

WINE

Architecture and Interiors

COUNTRY

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Quintessa Winery

Rustic Contemporary Architecture

Walker Warner Architects

Brooks Walker, principal architect in charge

Left: The waiting room at Quintessa Winery is a study in contrasts. Even though it is a commercial enterprise, the room has a homey appeal brought out by the leather chairs, fireplace, and unique light fixture. The concrete walls contrast nicely with the stone fireplace and the halo effect of the chandelier warms the space.

Right: Stepping from the multistoried waiting room into a cave-like space, one enters the tasting room at Quintessa. The public is invited to sit at a table where the ambient glow of backlit paintings creates an atmosphere of intimacy. The torchiere lights were designed specifically for this room.

Set back from the Silverado Trail in Napa Valley and nestled into a hillside, the symmetrically ascending crescent form of the Quintessa Winery comes alive each morning at sunrise. Nature's light show on this architectural amphitheater embraces its vineyards in the early morning hours as a great theater embraces a captivated audience with a masterful performance; here, it is the performance of wine making.

Quintessa, derived from the word quintessential, means "the essence of a thing in its purest and most concentrated form." The name was a calculated choice meant to serve as a business philosophy and a mission statement for the architects.



Photo by Mary Whitesides



Photo by Richard Barnes



Walker Warner Architects faced a unique challenge in creating a state-of-the-art wine-making facility that could stand up to the meaning of its name. They began by paying special attention to the constraints of the site and roadway presentation, and complemented this with function and efficiency.

From the road the building appears as an elegant curved stone wall inset by one simple portal of glass doors leading to the wine caves and wine-making operations.

The sensuous curve of the sculptural wall is clad with a blend of stone types, including local tufa rock, and grouted with a mixture of pea gravel, in a simple rustic style. The hospitality functions are in the

Left, top: Architect Brooks Walker let the site dictate the shape and function of the building. Here the entrance to the hospitality area of the winery sits atop a hillside above the production facility.

Left, bottom: The steel frame or "skeleton" of the building forms a corner for the clerestory windows in the waiting room. A shed roof protects the room from harsh radiant sun by mollifying the light source.

Right: The tasting room is a study in contrasts. Smooth concrete walls meet a textured concrete floor. Wood, steel, and leather not only set off the hard edge surfaces with deep colors, but also invite the human element to become part of the room.



main building, a rectangular configuration of multiple ceiling heights tucked against the hillside atop the arc of the sculptured wall. Constructed of steel and glass in contrast to the stone wall, one form offsets the other respectively, maintaining a separate integrity.



Left: After the wine has been through the fermentation process, it is stored in barrels for the aging process. This process must take place under certain humid conditions and temperate zones of 58 to 60 degrees. Underground caves like this one at Quintessa are a most efficient way to achieve fine quality wines. An obelisk marks a spot where four caves converge in the middle.

Right, top: The upper level of the Quintessa Winery is easily accessed by a curved drive atop the production facility. Wine connoisseurs can be left at the front door of the hospitality center while the driver parks just beyond the entrance. The steel, glass, and stone structure is barely visible from the Silverado highway.

Right, bottom: Quintessa grows and maintains its own vineyards. The grapes are a specially selected species that suit the specific flavor distinctive of their brand. Located behind the winery, the vineyards stretch along the rolling hills and disappear into the valley below.

The reception area centrally located in the main building rises above two adjoining wings. Clerestory windows dress the simplistic concrete walls. Steel beams crossing in front of the corner windows candidly express the contemporary design language. An originally designed chandelier is a halo of textured glass, the crowning glory of the room.

Adjacent to the reception area is the tasting room where a common space accommodates individual tasters. The mood here is directed by backlit paintings that cast a diaphanous glow onto walnut tables and leather stools. Ground concrete floors are in textural contrast to smooth concrete walls and a crosshatched concrete countertop. Elemental light fixtures are lucid markers for intimate

nooks where a glass of wine can be sampled. Quintessa also hosts group connoisseurs in a cave-like chamber where wine is ceremoniously uncorked and tasted.

A private tour of the facility will reveal that the architects, with the help of Quintessa's winemaker, have composed the buildings in such a way as to allow the wine-making





Left: The morning light strikes the façade of the arced structure of the Quintessa Winery. Architect Brooks Walker took his clue from the landscape for this unusual piece of architecture where road presentation was also a consideration. The result is a beautifully executed man-made structure that complements nature in a respectful way.

Right: A functional piece of sculpture, this stone arc made of local tuffa stone and grouted with pea gravel fronts the entrance into the production facility at Quintessa. This winery is a vertical operation where the vineyards and production facility are located on the same site. The "must" is gravity fed atop the arced structure during harvest time.

process to be returned to its purist form. By utilizing the hillside they are able to gravity-feed the "must" into the fermentation tanks, eliminating the need for any mechanical pumping.

At Quintessa the wine is barrel-aged in French oak and stored in 17,000 square feet of man-made caves. Four cavernous corridors, which make up the spines of the caves merge into a spherical anteroom with a stone obelisk fountain as the focal point. Another textured-glass chandelier casts an aureole of light on the wall like giant luminous clouds.

Quintessa winery is a study in contrasts, joining contemporary design with traditional skills, mass with minimalism, arcs with squares, concrete with wood, and texture with burnished surfaces. Walker Warner Architects achieves a yin-yang balance harmonious with nature and concordant with function.