



How does the back side of
Earth Door by Jim Melchert
relate to the landscape around it?



Jim Melchert,
Earth Door (1965)



HOW DOES THIS WORK RELATE TO THE LANDSCAPE AROUND IT?

- (A) Inspired by a Spanish altar that used to be on site
- (B) Features the pattern of plowed vineyards
- (C) Marks the original shore of Winery Lake
- (D) Shadow lines up with Milliken Peak on the Winter Solstice

Jim Melchert,
Earth Door (1965)



Answer:

It features the pattern
of the plowed vineyards

Jim Melchert (b. 1930) is primarily known for his work in clay and its ties to conceptual art in the Bay Area. As a student of Peter Voulkos at UC Berkeley in the early 1960s, Melchert helped lay the tracks for the California Clay Movement that continues to be robust into the present day. His work in the sixties and seventies was highly experimental: it comprised of ceramic sculpture, video, performance and site-specific work.



Jim Melchert
Changes (1972) performance with drying slip
Photos by Mieke Hille

At the time of *Earth Door's* creation, Melchert was teaching sculpture at UC Berkeley and spending much of his time at di Rosa with owner and founder Rene di Rosa. To create this particular work, Melchert dug a mould in the ground on the di Rosa property, then filled it with concrete and later set the casting on end.

The reverse side of *Earth Door* reveals the mold from which it was made, by virtue of the deep semi-circular grooves that rise, turn, and descend in a repeated pattern. They echo the arching form that a plow makes when reaping a vineyard, which Melchert would have often witnessed while spending time in the Carneros region. He has stated that his sculpture is a record of how the vineyards appear when the vines are not growing - celebrating an often overlooked aspect of the harvesting process.



Aerial view of the di Rosa property, undated.

“The cast side has deep grooves that rise, turn, and descend. They repeated the pattern of the plowed vineyards across the road. Now of course, the field is full of grown vines so you no longer see the rhyme. My grooves nevertheless let you know how that land once looked. Things get recorded in concrete”.

-Jim Melchert, in an interview with Patricia Maloney, Art Practical (2014)



Front view, photo dated 1987.
Jim Melchert,
Earth Door (1965)