

STAGS' LEAP WINERY  
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# STAGS' LEAP



FALL / WINTER 2001

CRUSH: A FORCE OF NATURE

note: edited excerpt: read the complete version of newsletter articles at stagsleap.com/art/literature.html

*fairies, but when your hair stands on end you know you're not in the cellar any more...*



OLAF BECKMANN

*It takes a thief to make wine and one must always leave enough barrel evaporation for the*

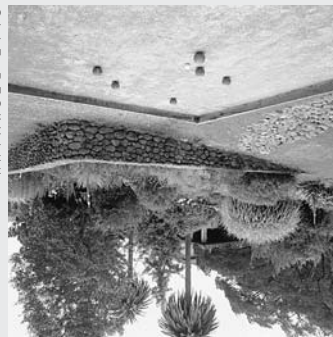
time, a flutter of fate. elongate and open briefly, a hole in Then, stars along the elbow, which twilight, and darkens, and narrows. her spine, becomes the moment after eyes. The top of your spine becomes her. Close your eyes. They could be her many years ago. Then you might feel that place where we lost our tails so shoulders, along your back and down to hollow oak. The day sifts off your placed as an overlook, around a gnarled

Sitting at the Power Spot, overlooking the sweep of vineyards at dusk, a bench has been crew checking véraison. the whistling comes from half a mile away, in the bowl of the vineyard. Arnulfo and his A whistle in the clear morning air of August, barely a week before harvest. Looking up, wistful now that the stately manor house has no family living in it.

Some are sure the ghost is a woman. She's young, beautiful, loves parties; she seems ghost, "Cut that out, now. That's enough." was on the toilet. Lissa would hear her grandmother softly scolding the turn it back on. He turned the bathroom faucet on and off while she hall light off when she got to about the middle of the passageway, then to go to the bathroom. The boy was mischievous; he would turn the years old at the most. She recalls her grandmother getting up at night unfolding in recipes). The ghost? Definitely a boy, fourteen or fifteen that's no longer there (soak the goat in milk, she tells us, her story closet, the bomb shelter. A goat jumped through the window of a cabin of secret rooms, a cupboard within a

Lissa Doumani remembers five guinea moving from Los Angeles to Napa, 1970. later, the first summer in a new home, especially at fourteen, ONE'S FIRST IMPRESSION of a place is what lingers

## A GHOST & A MUMMY



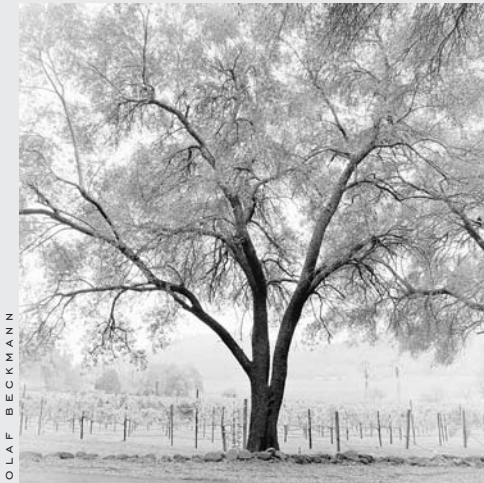
OLAF BECKMANN



OLAF BECKMANN

# RIPENESS

WHEN A FIG is ripe, its plush, dark red meat lets off a fragrance, and in the mouth, gritty seeds crack against the molars, signaling a voluptuous sadness and completion. It lets off an odiferous signal, the seeds adding some component to the flavor that is more than textural.



OLAF BECKMANN

Ripeness in the vineyard is a continuum that stretches back to the flower, and requires assessments throughout the stages when its fruit is not so gratifying in the mouth. For winemaker Robert Brittan, this is amply compensated by the relationship that arises between winemaker and vine, an ongoing conversation that includes discussions of many intricate and delicate subjects.

Grapes express their feelings about things with simplicity and eloquence, from how hot it was during bloom, or the fact that they aborted flowers, to how much they

enjoyed the late rains of spring. He goes out looking for flavors and textural impressions, noticing the way a bunch feels in his mouth, what kind of finish it leaves behind, how much pulp, how brown are the seeds, the lignification that signals the dying back of the canes, even the quality of the peduncle attaching bunch to stem, the way it breaks off—a sound, a vibration, and a thought at the back of his head just above the neckline.

Between complete véraison and harvest, while the sugars mount and the acids retire, Brittan goes out looking for surprises, for what's going to engage him once he gets to the fermenting vats. There's a sudden burst of awareness when it's time to pick. Everything builds to this point. Not only are the grapes preparing for this moment, but his own physiology has been preparing, waiting, anticipating. The air clears and the light develops a heightened saturation. From certain vantage points up on the hill above the estate, there is a palpable clarity to the air. You can see the moment when the season turns, and Saint Andreas himself working on the faultline, with his hoe and his brim hat, adjusting the flow of watersheds, releasing pressure, dancing through the the heat waves.



OLAF BECKMANN

*When a fig is ripe, its plush, dark red meat lets off a fragrance, and in the mouth, gritty seeds crack against the molars, signaling a voluptuous sadness and completion.*



OLAF BECKMANN

## CRUSH, A FORCE OF NATURE

IN THE PARKING lot at Stags' Leap Winery, the results of three vintages have rolled out of the cool fragrance of the stone cellar and stand ready for the road behind their classic labels. The 1999 Merlot, as an automobile, would follow on the sleek and voluptuous cars whose fenders are round and tail fins long, with a personalized license plate that reads "Smoked Turkey." Sliding into the seats, elegant and velvety, a thick black cherry middle, hints of forest floor and wild mushrooms, and a long cigar box finish. Assistant winemaker Kevin Morrissey has been test driving attentively.

Next to this fine animal, the pale, creamy gleam of the 2000 Chardonnay, unequivocally a convertible, open to the sky and windows down. The 2000 crop was ideal, weather allowing a relaxed harvest, following a long, drawn out, and gentle growing season. It's a classic in the style towards which Stags' Leap Winery has been steering: lean, firm, crisp yet full against the taste buds without excessive oak, a silken, aerodynamic model.

Poking its shiny fender out with characteristic bravado is the 1998 Cabernet, the result of a year of small, intensely concentrated berries. With six extra months in the barrel, this represents a design improvement over previous vintages, a fine-tuning that will continue. The benefits are evident: a softening and concentrating of the wine, gathering all of the flavor from a rainy and somewhat cooler growing season, late bud break, capped by ideal weather during harvest. The 1998 is full in the mouth, with long, firm tannins. There's time and space here, fresh fruit forward behind earthy tones. Bucket seats and no bumper stickers, this is a styling Stags' Leap vehicle.



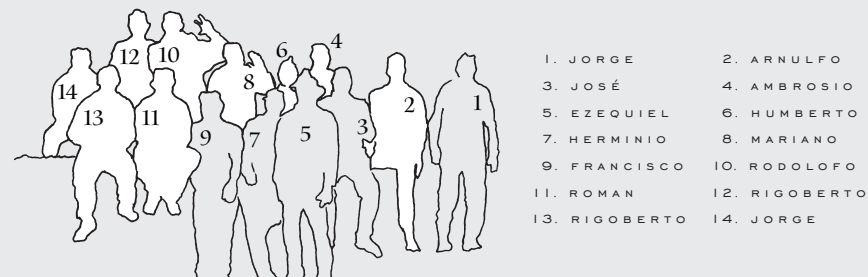
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- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. JORGE      | 2. ARNULFO    |
| 3. JOSÉ       | 4. AMBROSIO   |
| 5. EZEQUIEL   | 6. HUMBERTO   |
| 7. HERMINIO   | 8. MARIANO    |
| 9. FRANCISCO  | 10. RODOLOFO  |
| 11. ROMAN     | 12. RIGOBERTO |
| 13. RIGOBERTO | 14. JORGE     |

OLAF BECKMANN HAS BEEN PHOTOGRAPHING THE STAGS' LEAP WINERY ESTATE FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS. HIS PORTFOLIO CONSTITUTING A MYTH AND A CREATIVE FORCE ALL ON ITS OWN.

TEXT & DESIGN THERESA WHITEHILL, COLORED HORSE STUDIOS

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