

ESTATE OF THE ART

In time for harvest season, the Donum Estate unveils a new Doug Aitken installation in its monumental sculpture collection.

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PHOTO BY JAMIE BARRON

DOUG AITKEN, SONIC MOUNTAIN (SONOMA), 2019. IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Doug Aitken's new site-specific installation, *Sonic Mountain (Sonoma)*, 2019, is nestled in the Donum Estate's lush eucalyptus grove.

“I wanted to create a living artwork,

a piece that would change continuously and be performed by the natural environment,” says Doug Aitken of his new site-specific installation *Sonic Mountain (Sonoma)* (2019), at the bucolic 200-acre former dairy-farm-cum-vineyard Donum Estate in Sonoma.

While art and wine have been natural bedfellows since antiquity, the trend of winemakers investing millions of dollars in their art collections in order to draw a more diverse and global audience has been emerging only in the latter part of the past decade. Pairing art with wine is an innovative way to encourage oenophiles and casual wine consumers alike to flock to vineyards for heightened sensory experiences and open-air encounters in a world where almost every other desire can be fulfilled online.

Sophisticated winos now jaunt to Provence for Château la Coste’s two-hour art and architecture walk, where they can take in over 30 museum-quality artists, including Louise Bourgeois, Lee Ufan and Sean Scully, while sipping Grand Vin Rosé. David Walsh’s Museum

of Old and New Art in Tasmania offers tastings of the finest Moorilla Estate wines while touring world-class traveling art exhibitions in addition to a permanent, immersive collection. In 2017, globetrotters began traversing to Pt. Leo Estate in Victoria, Australia to embrace beautiful glasses of nebbiolo while viewing sculptures by Jaume Plensa, Tony Cragg and Julian Opie in the Gandel family’s 19-acre sculpture park that now features over 50 works. And likewise, art aficionados and wine connoisseurs have been making their way to the Carneros region of Sonoma to revel in the Donum Estate’s distinguished sculpture collection.

Allan Warburg and his wife, Zhu Meijun, or “Mei,” along with two partners, purchased Donum Winery in 2010. Already avid collectors of mainly paintings and smaller pieces, the couple took advantage of their new expansive surroundings, acquiring large-scale sculpture and other major works which they privately started presenting in 2015 and opened to the public just last year. While savoring glasses of pinot noir,



Ai Weiwei's *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads*, 2011, appears in a ring of 150-year-old olive trees.



Richard Hudson's *Love Me*, 2016



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-Doug Aitken**

visitors wandering through the rolling vineyard’s grapevines and beehives encounter an impressive grouping of over 40 major works, including Jaume Plensa’s ethereal *Sanna* (2015) and Yayoi Kusama’s glistening bronze *Pumpkin* (2014), all set against a backdrop of San Francisco Bay views and lustrous mountains. “The conviviality and sharing inherent in wine and food is echoed in the sculptures that help define and articulate Donum,” says British art curator and Yorkshire Sculpture Park Director Clare Lilley, who contributes an essay to the inaugural catalogue of the collection launching during Frieze London in October.

A symbiotic energy between the art and the natural

elements permeates the vineyard’s vast grounds. Ai Weiwei’s *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads* (2011) appears in a ring of 150-year-old olive trees, whose sculptural qualities emerge even more clearly in such close proximity to the artist’s seminal statues. Tracey Emin’s *All I Want Is You* (2016) also echoes the natural setting. The monumental yet shockingly intimate bronze Emin created following her mother’s death speaks to a deep void that mirrors the dark water of a nearby pond. “The quality and global reach of Donum’s collection as well as the careful placement of the sculptures,” says Lilley, “make it an exceptional sensory and intellectual experience.”

Aitken’s *Sonic Mountain* (Sonoma) enhances that experience by mimicking a wind chime as it creates sound patterns in response to the surrounding environment. Bay breezes drift through the commission’s 365 aluminum rods to create a mesmerizing musical symphony accompanied by a dynamic dance, the result of the interplay of light between the sun, the rods’ reflective surfaces and the shadows cast by the foliage of the vineyard’s eucalyptus grove. These cylindrical rods in their concentric metal scaffolding seem to converse with one another, creating moments of both hypnotic sounds and silence—the life breath of the kinetic art installation.

“The artwork should be walked around, in and

through. It is not to be physically activated. Rather, I want visitors to enjoy the sonic-scape produced by the elements,” explains Aitken. “Doug responded to Donum’s landscape in every detail,” the Warburgs chime in. “He has created a hypnotic soundtrack composed in collaboration with nature.” To inaugurate the installation, multimedia artist Hisham Akira Bharoocha created his own soundtrack, a musical composition titled “20 Percussionists for Sonic Mountain.” As commissions like Aitken’s continue to inspire new works, Donum will build on its impressive collection, collaborating with artists on a series of quarterly public events beginning this fall.