

Daily Journal of Commerce, Seattle, Washington March 12, 2008

## **AIA Project of the Month: The winery gets reinvented in Woodinville**

By [CLAIR ENLOW](#)  
Special to the Journal



Photo by Benjamin Benschneider for Mithun --The winery is dominated by solid north-south lines made of tilt-up concrete. The east-west walls are largely transparent, for controlled views through the building.

There are many winding drives in wine country, U.S.A. Most seem to lead to another faux chateau, a fantasy of Tuscany or the Loire Valley.

Novelty Hill Januik Winery in Woodinville takes another route. Inside an open concrete shell on the edges of sprawling suburbia, the spirit of wineries past is reinvented. It is both poetic and strictly modern, embracing tradition and the continually evolving science of wine-making.

The building is shared by two independent wineries: Januik and Novelty Hill. Novelty Hill was founded by high-tech venture capital investor Tom Alberg and wife, Judi Beck, in 2000. Mike Januik, who made wine for Chateau Ste. Michelle for a decade, crafts the wine for both.

In addition to doubling the production capacity to 30,000 cases per year over their previous wine-making site, the owners wanted the new winery to make the production process transparent, so visitors can experience wine in a number of different ways.

They selected Mithun for the its multi-faceted practice — including landscape architecture — and reputation for sustainable design. Alberg's daughter, landscape architect Katherine Anderson, also played a key role in the design.



Photo by Benjamin Benschneider for Mithun --  
Wine ages in hundreds of barrels on the left, and there are views of the terraced landscape outside. Photo by Benjamin Benschneider for Mithun

The long, narrow site lies on a busy thoroughfare north of Kirkland. The Sammamish River Valley and its new cities have welcomed a number of large wineries to the area, anticipating the boost to the economy and the benefits of a clean industry.

At the Novelty Hill Januik Winery, architecture is an unexpected bonus. Though dominated by industrial-strength concrete, the winery is flooded with warm south light and filled with welcoming touches.

In keeping with the shape of the 3.9-acre site, the multi-functional building is very linear in plan, with parking tucked along the side and heavy concrete walls aligned in the direction of the nearby thoroughfare.

Between these solid walls, there are open views, from the racks of French oak barrels stored on the north end to the grand modern garden on the south.

“We really wanted to blur the lines between outside and in,” said architect Susan McNabb, who managed the project for Mithun. “At every point, there are connections to the outside.”

A glass wall separates the working spaces from the hospitality areas, which include a tasting room, a catering space, and expansive kitchens and service areas. Another wall of glass, anchored with an indoor-outdoor fireplace, is all that separates these from outdoor rooms that stretch to the edge of the property.

Visitors and guests gather in the bright space in between, at free-floating parallel counters where tastings are offered, even for busloads. The goal from the beginning was that there would be no bar against the wall, according to Kim Munizza, lead interior designer for the project.

The solid island of the counters, with heavy basalt tops, are faced on one side by a wall of hardwood slats that holds a block of display-quality wine niches and photos of the vineyards on the steppes of eastern Washington. The wood wall extends to the outdoors, sheltered by a generous overhang. Exposed beams, visible throughout the main level, cross the building.

The main circulation spine cuts through the center of the building between working and hospitality spaces to the natural hillside behind, and the loading dock where trucks bring wine grapes from the drier reaches of the state.

The winery draws its raw material from about 300 acres of vineyards in Eastern Washington, so the connection between wine and land is very real. But because the wine growing and wine-making operations are remote, it is important to show that connection.

“We wanted to tell the story of the grape, from the ground to the glass,” said McNabb.

This connection is expressed through expansive outdoor rooms that extend out from the interior hospitality areas on the south side of the building.

Separated by low walls aligned with those inside the building, a series of terraces invite exploration and contemplation. Alternately level and sloped, they lead down to a wetland on the other side of the site.

Among the terraces, guests can visit the popular bocce court or wander in the allee, a formal french garden promenade through red twig dogwood, where tables and chairs are set in good weather. They can admire the long concrete water trough filled with black basalt from eastern Washington, or the serenely modern stone fire pit at the far side.

Views of the industrial doors of a nearby winery are controlled with warm translucent panels at the ends of the long garden rooms and the boundary of the property. At night, lights play on the panels for a more dramatic effect.

Connection with the land also is expressed through a liberal use of basalt stone from eastern Washington. The darkness of the volcanic rock makes a fine contrast with the gray concrete and the putty colored pebbles in the central garden room.

Several tones in the paving and fine gravel evoke the subtle flavors that the land itself — the “terroir” — imparts in the wine.

In the north half of the winery, the grape-to-glass story is told in several working and watching spaces.

As with traditional wineries, the final product is celebrated in the “cellar,” a room tucked into the hillside under the back of the building and lined with backlit barrels and bottles of reserve wines. Like the conference room above, it is equipped with a long banquet table crafted from salvaged old-growth timbers.

Hospitality aside, the most important users of the building are the winemakers themselves. The real cellar today is more like a moveable laboratory, with chemistry testing, evolving software programs and sensors everywhere.

“Working in the cellar, you can feel pretty isolated,” said Januik.

At his new winery, employees can gather inside and out, overlooking the wetland behind the winery, to oversee the crushing process that takes place inside a giant tank that revolves like a front-loading washer. An observation deck adjoins a conference room that also looks out on a canopy of trees. It’s also equipped with wireless hookups and flat-screen monitors.

Just like the winemakers, visitors can pass through the glass into the industrial space, walking along the catwalks above the 27 gleaming 15-foot-tall fermentation tanks, inhaling the heady aroma of wines-in-progress.

The vast barrel-storage rooms are also there for everyone to peer into. Set into the hillside below the parking area, the 55-degree rooms take advantage of the natural temperature control of the earth. This is one of several sustainable features of the operation and the architecture.

Energy efficiency is promoted through natural lighting and ventilation.

In addition to the south-facing open plan, skylights were placed for maximum daylight penetration. The design team used a University of Oregon grant to study microclimatic data, humidity and wind patterns to design the ventilation system. The heating and cooling systems are tightly programmed to sense ambient temperatures and adjust accordingly. The decision to install two small compressors instead of one large one has yielded further savings, because only one is needed most of the time.

Even the winemaking process itself saves energy over conventional modern methods. Januik estimates that a combination of software and process control called Logics saves more than 25 percent in energy costs.



Photo by Clair Enlow [\[enlarge\]](#)  
Susan McNabb, Mike Januik and Kim Munizza

Reduced toxicity is an overriding goal that supports the winemaking process as well as the interior environment. The water feature uses an ozonator rather than chlorine to keep the water clear, and only dechlorinated water — not tap water — is used in the washing of barrels and tanks. No pesticides are used on site, and only low-volatile products were used in construction and finishing.

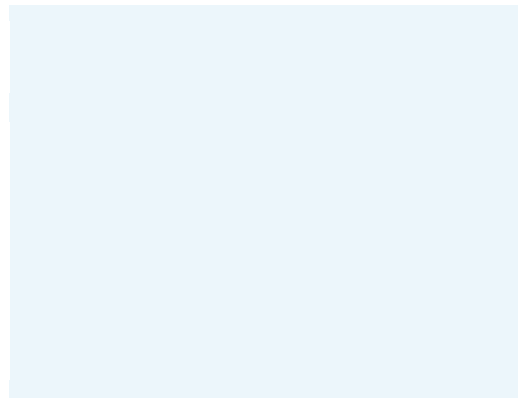
The architects' description of the design concept uses the word "biophilia" often. This literally means "love of life," a fitting theme for a winery.

This hard-working winery does seem to function seamlessly, like a healthy organism in nature. But it also does what wineries have always done — embrace and promote a desirable lifestyle.

"It just feels good to be here," Januik said.

---

*The Project of the Month is sponsored by the Daily Journal of Commerce and the Seattle chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The Project of the Month for March was selected with the assistance of UW professor Eddy Rojas, landscape architect Michele Arab and architect Ron Van der Veen. For more information about submitting projects for possible feature articles, contact Stephanie Pure at AIA Seattle, (206) 448-4938, or [stephaniep@aiaSeattle.org](mailto:stephaniep@aiaSeattle.org).*



**Mithun**

Paul Wanzer, project  
director and design leader  
Susan McNabb, project architect  
and project manager  
Kim Munizza, lead interior designer  
Deb Guenther, lead landscape  
architect  
Katherine Anderson, project  
landscape architect

**Owner:**

Novelty Hill Januik Winery  
Tom Alberg and Judi Beck

**Project type:**

Winery

**Size:**

31,000 square feet

**Completion:**

June 2007

**Structural engineer:**

IL Gross Structural Engineers

**Electrical engineer:**

PK Electric

**Mechanical engineer:**

Emerald Aire

**Plumbing engineer:**

HV Engineering

**Civil engineer and  
wetland consultant:**

David Evans & Associates

**Irrigation design:**

Royal Waldock

**Environmental graphic design:**

WPA

**Daylight and natural ventilation:**

Energy Studies in Buildings  
Laboratory  
University of Oregon  
Betterbricks Daylighting Lab  
University of Washington

**Art consultant:**

Winston Wachter Fine Art

**Acoustics:**

JGL Acoustics

**Contractor:**

Walsh Construction Co.

**Jury comments:**

*“Nowhere does the strong concept break down. At every turn, a transition and vista, a visual delight.”*

*“Outstanding integration with the surrounding environment. This winery exhibits a minimalist yet rich design. Great character and functionality.”*

*“Beautiful.”*

---