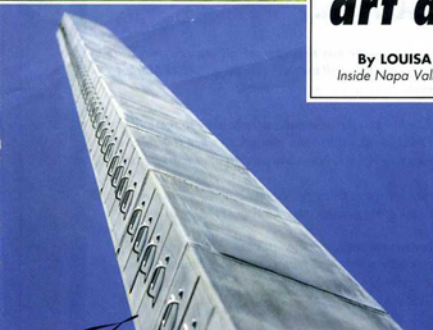




Di Rosa Preserve
Showcases
art alive!

By **LOUISA HUFSTADER**
Inside Napa Valley Correspondent



Just outside of Napa, amid the rolling vineyards of the breezy Carneros district, lies one of the art world's best-kept secrets: a 217-acre ranch stocked with thousands of contemporary artworks, the lifelong—and continuing—obsession of collector and self-described “artholic” Rene di Rosa.

Opened to the public in 1997 under the name di Rosa Preserve, the estate recently shortened its name to di Rosa, with a new tagline, “art alive!” replacing the relatively stodgy “art & nature.”

What hasn't changed is the museum's commitment to its stated mission: “Di Rosa is a place that provokes the creative spirit and imagination of our time, through celebration of the art and artists of Northern California in an extraordinary landscape.”

In practical terms, that means offering regular, two-hour-plus tours of the property (\$15, advance reservations required) along with free admission to the Gatehouse Gallery.

There's also a \$10 introductory tour that takes just one hour, but it's limited to an overview of the Main Gallery — the heart of the di Rosa collection, with modern and contemporary paintings, drawings, sculpture, and photographs by such Bay Area artists as Robert Arneson, Joan Brown and Roy De Forest — as well as the di Rosa Residence, a 125-year-old converted winery with hundreds of artworks exhibited salon-style, the sculpture-studded Courtyard and the North Lawn, with its outdoor installations including the gleaming Glass Chapel by Rene di Rosa's late wife Veronica.

The full tour allows visitors extra time in these four spaces, as well as the chance to marvel at large-scale creations by Mark di Suvero, Viola Frey and lifelong Napan Gordon Huether in the Sculpture Meadow.

Saturday tours include admission to the Gatehouse Gallery, which is otherwise open to the public without charge Wednesday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

With expansive windows overlooking Winery Lake, where swallows dart and swoop above a polychromed steel cow (“Endless Summer,” Veronica di Rosa, 1989) that appears to graze along the water's surface, the gallery includes work from the di Rosa's permanent collection as well as a rotating series of exhibitions that may showcase new Bay Area talent or delve deeper into the work of established artists.

Among the perennial favorites in the Gatehouse Gallery is David Best's “Rhinocar,” a 1976 Oldsmobile with a rhinoceros head, a clock hubcap and a carapace bristling with found objects. Nearby, a twig-sculptured horse by Deborah Butterfield is just as compelling, but in a much quieter way.

Even the gallery gift shop is unusual, with small gifts like enamel pins reading BLAH BLAH BLAH and peacock ornaments in honor of the stately birds that stalk the di Rosa lands.

Along with the name change, there are other developments on the horizon at di Rosa: Executive Director Kathryn Reasoner is planning to ask the Napa County Board of Supervisors to allow the property to admit the public on Saturdays and Sundays. ●