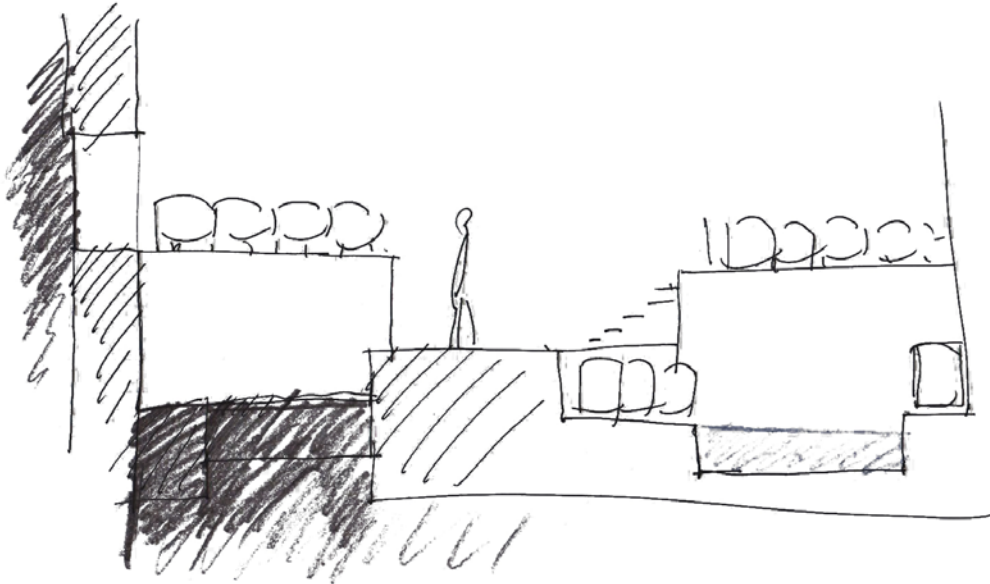




ABOUT THE ARCHITECTURE Hikaru Mori – In Her Own Words



‘When we began to think about building a home for Masseto we knew it needed a very individual concept. An almost sacred place. Winery architecture should represent and reinforce the brand’s identity and embody its philosophy. It must offer a home for a very intricate mix of technical and human activities, and it must provide a perfect production and conservation space.

‘In Masseto’s case, there were two other considerations. Firstly, to preserve the natural environment. The winery could not be autonomous or dominant. It had to be symbiotic with the vineyard, the hillside and the original Masseto building. And secondly, it had to integrate the gravity flow vinification process.

‘Our response was to create a design concept we called The Quarry. It is a tribute to a worksite dedicated to uncovering the secrets of each Masseto vintage. It is also a tribute to the wider history of human effort and its interaction with the natural world.

‘The concept was unanimously selected by Masseto after an invitation to tender was extended to international architectural firms. It was the beginning of an audacious collaboration. Masseto supported and encouraged the full extent of our vision, without exception. This is not something that happens very often.

‘From outside, only the low lines of the grape reception area and the original two-storey house emerge from the hill. There are few external clues to the internal shape. Inside, to represent the effort required to produce the wine made here, we created a series of spaces - not by construction, but by extraction from the hill’s monolithic mass.

MASSETO



‘These diverse internal volumes, heights and levels are reminiscent of a gold mine as it follows seams of precious metal to the core. Here, under the sheltering hillside, the wines come to life and mature, protected as a child in the mother’s womb.

‘The winery is made from a cast-in-place concrete framework, to symbolise the solid mass around it. Internally, the different textured and scored surfaces represent the traces left by the extractive process. The surfaces are the boundaries linking the void (internal space) to a mass surrounding it (infinity).

‘Like water through a channel, the continuous flow is both static and mobile. As people enter and leave the winery, they are immersed in that flow.

‘The main entrance to the winery is cut into the hill. A smooth black concrete surface heightens the entrance’s tunnel effect, and a slope leads underground to the winery’s first level. Here, behind a stainless-steel wall, a suspended gallery overlooks the fermentation room with its twelve custom-designed tanks. The deep-grey colour of the tanks and their polyhedral facets create a series of shades and depths.

‘From here, through a smoked glass wall, the space expands into a second gallery overlooking the first-year barrel room. An excavated staircase leads down to a platform on a water pool.

‘The downward trajectory continues to the centre of the winery: two barrel rooms and the Masseto Caveau, or wine library. The first- and second-year barrel rooms are separated by a burnished-steel sliding door. Here the wine rests, slowly reaching maturity. Throughout the winery, the overhanging and recessed surfaces, along with the irregular shapes of the pillars and walls, all add to the feeling of being inside a quarry.

‘At one end of the second-year barrel room, there is a partially suspended glass tasting-room. At the other, concealed behind a stone clad wall, is the wine library, Masseto Caveau. Bottles from every vintage are preserved here, suspended inside a stainless-steel mesh. Around the barrel rooms and wine library, which are the living heart of the building, lie the technical facilities and vinification process controls.

‘Returning to the surface, moving from dark to light, polished concrete steps lead up under the Masseto House. Reconstructed to preserve its historical features, its windows frame the vineyard below, surrounding hills and sea beyond.’

Hikaru Mori
Architect

April 2019

MASSETO