



Bryant Estate: Art and Wine Flourish in Napa

Refined and elegant. These are two words often used to describe both Bettina Bryant and the wine that bears her name. The president of Bryant Estate and noted art collector has an expansive history in the arts, starting with her days as a dancer in the American Ballet Theater during the glory era of Baryshnikov. Pursuitist caught up with Bryant at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel while she was in Los Angeles visiting with art galleries and organizations.

As Bryant, a denizen of New York until several years ago noted, Los Angeles art and culture have become more exciting and vibrant in recent years. She's been visiting Los Angeles for decades since her work in dance and later in her work as a private art curator. Now, as a full-time Napa resident and the



guiding force of one of Napa's smallest and most respected wineries, her work brings together a lifetime of appreciation for art, culture, and nature.

Bryant was kind enough to share with Pursuitist an upcoming vintage, the 2016 Bryant Family Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon that will be released to their mailing list first. The wine is estate-grown and reflects the enviable spot that Bryant Estate enjoys on 13.2 acres of at the northern end of Prichard Hill overlooking Lake Hennessey. This particular microclimate is rich with volcanic soil and enjoys gentle breezes coming off the lake depositing moisture. The wine itself is worlds away from the high-octane Napa Cabs that gave the area a reputation for fleshy, showy vintages. The Cabernet Sauvignon is soft and graceful with piquant cherry notes grounded by a nearly imperceptible sense of earthiness. As Bryant put it, "the vineyard persists."

The winery produces just 2,500-3,000 cases a year split between three wines currently. Bryant Estate uses grapes from other vineyards including the Madrona vineyard for its Bettina blend and its DB4 vintage. With just six core people at the winery, everyone is intensely hands on. For this year's Bryant Family Estate vintage, the vineyard conducted 83 micro picks, picking for freshness as well as ageability and longevity. This also allows the wine to reflect the nuances of each year and each harvest. The estate also has its own bottling operation. "It gives us a lot of control over when we determine the optimal moment to bottle," added Bryant, noting that some other wineries rely on outside mobile bottling services.



She's modest about having a wine named after her, mentioning that it was her husband's idea. However, it's also clear she's proud of the wine itself, mentioning its strong reviews and noting that because it is a blend, it's a marriage of vineyards from three different elevation sites that lends the wine its complexity.

Bryant has a great appreciation for the community in Napa noting that the fires and earthquakes have shown how deep the ties in the area among winemakers are. "There's a really deep sense of community," she noted. In addition to singular events like fires, Napa's winemakers are looking at a future that could shift this precious climate. Bryant and her team are constantly making adjustments for the climate, measuring water stress, honing the shade cloth, and using state-of-the-art farming techniques to mitigate the impact of climate fluctuations.

Now that Bryant is in Napa full time she plans to fuse art into the winery experience as well as focus on arts education. She also nodded to the ongoing fusion between wine and art, citing examples such as Richard and Pamela Kramlich who own one of the largest private video art collections in the world. Bryant has visited their home in Oakville and remarked on the way the art is integrated into the experience of the property. (For a tour of the art in their San Francisco home, check out this KQED feature). Bryant recently commissioned a piece from naturalistic painter Walton Ford which is expected to arrive at the winery in a few months.

Together the Bryants have collected a wide variety of art over time from 18th-century portraiture to Abstract Expressionism and Jasper Johns, Brice Marden, and others. Bryant sees art as a continuum enjoying the juxtaposition of pieces from Cycladic figurines to current artists. Could there be an art experience or sculpture garden in the winery's future? Bryant doesn't rule it out citing examples like the marquee art on display at the Donum Estate. For now, however, she's focused on education and what is the best art conversation to have in Napa. We will be listening.



Deidre Woollard

Deidre Woollard served as the lead editor on Luxist.com for six years writing about real estate, auctions, jewelry and luxury goods. Her love for luxury real estate led her to work at realtor.com and two of the top real estate brokerages in Los Angeles. She is the co-founder of Lion & Orb, a real estate PR firm, and blogs at MFAnotMBA.com.