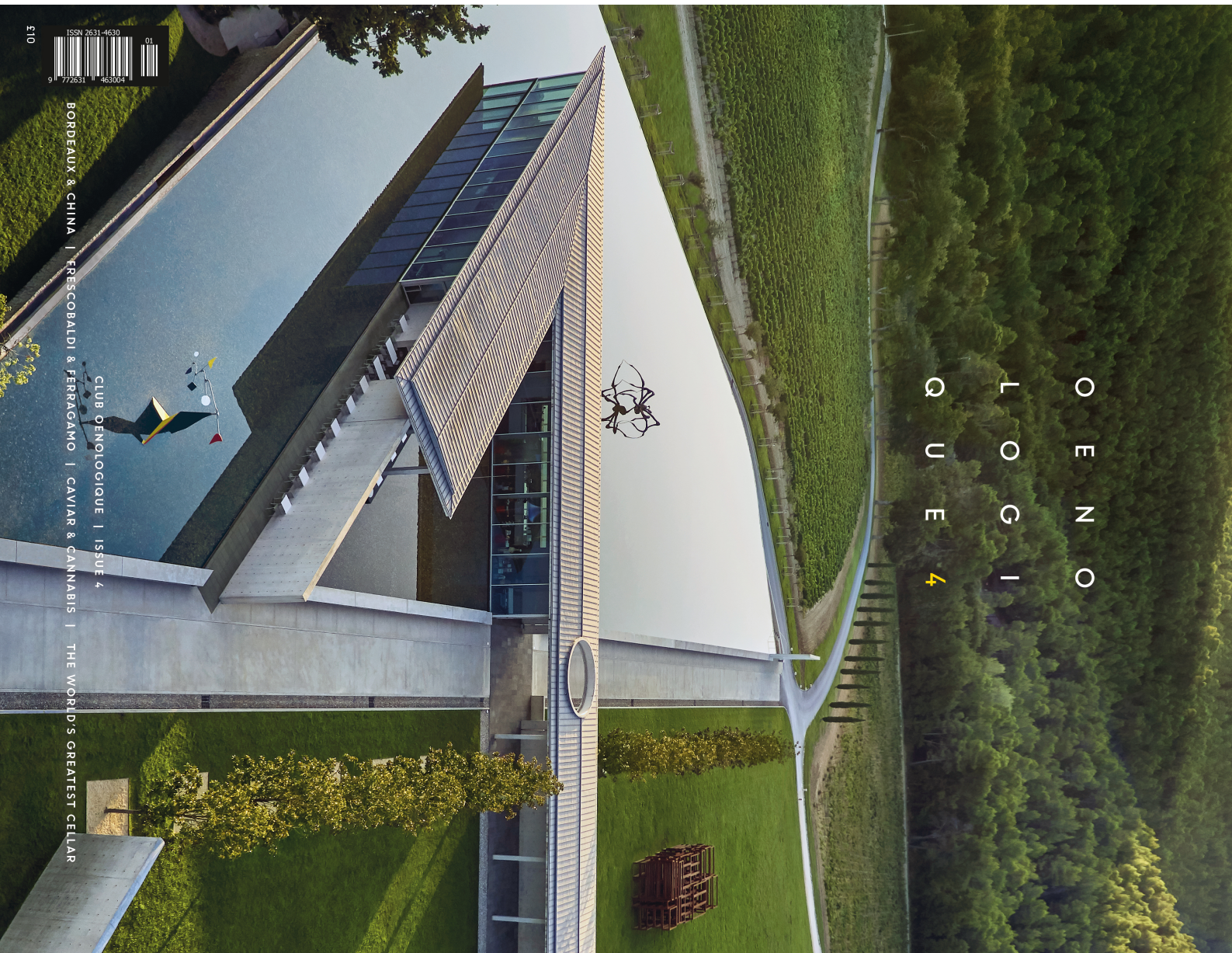


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CLUB OENOLOGIQUE | ISSUE 4  
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# Through the looking glass

IN THE ROLLING HILLS OF CHIANTI LIES AN ESTATE  
WHOSE CONTEMPORARY APPROACH IS MIRRORED BY  
ITS QUIRKY STAR-STUDED ART COLLECTION

Castello di Ama's art collection currently includes 16 works. The second piece to be commissioned was Daniel Buren's 23m-long mirrored wall *Sulle Vigne: Punti di Vista*, conceived as an open-air landscape gallery



I'm peering into an iron grate set into the floor of an ancient cellar on a Tuscan wine estate. Through it, far below, I glimpse something extraordinary: a female nude in pink marble, kneeling in a pool of her own making, as water oozes from the tip of the fleshy flower that springs from her torso. In another cellar, a mysterious glass basin catches the light that enters from a single window, while in one of the estate's two private chapels, a red disc glows intensely on the dark floor. It seems like a portal to the underworld, especially when, reaching down to touch it, you can see your hand pass right through what had seemed to be a flat surface.

By Louise Bougeois, Roni Horn and Anish Kapoor, respectively, these are just three of the 16 site-specific art pieces that have been commissioned by Lorenza Sebasti and Marco Pallanti, owners of leading Chianti Classico estate Castello di Ama, since 1999. Originally arising from a collaboration with Tuscany's influential Galleria Continua, the collection has been managed since 2015 by independent curator Philip Laratt Smith.

It's not as if Castello di Ama needs the art to boost the reputation of its wines. Singled out for praise as long ago as 1773 by Pietro Leopoldo, the Medici Grand Duke of Tuscany, the vineyards around what appears more a fortified village than a castle were rescued from neglect in the early 1960s with the help of Pallanti, a Tuscan winemaker who had studied in Bordeaux. Today, Castello di Ama is at the forefront of the renaissance of Chianti Classico, the top level of

French artist Daniel Buren's work looks out over vineyards from the lawn beneath the village of Ama. Its five windows, designed to frame the landscape as in a Renaissance painting, are lined with marble stripes that recall Siena's 13th-century cathedral exterior. Each stripe is exactly 87mm wide – a Buren trademark.

Cuban artist Carlos Garaicoa also rifts on walls with his 2006 work *Yo No Quiero Ver Más a Mis Vecinos*, which reproduces in miniature nine of the barriers that have historically kept people apart – shown here, the Great Wall of China. 'The title of the work translates as 'I Don't Want to See My Neighbours Anymore'

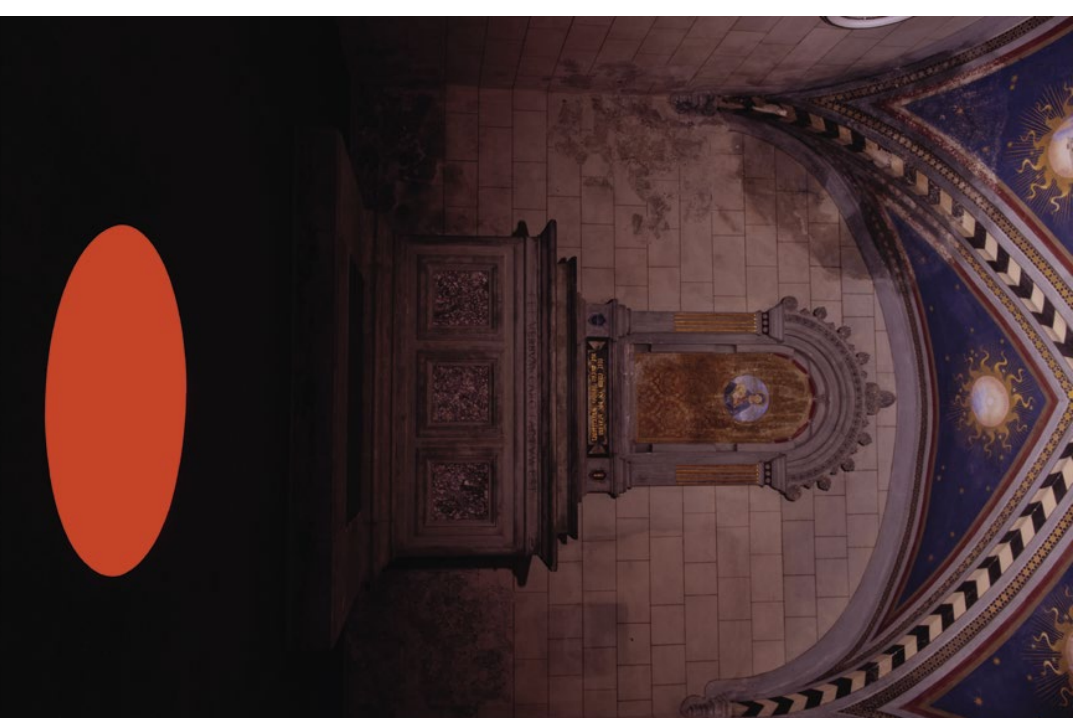
wine from the Chianti appellation, which now competes with Brunello as one of the great wines of Tuscany. Meanwhile, the estate's Merlot, L'Appartita – whose 2016 vintage was awarded a perfect 100 points by the critic Antonio Galloni – is one of the region's most spectacular and sought-after IGT wines.

At an October event to present the latest addition to the collection – a delicate, mystic installation by Polish artist Mirosław Bakka – Sebasti and Pallanti entertained around 50 guests, including some of the world's leading museum directors and curators. Over a glass of L'Appartita 2008, Pallanti explained that Castello di Ama 'has three legs: landscape, wine and art, each one intimately connected with the other two'. So intimate, indeed, that Bakka's work was installed amid the steel blending vats in the working part of the winery. As Frances Morris, director of London's Tate Modern, commented when we emerged from the hidden barrel-vaulted cellar where Korean artist Lee Ufan created his captivating, wine-hued work *Topos* (Excavated) in 2016, 'The lovely thing about this collection is that you have to seek the works out. It's the opposite of a sculpture park.'

Sebasti and Pallanti work closely with the artists on the pieces and their location within the estate. Bakka visited seven times before his work was finally installed. 'The artist needs to be inspired by the genius loci,' Sebasti said, 'just as the winemaker has to be possessed by terroir in order to create something masterful and unrepeatable.' 🍷



Referring to the changing of the seasons and the turning of the soil, as well as other types of revolution, South African artist Kendall Geers's 2003 work looks out over barrels of L'Appart, one of the great wines of the estate

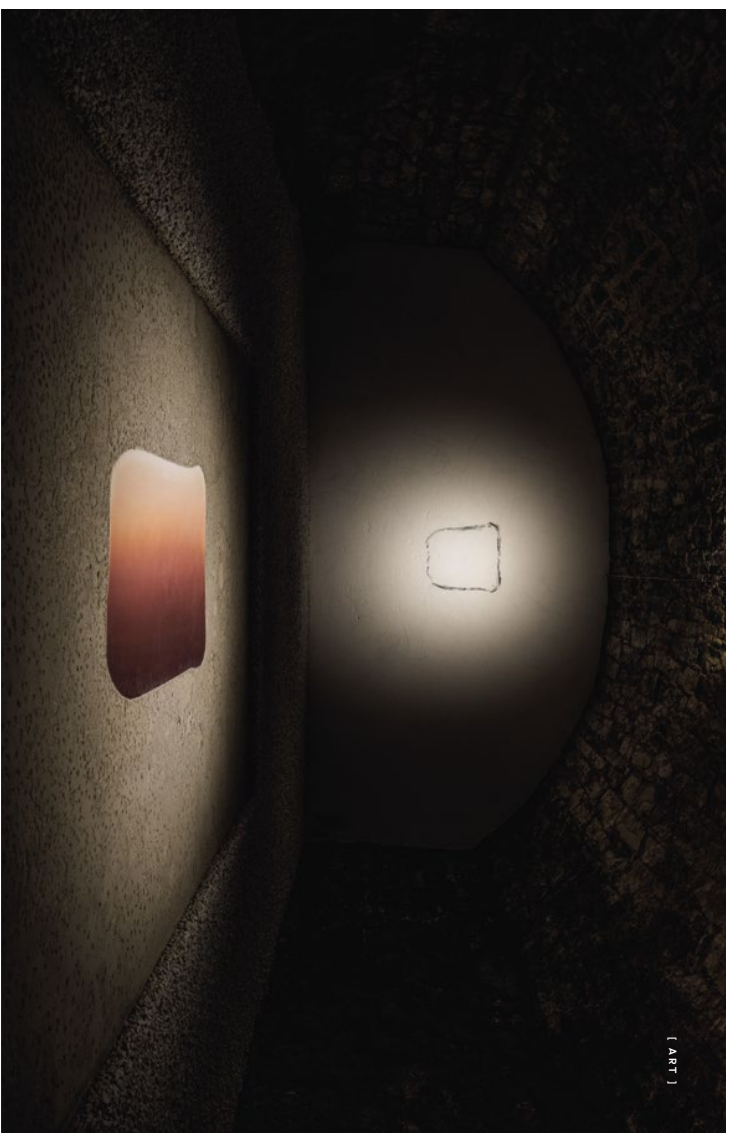


In the private chapel of one of Castello di Ama's two 18th-century villas, Anish Kapoor created a glowing red circle, called *Alma* (Greek for "blood"), in 2004. Disorienting the viewer, it turns out to be not a flat disc but a hole in the floor

The space behind the altar of another chapel on the estate hosts Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto's 2014 work *The Confession of Zero* (below), comprising two steel-tipped marble cones that never quite touch. In 2017, for Castello di Ama's 15th commission, Roni Horn created a mysterious glass vessel illuminated only by the light from a single small window inside the empty storeroom of one of the estate's 18th-century villas (bottom)



[ ART ]



In 2016, Korean artist Lee Ufan was invited to create a work in an ancient barrel-vaulted cellar (opposite, top). For *Topos* (Excavated), Ufan used a wide brush loaded with paint that reflects the changing hues seen in a glass of red wine. Chinese artist Chen Zhen completed the hanging glass piece *La Lumière Intérieur du Corps Humain* (opposite) shortly before his death in 2000. In 2005, it was installed just as he had intended in one of the estate's main ageing vaults

In a secluded courtyard at the centre of the Castello di Ama estate, Spanish artist Cristina Iglesias's *Towards the Ground* (below) is a fountain lined by branches and leaves in carved resin. It very slowly fills and empties in a continuous cycle. Louise Bourgeois's *Topiary* (below right), from 2008, 'inhabits a dark, damp cistern; seemingly made from pink wax, it is in fact sculpted in marble. The estate produces acclaimed Chianti, as well as Tuscan IGT wines, notably the Super-Tuscan L'Apparita



Pascale Marthine Tayou's *Le Chemin de la Bonheur* (above) is a coloured path through the village of Ama, like the trail of pebbles in the fable of Hansel and Gretel. Castello di Ama owners Lorenza Sebasti and Marco Pallanti (top left) launched the winery's art collection in 1999. Michelangelo Pistoletto's *Divisione e Moltiplicazione dello Specchio* (above left) consists of a huge tree trunk with a mirror-lined slice taken out of it