

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Ananda Pellerin and Neil Wissink, "Anya Gallaccio's Art & Wine Supper", *Another Mag*, February 7, 2014

Art and wine combine in Anya Gallaccio's Californian Zinfandel



Unwrapped parcel of grilled Mackerel at the South London Gallery *Photography by Neil Wissink*

Having attended countless gallery openings where visitors seemed more interested in the bar than the show, Turner Prize-nominated artist **Anya Gallaccio** decided it was time to cut out the middleman. "In a simple way I thought, why make art when you can make wine?" she explains. As well as making a wry statement about the realities of the art world, Gallaccio's decision to develop her own wine is very much in line with her previous work, which often centres around organic materials – ice, trees, rocks – and she has in the past even created an eau de vie de pomme with a Swiss farmer. The British-born Gallaccio has been living in California for several years, during which time she has come to know the area's various new world appellations. "I got really interested in the history of wine tastings," she says. "Including the famous Judgment of Paris blind tasting in 1976 when some of the Californian wines beat the French ones."

"I thought, why make art when you can make wine?" — Anya Gallaccio

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Teaming up with winemaker Zelma Long, Gallaccio chose Zinfandel grapes from five different appellations across Sonoma Valley, in order to make five single estate wines and one mixed blend. “In a way Zinfandel is a difficult grape because it has no pedigree, and it had a bad blip in the 80s when people were making high alcohol, bulk white Zinfandels.” But having chosen their underdog grape, in 2005 the two women started a process that took them three years, during which time the grapes were all harvested within ten days of each other, were hand sorted by the artist and others, and the wine stored in once-used French oak barrels.



Sonoma Valley vineyard *Photography by Neil Wissink*

Gallaccio has since brought her wines to intimate gatherings including a dinner at art dealer Ivor Braka’s house, as well as get-togethers with winemakers and chefs (“Jeremy Lee loved them, so did Mark Hix, but Fergus Henderson found them too sunshiny”). She also hosted a supper in the South London Gallery’s beautiful old barn space several months back, where six wines were paired with dishes comprised of a single local ingredient - including some fantastically bloody pigeon and wonderfully charred mackerel, all wrapped in simple but beautiful postal paper. At the beginning of each course, a short text by poet Rick Holland was read by nervous diners - who eventually warmed to the challenge as the wine continued to flow.

THOMAS DANE GALLERY



Anya Gallaccio dinner at the South London Gallery *Photography by Neil Wissink*

The evening, titled *After the Gold Rush*, was inspired by Gallaccio's ongoing interest in the American West Coast. "I'm fascinated with the landscape and that idea about reinventing yourself," she says. "A lot of those ideals are still very much alive across the wine industry. You get dot-com millionaires who have given it all up to grow grapes, while most of the people who work the land are of Mexican descent, and some of them have saved up money and bought land. It'll be interesting to see what happens over the next few generations – all of this stuff is more social and political, so in a way the wine was just a huge excuse, a cover to be able to meet some incredible people."

There are about 100 half cases of Gallaccio's *Motherlode* wines still available as limited editions. At the lofty price of \$1000 per box of six, Gallaccio acknowledges the price is high, but the process was expensive and once they're gone, that's it. "My logic is that you buy a box and you have to decide whether you're going to drink it or not. But if you're going to drink it, I think you should in one evening so you can taste them next to each other. Invite eight people to dinner and go for it!"

Anya Gallaccio is represented in the UK by the Thomas Dane Gallery.