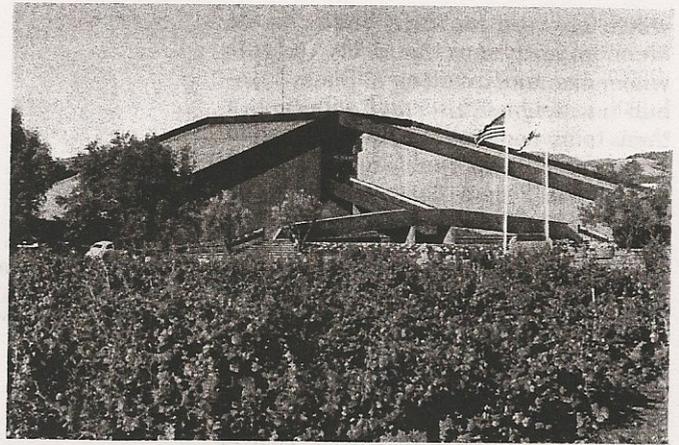
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sales, but also to create a memorable tasting and visual experience for visitors, resulting in their loyalty as consumers after they return home. For the former visitor, the architectural portrait on the label becomes a symbol of the visitor's positive experience at the winery and may contribute to enticing the wine shopper into a purchase.

The architecture of a winery is only one component to the marketing, public relations, and image development equation. Label designer Ralph Colonna claims that, "The label, advertisements, and winery design are good for one sale, the first. After that, the wine and its quality will need to bring the consumer back. The product must stand up to the pre-purchase image. Otherwise, everything falls apart." Dan Berger of the *Los Angeles Times* praises Clos Pegase owner Jan Shrem's bold architectural statement, but points out that, "Shrem is not selling a building, he is selling a bottle of wine. The very high quality of the Clos Pegase wine has taken the focal point off of the building. If Jan Shrem had made nothing but mediocre wine, the building would still be the focus of their attention."

Many of the recently completed wineries in northern California are blatant with their "billboard" architectural intentions, the most obvious being the new

Rodney Strong wanted an honest building with a bold design for his Sonoma County winery



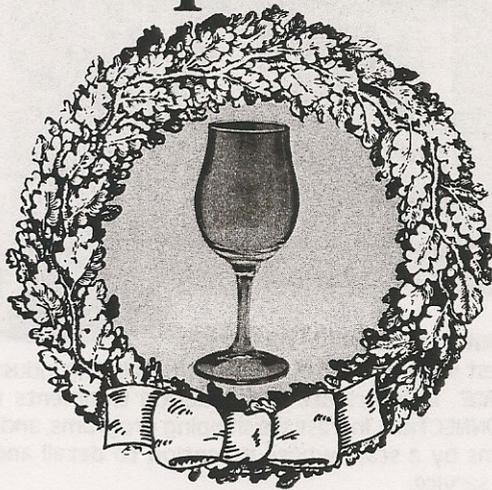
California champagne cellars of France's Taittinger family, Domaine Carneros. As with other wine organizations, the Taittingers are using their architecture to tell an immediately recognizable story about their wine pursuits. The design of their winery is intended to function in the same manner as the design of their label, capturing the wandering eye of the visitor/consumer, sending a very direct and unencumbered message about who they are, and setting up expectations of their champagne's quality.

Architectural stories are characteristic of the wine industry. The stories and their architectural representations have added a dimension to the wine industry which

distinguishes it from other consumer products. Former southern California winemaker Ely Callaway noted that, "Wine is a story business. Beer isn't. There's no back label with a story on a beer can." The stories render a richness, depth, and personality which is often absorbed by the consumer. Presenting a friend with a bottle of wine becomes an extension of oneself. As wineries become more effective at conveying their chronicles to consumers, consumers will become more apt to base their selections on their appreciation for the story.

Stories can be built around a family's history in the wine industry, as with the Kunde's current transformation of a barn

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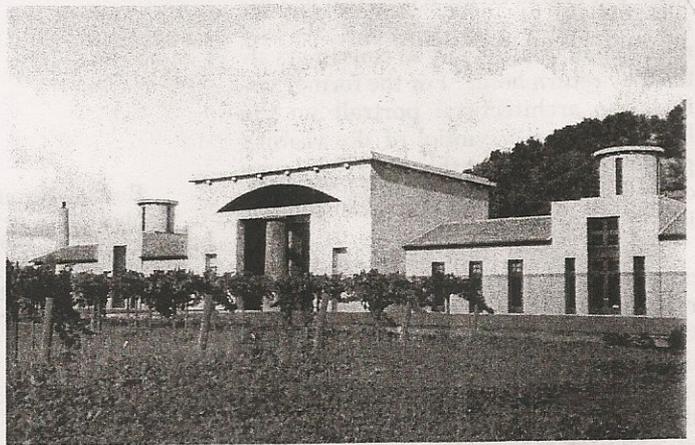
which has been on their Valley of the Moon property since the 1880s. Oakville winemaker and architect William Turnbull has designed his small winery as a thesis to his concerns for the preservation of the agricultural qualities of the Napa Valley. Clos Pegase is an architectural illustration to the mythology of wine. The Benziger's narrative is about their family and the backdrop of their personable domestic architecture in Glen Ellen.

Architecture is a language available to individuals of all cultures, economic backgrounds, and ages. Architecture can be composed and read literally, figuratively, or abstractly. It can be used to transmit information, convey ideas, profess truths, stimulate questions, or provoke sensory stimulation. Some architectural creations are skin deep; all you need to read to understand their contents is their cover. Others, like poetry, can convey multiple messages, utilizing a rich language, stimulating thought, and inspiring understanding. Architect Charles Moore notes, "A skunk has but one trick, a fox several."

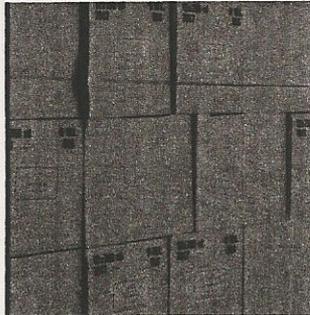
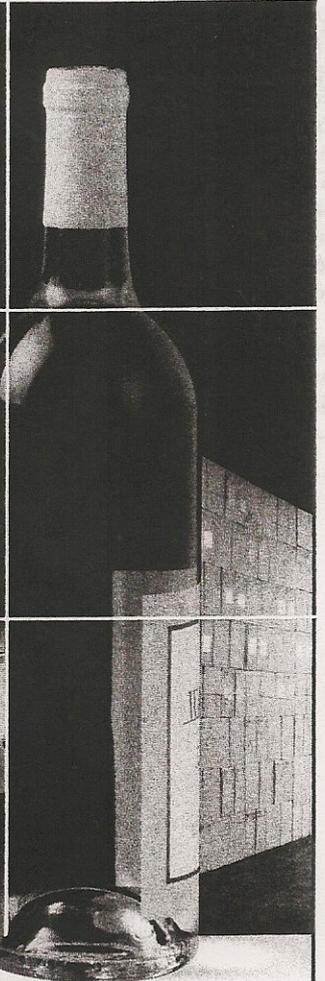
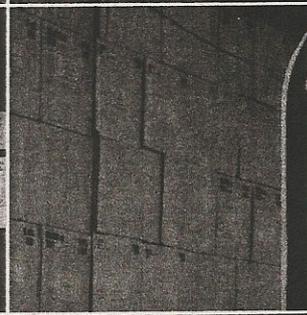
Wineries with a pragmatic leg have their tales. Rodney Strong conveyed to his architects in the late 1960s that he wanted an honest building where every element had to have a practical aspect. He said that he wanted a bold design and specifically stated that he did not want to create a winery which reflected an epoch other than his own. Claims Strong, "I am entrenched in the belief that if something is of quality and it functions well, it will have an in-turn beauty about it. Our idea was that the esthetics would be a result of solving the design needs of the winery in a practical, efficient, and cost efficient way."

Strong's approach is consistent with the challenge of industrial product designers since the 1930s. It is essential for industrial designers to be aware of the sales, marketing, and performance aspects of their products. Martin Smith, associate chairman of the Industrial Design Department at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena professes that, "The Ford Taurus was important not only for what it did for Ford Motor Company, turning around its fortunes, but it focused on the value of design for selling a product." The success of Mazda's recently released "Miata," the line of Braun's home appliances, and the "Sknasaur" kite are

Clos Pegase is a strong statement of the mythology of wine



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just a few of the "everyday" testaments to the value of good design, as a synthesis of function and esthetics, to the success of a product.

Visitors, vintners, and others affected by the wine industry are requiring more of the architecture than in previous decades. In addition to functioning as a wine producing facility, a destination for visitors, and as a portrait of the winery's venture, the architecture of wineries is an evolving dialogue on whether, and how, the architecture of our era should represent our values to future generations.

Perhaps "billboard architecture," in all of its marketing honesty, is an appropriate representation of the previous "decade of greed." But what messages and legacies are worth conveying during the 1990s? We are likely to witness continued developments in architecture as works of art, the integration of interior design and the landscape with the architecture, and the continued personalization of architecture by the vintners.

One of the global trends anticipated for the 1990s will be the concerns for the interdependency and frailness of our planet's ecosystems. Health awareness by an aging populace in the United States will likely result in the further scrutiny of the wine making process, its chemical processes, and agricultural practices.

Architects will be challenged to design

architectural manifestations of environmental awareness for the organic vintner. Some wineries may attempt to sincerely convey how they conscientiously handle their waste water, how their wines are free of pesticides, or how their buildings are fabricated with recycled building materials and utilize appropriate technologies.



Domaine Carneros in Napa is an example of "billboard architecture," a statement of marketing honesty

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Architecture which is designed in concert with the lay of the land is by no means unprecedented. The Napa and Sonoma counties exhibit many examples of buildings which express a profound love and appreciation for their surrounding environment. Winemaker and architect William Turnbull of the Johnson Turnbull Winery claims that "The Napa Valley is a microcosm of the problem besetting agricultural lands in California. The problem is how new construction, which alters the historic character of any place, can be added to the existing landscape with an attitude of stewardship that respects the land. In essence, the problem is one of environmental responsibility."

Wine caves and caverns will continue to provide economic, political, and esthetic benefits to wineries, especially in lieu of rising vineyard costs, zoning regulations, and refrigeration (freon gas) restrictions. Wineries will recognize the value which caves have in attracting tourists for memorable tasting experiences, inside and out. The interior development of wine caves and the increased competition among wineries will result in more thoughtfully designed interiors of the tasting rooms.

During the previous ten years, there has been an unprecedented development in wineries as facilities for the apprecia-

HOGUE IS IN NEW CELLAR

The Hogue Cellars at Prosser, Washington, has completed a new production facility as well as an adjoining 10-acre Chardonnay vineyard parallel to I-82 out of Prosser. A Willmes TP 15 press was added and a crush pad completed in time for the 1990 harvest.

Hogue Cellars also added a German-born assistant winemaker, Anke Freimuth-Wildman, and a viticulturist

who is a graduate of U.C. Davis - Sarah Powell. Both women have worked in wineries internationally.

Mike Hogue, owner of the winery, was honored as the 1990 South Central Washington Small Business Person of the Year.

Hogue was among 29 Washington State wineries taking part in the Ninth Prosser Wine and Food Fair in August.

tion of the arts; painting, music, food preparation, and poetry reading. In his introduction to "The Architecture of Wineries, A Selected Bibliography," Anthony White writes, "The most pleasant experience a wine drinker can have is to find a beautiful wine in a setting of beautiful architecture. This is one instance where the esthetics of place can greatly complement the esthetics of the product." Architecture has the potential to be more than a backdrop for the arts, as will be exhibited by Codorniu's new Carneros winery, which has been designed as a piece of utilitarian sculpture. Destination-bound, visually acute tourists will continue to be drawn to facilities which appeal to their visual tastes as well as their palates.

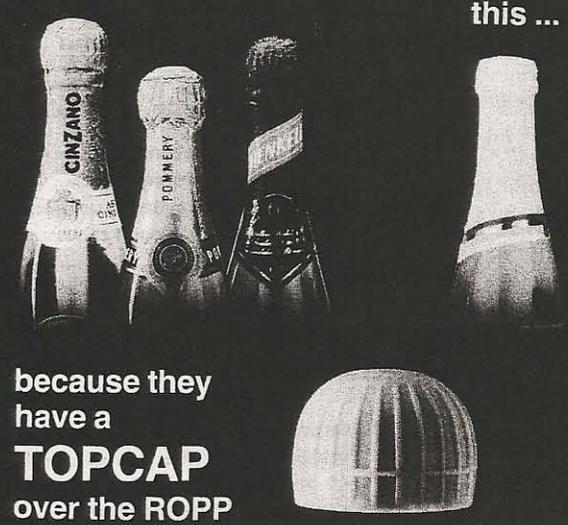
The architecture and environmental

design which may contribute the most to a winery's marketing and public relations program will be one which not only addresses the pragmatic and esthetic issues, but a design which is able to capture the spirit of the winemaker. Vignerons with significant and noteworthy, if not prophetic, intentions may lead to architectural manifestations beyond the level of romance novels. It is conceivable that the vintner and architect's collaboration could result in meaningful and culturally contributing architectural prose, or even poetry. ☐

(The author operates his own architectural firm in Santa Rosa. The above was excerpted from his Master of Architecture thesis on the design of northern California wineries.)

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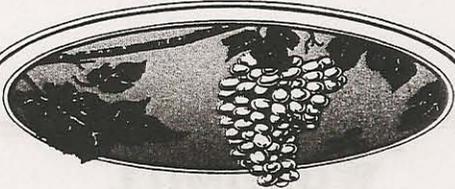
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