

Every Step of the Way

Martin's Lane Winery

MASTERPIECES COME in many forms: strokes of colour on a canvas; words strung together in a novel; a perfect vintage of pinot noir. Situated hillside on East Kelowna's Lakeshore Road, Martin's Lane Winery is one of the Okanagan's newest masterpieces. An exhibit of design, it is elemental, radical, and riveting.

Named in honour of proprietor Anthony von Mandl's late father, Martin's Lane is notably different from von Mandl's sprawling Mission Hill Family Estate winery, visible directly across Lake Okanagan.

A rather unexpected art piece greets those who visit Martin's Lane: a boulder-sized replica of Vincent van Gogh's head, resting on its missing ear side. Actually, it's not van Gogh at all, but rather a man with an uncanny likeness to the master painter. Vancouver-based artist Douglas Coupland was commissioned by von Mandl to create a sculptural project to mark the opening of the winery; the result, *Project Redhead*, celebrates the correlated percentage between redheads in the world and that of pinot noir vines by population. A worldwide crowd-sourcing initiative helped Coupland discover Daniel Baker from Christchurch, England; he is a true chaperone of this reticent complex, and it is his face that Coupland immortalized in bronze.

Martin's Lane is open by invitation only (though its beautiful architecture can be appreciated from von Mandl's adjacent winery, CedarCreek). The sharply angled and weather-rusted Corten steel facade sheathes a sleek industrial core of wood, polished and ridged concrete, and glass. Within the vast wine cellar, sunshine radiates in angles from raked windows, reflecting on the tanks below.

Like with any great bottle of wine, it's what is inside that truly

counts. Although celebrated Seattle architect Tom Kundig is responsible for the form and function of the Martin's Lane stage, winemaker Shane Munn is the man behind the curtain who pulls the strings. Munn's masterpieces come in two kinds: pinot noir and riesling.

These varietals (one classically French, the other German) are an uncommon duo to commit an entire 3,000-case production to, but Munn stresses that "just because they're from traditionally different regions doesn't mean they won't work here."

Martin's Lane is a guardian of distinct terroir-driven offerings, and the level of quality draws a new line in the sand of the Okanagan. These are products of precision and focus, nerve and texture. The sites from which they hail impart specific nuances to the wines, which Munn admits to "guiding in the right direction, rather than trying to force them."



The four organically-farmed vineyards Munn harvests from are separated not only by distance, but by geography, topography, and climate. The most southerly Naramata Ranch Vineyard has perhaps the oldest riesling vines in the valley. Planted in 1976, they grow on granite bedrock soils and deliver expressive wines. In West Kelowna, Fritz's Vineyard has 21-year-old riesling and pinot noir rooted in quartz-granite, which translates to rich and powerful flavours. The two younger sites, each planted in 2008, are closer to the winery, in East Kelowna; the Simes Vineyard

is home to both varieties, while the cooler DeHart Vineyard is dedicated strictly to pinot noir—impressive versions, compact but with finesse.

Gorgeous as it is, the production centre being carved into the west-facing hillside is equally advantageous to winemaking. Inside, six stepped levels ensure a full gravity-flow facility, resulting in wines made with the most minimal intervention. The entire venture is rare, and humbling to take in, and doubtless best expressed by Munn himself: "This project is a dream."

—Daenna Van Mulligen

