

Water to Wine:

The sculptures in the new Brick Bay winery Sculpture Walk aren't the only works of art on the site.



ABOVE: The Glass House at the Brick Bay winery functions as both entrance to the Sculpture Walk and a tasting room and cafe for visitors.

THE GLASS HOUSE STRETCHES like a bridge along a narrow ridge of land, hovering above a small lake on one side and a tumbling cascade of rocks on the other. With the rows of grapevines marching up the hill behind it, the building looks, from a distance, like it could be a nursery for tender young plants. But as you approach up the wide, flat stairs, it becomes obvious this is no horticultural centre, but a modern take on the traditional vineyard wine-tasting room.

Richard and Christine Didsbury have owned the land that the Brick Bay winery, 10 minutes out of Warkworth, is on for the last 20 years, and are now on their tenth vintage. Late last year, they opened the Brick Bay Sculpture Walk, a project that showcases more than 30 large-scale sculptures by New Zealand artists. When originally envisaging the building, to serve the triple purposes of office, entrance to the sculpture park and café/wine-tasting area, Richard Didsbury says he was quite prepared to let architect Noel Lane run wild. "The thing about wineries is that they tend to go for the Tuscan style. We wanted to do something that was unashamedly modern and New Zealand. We were prepared to let Noel do something totally outrageous, you know, to the scale of Frank Gehry."

When asked how he resisted the urge to make an extravagant gesture, Lane laughs. "I've never wanted to be Frank Gehry! No, I aspired to design a site-specific building that captured the atmosphere of the historical and current industries of the area. The building is based around the environment it's sitting in. It was designed to be the beginning of the sculpture walk, but over and above that, they wanted to sell their wine and local cheeses in a café environment as well."

Didsbury's complete faith in Lane's architectural choices comes as the result of a long working relationship between the two, which includes the Didsburys' own house at Brick Bay, and the new cinema complex at nearby Matakana. When Lane suggested that the building



ABOVE: During the hottest hours of the day, solar control blinds shade the main room, and help to cut down on noise bouncing off the hard surfaces.

would work better in a different location to the initially intended one, Didsbury happily let him choose the site. Lane chose a long narrow site, running east to west on a dam bar crossing a long valley, with a man-made lake on one side. "The nicest experience of the site was standing on the dam bar, looking at the water running away to the ocean," he says.

Keeping in mind the agricultural and horticultural influences of the area, Lane designed a simple, glass pavilion, with three coloured cubes at the eastern end to house the kitchen, office and toilet blocks, which light up from inside with a gentle glow at night. "As a gateway, this structure straddles the existing dam bar and transfers the visitor from the new urban surrounds to the mysteries of the concealed sculpture walk beyond," says Lane. "It's a glass structure so it's very transparent, allowing everything to be engaged with the environment."

Working with graduate architect Tom Rowe, Structure Design, builder Rob Dunne, aluminium joiner Gulf Windows and MS Engineering, Lane created the pavilion to capture light and sun, but not overheat. Natural ventilation through automatically controlled louvers and windows, and shading from blinds using high-tech solar and audio control fabric from SP Blinds, keeps the building cool throughout the day.

Locally designed or sourced furniture, including Kina lights by David Trubridge, sofas and ottomans by Simon James, chairs from ECC, display cases by Katalog and tables by InSpace, have been carefully selected to fit with the simple, clean lines of the pavilion and the dusty greys and browns, and fresh greens of the surrounding landscape.

Didsbury says he and Christine are delighted with the finished project, and they're not the only ones; it has been shortlisted for this year's NZIA awards. As far as we're concerned, anything that combines wine, design and art is already a clear winner. **MW**



Brick Bay Sculpture Trail

The Brick Bay Sculpture Trail near Matakana showcases contemporary New Zealand sculpture by established and emerging artists. Experience sculpture in a unique landscape framed by towering native trees and majestic palms, abundant birdlife, green pastures and overlooking the celebrated Brick Bay Vineyard.

Just 60 minutes north of Auckland.

NOW OPEN 10-5pm DAILY



Brick Bay Sculpture Trail

Photo: Mark Smith

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