

WINE
TALK

The Art of Wine

From metal cheetahs by Dylan Lewis to Russian religious icons, the winelands are bursting with eclectic art treasures, says Jacqui Latimer

What does William Kentridge's Queen of the Night have in common with a Fabergé egg and an ornate silver wedding cup? It's not that the birds billowing out of Kentridge's dream in charcoal were once egg-bound, and that the egg was formed after two beaks sipped from the silver goblet. The egg, the ancient cup and the sublime drawing are, in fact, part of the diverse collection of art treasures on display in winery galleries and tasting rooms.

My wine and art adventure starts at **STEENBERG** in Constantia, where the mountain views are peppered with the colourful, muscular sculptures of Eduardo Villa. The geometric steel forms held in tension elicit a strange response. I'm torn between meditative contemplation and a desire to skip around the towering structures like a pagan worshipper. I opt for meditation for the sake of the tasting room staff and move inside to enjoy the series of Bernie Searle self portraits. In four huge panels, the eccentric photographer is rolling around in a white shift dress on a mountain of grape skins. The lighting is dramatic and the white dress becomes progressively stained. It looks as though Bernie gave in to those pagan impulses.

Some other folk getting down and

dirty with the fruit of the vine are the eight Cape Town artists involved in the recent Wine Made Art event. In its second year, the event sees artists using **TOKARA** wine as inspiration and medium to produce works with a wide variety of styles and themes. A coquettish mermaid rendered in a deep red line floats next to a woman's profile emerging from a brick-red wash. Using

exhibitions as well as housing some rather impressive permanent pieces. William Kentridge's two-metre Queen of the Night watches over visitors in the tasting room, and a Kentridge tapestry hangs in the restaurant. Willem Strydom's marble sculpture in the main entrance is also breathtaking in its writhing luminous detail.

Not all wineries supporting the

arts house a permanent gallery space, but instead, estates like **MORGENHOF** in Stellenbosch hold annual exhibitions. These one-off shows are worth looking out for in the local press as they provide an opportunity to discover new talent.

Few exhibitions could be more enduring though, than the work of one-time owner, GP Canitz, on display at **MURATIE**. Paned windows drip spider webs alongside Canitz's sky and veld landscapes, and portraits of ever so slightly sad looking ladies. Dramatically lit, in dark interleading spaces, the paintings are a window to the past of one of the country's oldest wine estates.

Down the road at **EAGLEVLEI**, the vines are relatively new and the gallery space is bright and airy. Red! The Gallery is responsible for their monthly exhibitions, and art produced by children involved in the estate's art



Tokara Face by Dorothee van der Osten at Tokara

red wine to draw and paint was the novel idea of Cape Town agency Riot, which was awarded a Golden Loerie for the campaign in July 2007.

Julia Meintjies, curator of the **TOKARA** gallery, is well known for her talent spotting. Tokara hosts regular

foundation is also on display and for sale.

Moving from young local talent to cherishing links with an exotic past, I arrive at **HAZENDAL**. Russian realist paintings, religious icons and Fabergé eggs are all on display at The Marvol Museum of Russian Art and Culture.

WARWICK is another estate where tradition and art combine in the form of a silver wedding cup designed by a 14th century artist. A romantic legend explains how the cup came to be shaped like a young maiden with a generous skirt holding aloft a pitcher that swivels in her hands. The vessel allows two people to drink from the same cup at once. At Warwick, the cup, which is reproduced on the estate's logo, represents love and faithfulness. Starry-eyed couples visiting the estate are given the opportunity to drink from the wedding cup and seal their vows again, and can even buy replicas.

SPIER has long been a champion of the arts and December 2007 will see the first biennial Spier Contemporary exhibition and awards, which aims to become a space where the continent's diverse art forms will be celebrated, debated and enjoyed.

The Beam Gallery, located in the old wine cellar, is a more permanent gallery space at Spier. According to Visual Art Manager for The Africa Centre, Farzanah Badsha, the next exhibition, opening shortly, will be of work by Master Crafters from the Western Cape.

Another big name supporting the arts is Donald M Hess of **GLEN CARLOU** near Paarl. Here the Hess Collection

showcases works of international contemporary artists and builds on the success of the new world wine producer and art collector's gallery at the Hess Collection Winery in Napa, California. Glen Carlou's indigenous Zen Fynbos Garden is also a must-see.

At **GRANDE PROVENCE** in Franschoek, garden meets art as the estate's gallery space spills over into the sculpture garden. A meander around these charmed spaces feels a little like a voyage of discovery and a pilgrimage rolled into one. I particularly love François Van Reenen's colourful resin dogs and Elizabeth Gunter's hopelessly sad pencil drawings of stillborn animals. The selection of art on display ranges from drawings, paintings and sculptures to ceramics, photography and traditional beadwork.

Also in Franschoek, the **GRAHAM BECK ESTATE** boasts more Eduardo Villa sculptures (as does the Robertson estate) and a pair of Dylan Lewis cheetahs flank the tasting room door. Even the art un-enthusiast will be charmed by the marble nudes reclining under the trees along the path to the winery.

Uit Klip, Uit Water, is an ethereal sculpture of a woman overlooking the cellar at **SARONSBURG** in Tulbagh. The sculpture was wrought partly from stone from the estate by Angus Taylor. The gallery showcases local art

handpicked by art enthusiast owners Nick and Marriette Van Huysteen.

From the sublime to the blissfully ridiculous, land artist Strijdom van der Merwe has delighted visitors to **ROOIBERG**

WINERY between Robertson and Worcester for the past ten years.

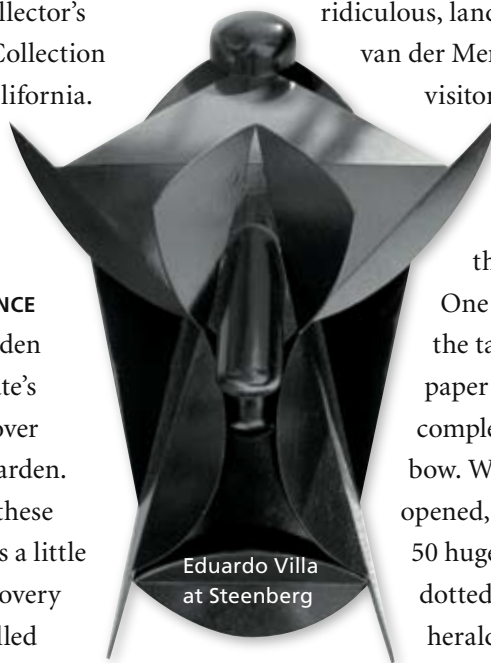
One year he wrapped the tasting room in red paper for Christmas, complete with huge white bow. When the restaurant opened, 50 red men and 50 huge white chairs dotted the landscape to herald the new arrival.

Another year, 50 red

windsocks were planted near the winery entrance.

Another art highlight on a main thoroughfare is the **WILDEKRANS WINE SHOP AND ART GALLERY** near Elgin, just off the N2. Right next to the Orchard farmstall, local art is displayed in this gallery, which also serves as the farm's wine tasting facility. At **NIEUWEDRIFT VINEYARDS** on the Berg River near Piketberg, the tasting room again doubles as a gallery for paintings by Karin Mostert, wife of owner Johan.

Having started out on an exhaustive tour of wineland art attractions, I've happily realised that the wine and art cocktail menu is endless. From permanent galleries exhibiting international pieces to tasting rooms adorned with local art talent, wineries are the perfect place to indulge in a little culture, wineglass in hand. **GT**



Eduardo Villa
at Steenberg