



## *Stags' Leap*

Digital Press Kit

Part IX. **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:**

**THE STAGS' LEAP WINERY ESTATE BOOK PROJECT**

**UPDATED MARCH 2008**

**Q: What is it?**

**A:** Developed over five years between 2001 and 2006, completing one book per harvest, the Stags' Leap Estate Book is a five-volume set of books, each 32 pages, collected into an open-flap portfolio case. Each of the books is devoted to a topic central to Stags' Leap Winery and is illustrated by a different artist.

**Q: Whose vision was it? How did it come about?**

**A:** The project was originally proposed in the spring of 2001 by Robert Brittan, winemaker at the time. He envisioned a set of informal books that could be left in the cottages for visitors to “steal” when they left, taking them home in their suitcase. These books would give visitors a sense of how to enjoy themselves while staying at the estate, and some idea of the history, natural history and philosophy of the winery. Brittan asked Theresa Whitehill, poet and designer, to guide the project. The project was carried forward and completed with winemaker Kevin Morrissey. The estate book grew far beyond its original objectives, partly due to a timely visit to an exhibit of artists' books held at the San Francisco Legion of Honor.

**Q: What was the inspiration for its unique design?**

**A:** The original inspiration of the project is, of course, the property itself, a magical place, full of wonderful history, wildlife, and natural beauty. Whitehill's early ideas were also influenced by a lecture of Robert Bringhurst (poet, typographer, and translator) in which he developed ideas about the dynamic potential of typographic design. Inspiration to take the book concept to another level also came from a trip to view *Artists' Books in the Modern Era 1870–2000: The Reva and David Logan Collection of Illustrated Books* at the California Legion of Honor in the fall of 2002. Driving home from the show, the concept of the open flap portfolio with books opening in different directions was born, along with an understanding that such a project had deep meaning for a winery devoted to the craft of fine winemaking. The book project would tap the synergy between California's Arts and Crafts movement and the contemporary resurgence of artisan food and wine.



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As the project grew, Whitehill began showing the prototype as a work in progress on her regular visits to several collections and educational institutions in the Bay Area, including Mills College, the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, and Stanford's Special Collections Library. Compared to many contemporary artists' book projects that can be wildly inventive and conceptually strong, but weak on genuine content, curators seemed intrigued by a project that had a creative structure but also maintained a focus on content of significance in areas of botany, history, winemaking, and culture.

**Q: Explain the layout and structure of the books.**

**A:** The structure of the set of books is uniquely playful and engaging. Each of the first four books opens in a different direction while the fifth book is a collection of unbound folded sheets in a portfolio cover that mirrors the open flap portfolio case. Special design considerations had to be taken into account for each book in order to make the reading order apparent (how does one read a book backwards with comfort and ease?) and how the portfolio closes (clusters of small gold foil dots indicate the order of closing on the inside flaps of the portfolio cover).

**Q: Why wasn't the fifth book bound like the others?**

**A:** The decision to leave the fifth book as a set of unbound folded sheets was aesthetic. You'll notice that each of the first four books open in a different direction. Keeping the playfulness in mind, when you get to the fifth book it replicates the outside structure of the case. It's about symmetry. In addition, these books are intended to document knowledge about Stags' Leap Winery at a particular point in time in the early twenty-first century. Stylistically, the books are intended as an outline to encourage the gathering and refining and evolution of this knowledge into the future. An open-ended book called for an open-ended structure. This balance between longevity and its archival requirements and the open-ended nature of knowledge is a vibrant tension which the designer decided to solve by having the individual volumes be more informal and intimate, and leaving the fifth volume unbound.

**Q: Who has been writing, working on this project?**

**A:** For the past five years, poet and designer Theresa Whitehill has been the creative force behind this project. Through her relationships with artists and curators, as well as museum directors and academics, winemakers and vineyard workers, she has taken the original vision and created a work of art that also carries a story worthy of being shared with lovers of Stags' Leap Winery and its wines.



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**Q: How does the general public arrange to purchase the case set or the individual books?**

**A:** The books are available through Stags' Leap Winery for a limited time.

**Q: Will they be available to members of the Manor House Porch Society, the wine club of Stags' Leap?**

**A:** Yes, they are available to members of the Manor House Porch Society at a specially reduced rate.

**Q: How do libraries and cultural institutions arrange to obtain the book?**

**A:** Information for those interested institutions can be obtained by contacting Stags' Leap Winery, and the winery will also be sending a prospectus to identified cultural and educational institutions.

**Q: How much do they cost?**

**A:** The individual volumes as well as the full set are available to members of the wine club, the Stags' Leap Manor House Porch Society, and educational/cultural institutions, for \$45.00 each. Retail price to the general public is \$125.00 per individual volume. Those interested in purchasing the complete case set of five volumes can do so for \$500.00 as a member of the Porch Society or as an educational/cultural institution. \$750.00 is the retail price for the complete case set, with a limit of one case set per individual.

**Q: How was the pricing established?**

**A:** The value of the individual volumes (printed in an edition of 1,000 each) and the case sets (an edition of 100) is based on their limited nature, the value of the work of the participating artists, and the winery's reputation for fine Cabernet Sauvignon and Rhône varietals. The case sets include a numbered certificate signed by each of the artists and the winemaker. Starting with the basic production costs for the entire project, from artists' fees to design, printing, and bindery, Stags' Leap received informal appraisals from three separate California book dealers before arriving at its pricing structure.



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### **Q: What happens when all the books are sold?**

**A:** When the books are all gone, they will become rare collector's items to be cherished and enjoyed. Like wine from a great vintage, when the books are gone, they're gone. Once the 100 case sets are gone, the project will never be reissued in this form. The dust jacket covers for each book were printed letterpress (a traditional media of printing prior to offset lithography – limited in commercial use today) on a rare press with limited access. As time passes and new forms of media take over, letterpress equipment has become increasingly difficult to find and maintain. Each book is illustrated by a different artist, each of whom is a successful working artist in mid-career with their own galleries and patrons, and the combined artistic effort represented by the case set is a rare value.

### **Q: How is the book project like a fine press project?**

**A:** The collaboration with artists, its letterpress-printed covers, and its linen-covered portfolio case with foil stamping and bone pin closure, along with the edition size of 100 case sets are all elements common to fine press projects.

### **Q: How is the book project not like a fine press project?**

**A:** The individual volumes were printed in an edition of 1,000, which is a high number for a limited edition. The text pages of each book were printed via offset lithography, which does not hold as much value for collectors of fine press, who prefer that the entire book be printed letterpress.

### **Q: Why the mix between commercial and fine press elements?**

**A:** The crossover between fine press and commercial standards was a balancing act, providing creative tension for the project, and allowing a much wider audience than would normally be available to ultra limited editions and pure fine press work. This makes the book project more accessible, and provides a vibrant cross-over between the worlds of fine press printing, the more innovative fields represented by artists' books and conceptual book projects, along the world of wine aficionados. The winery hopes the project will inspire conversations between areas of expertise (winemaking and historians, geologists and artist, book curators and cellar workers), a cross-fertilization that is at the heart of its reason for existence.



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**Q: Which cultural/educational institutions have the case set for public viewing?**

**A:** Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, St. Helena Wine Library, UCLA Special Collections, UC Davis Special Collections, The Wine Reserve (Napa), and Harlan Estates

**Q: Where can I read reviews or articles about the book project?**

**A:** 1. "On Writing Stags' Leap Winery: A Guide to the Estate in Five Volumes," Theresa Whitehill, *Napa Valley Wine Library Report: Winter 2007–2008*, pages 17–18

2. "Stags' Leap Winery: A Guide to the Estate in Five Volumes," *Wayward Tendrils Quarterly*, Vol. 17 No. 4, October 2007, pages 8–9

3. "All there is to know about Stags' Leap Winery," David Stoneberg, *St. Helena Star: Wine & Business*, Thursday, July 19, 2007, page B1, B4