



ARCHITECTURE

Design of the times

Not wishing to be left behind by the rise of modern New World wineries, many Bordeaux properties have embarked on ambitious projects to reinvigorate their estates, blending history and modernity to stunning effect, says Peter Richards MW



IN 1988, THE Châteaux Bordeaux Wine and Architecture Exhibition was an attempt to stir the bordelais into action in the face of New World dynamism. Architect Jean Dethier noted how wine architecture could be a force for modernisation, democratisation, hospitality and brand image. Bordeaux, he warned, needed to remedy its 'cultural amnesia'.

The awareness of how architecture and wine can work together has arguably never been stronger in Bordeaux than it is today. Take the city itself – the eye runs from the stately grandeur of 18th-century riverfront facades to the coqueting swirls of the Cité du Vin cultural centre: a celebration of wine in arresting modern architecture. Such audacity is in evidence all across the region.

Roman architect Vitruvius defined the three fundamentals of architecture as beauty, usefulness and permanence. Château Margaux embodies all three, its iconic neo-Palladian chateau now flanked by the sober yet elegant

new winemaking facility by Foster & Partners. ('So coherent, so refined' was how the late Paul Pontallier described Margaux's architecture to me.) Other examples of successful architectural regeneration – both historic and modern – can be found at Châteaux Laillet, Talbot, Fichon Baron and Boychevelle.

Château Le Pin took the *tabula rasa* approach, replacing a nondescript house with a sleek new edifice (retaining the emblematic pine trees, of course). Sustainability – an issue that deserves more prominence in wine design – was a factor in Cheval Blanc's impeccable new winery, which is designed to save energy as well as facilitate precise winemaking.

The term 'château', intimately linked to Bordeaux, is an expression of ambition in both architectural and wine terms. The properties profiled here represent the new generation of winery design, tangible proof that Bordeaux's 'cultural amnesia' has long been forgotten.

Peter Richards MW is an award-winning writer and broadcaster whose first book, Wineries with Style, focused on the architecture of wine around the world and won the Gourmand World Wine Awards

Château Pédesclaux

Paullac

You notice Pédesclaux from afar. Above the vines of Paullac rise a conspicuous dark box winery and a classical 19th-century chateau that seems to be encased in ice. The striking design by architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte, completed in 2014, means the two buildings reflect each other both metaphorically and literally. The play of light is quite something, especially at sunset and sunrise. The winery is deceptively bulky – the land falls away so the true, significant scale of the building is only evident from the back. It's enough to handle the 300,000-bottle production and more. Owners (since 2009) Jacky and Françoise

The modern winery at Château Pédesclaux

Lorenzetti have acquired vineyards in different terroirs around the appellation (growth and replanting is ongoing) so the 58 double-compartment conical steel tanks enable precise vinifications. The idea is not to use pumps but to harness gravity – at the heart of the winery are 'elevator vats', which can weigh up to 10 tonnes when full, hoisted up or down as required between the levels for winemaking, barrel ageing and bottling.

• Visits by appointment 9am-12.30pm, 2pm-6pm: November to March, Monday-Friday, April to October, Monday-Saturday
www.chateau-pedesclaux.com >



CHÂTEAU PÉDESCLAUX

GRAND CRU CLASSÉ EN 1855
PAUILLAC

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