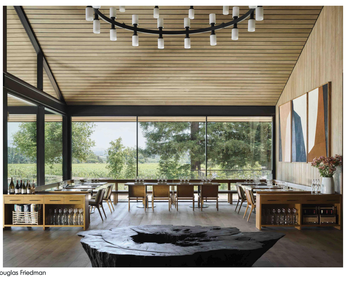


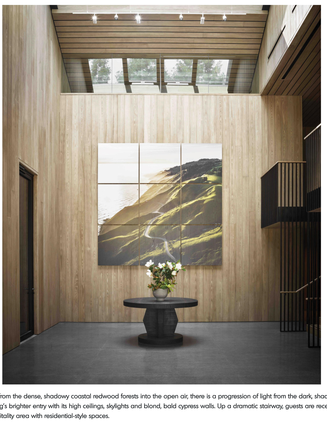
All photos by Douglas Friedman

HOUSE OF FLOWERS IN HEALDSBURG: A PLAY ON LIGHT AND SHADOWS

Author: Annette Hanami
All photography by Douglas Friedman

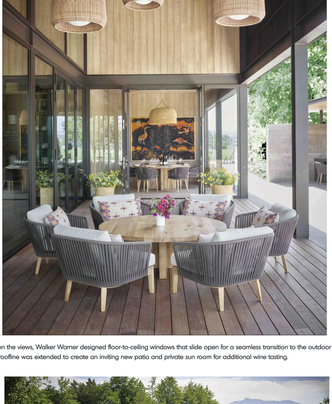
Thirty years ago, Flowers Vineyards & Winery founders Joan and Walt Flowers helped define the style of wines originating from the true, far west Sonoma Coast. The terroir-driven Pinot Noir and Chardonnay wines were as fresh and pure as pristine landscape where the coastal ridge meets the crashing waves. Vineyards rise dramatically to over 1,800 feet high above the fog, basking in sun and framed by dense redwood forests. However because of the remote location, customers could never visit the winery. When the opportunity arose to acquire an existing ca. 1970s winery and gardens just minutes from Healdsburg, the current owners chose Walker Warner Architects and Marco Hureaux Design to re-imagine the spaces as a welcoming tasting room that captures the wild beauty, outdoor feeling and organic approach of its origins.

Set within a redwood grove, "Our approach was deceptively simple," said Walker Warner principal Brooks Walker. "Let nature dominate and use architecture to frame the experience." The slatted redwood exterior is an abstraction of old barn siding characterized by weathered gaps, painted a shadowy black to help the building recede into the background.

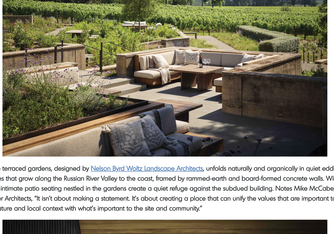


Like emerging from the dense, shadowy coastal redwood forests into the open air, there is a progression of light from the dark, shaded exterior into the building's brighter entry with its high ceilings, skylights and blond, bold cypress walls. Up a dramatic stairway, guests are received into a light-filled hospitality area with residential-style spaces.

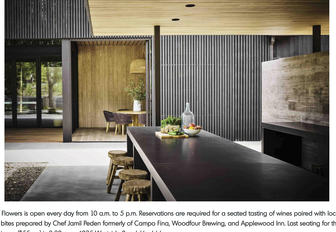
The exterior slatted wood veil creates texture and a continuing play on light and shadow inside the VIP tasting room as well as in the interior spaces where it lines bookshelves defining the living room.



With a focus on the views, Walker Warner designed floor-to-ceiling windows that slide open for a seamless transition to the outdoor spaces and gardens. The roofline was extended to create an inviting new patio and private sun room for additional wine tasting.



The expansive terraced gardens, designed by Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects, unfolds naturally and organically in quiet eddies of native plant ecologies that grow along the Russian River Valley to the coast, framed by rammed-earth and board-formed concrete walls. Willow-topped pergolas and intimate patio seating nestled in the gardens create a quiet refuge against the subdued building. Notes Mike McCabe, principal at Walker Warner Architects, "It isn't about making a statement. It's about creating a place that can unify the values that are important to Flowers… celebrating nature and local context with what's important to the site and community."



The House of Flowers is open every day from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Reservations are required for a seated tasting of wines paired with locally-sourced, hand-crafted bites prepared by Chef Jamil Reden formerly of Campo Fina, Woodfour Brewing, and Applewood Inn. Last seating for the full Flowers Experience $55 ppl is 3:30 p.m. *4035 Westside Road, Healdsburg*

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