

FAST AND FURIOUS: Design/Build team turns a recession-squeezed dream into recession-ready reality

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New York, NY – In this economy, the idea of *quitting* your job to open up an artisanal Italian wine store is downright insane, but that's exactly what Carlo Orrico did. Just as Wall Street began its downward tumble in the fall of 2008, this young maverick sommelier followed a series of timely hunches that led to the opening of **Le Vigne** in Greenwich Village, and the three-act story of its breathtaking design by the team of MADLAB + SPURSE is no less whimsical.



Act 1: The Dream

The light bulb went off for Orrico after another late night handling wines at one of Greenwich Village's celebrated Italian restaurants. After spotting an ad on craigslist.com for a 600 sq. ft. retail space next to Jonathan Adler's boutique, the New Jersey native quit his job, signed the lease, and started scouting his favorite wine stores for the right designer.

Orrico just so happened to visit a wine store the very next day designed by MADLAB, an architecture and design firm based in NY and NJ. Amanti Vino had all the bells and whistles he was looking for: wall-to-wall custom-designed wine display and storage systems, bold yet classy graphics and branding, and innovative lighting features throughout. Orrico immediately contacted Petia Morozov, design partner at MADLAB, to get down to the business of designing his dream store. "Carlo has an eye for great design, and with Amanti Vino, he especially appreciated the way in which we tried to break the mold to wine shopping," says Morozov.

Act 2: The Squeeze

Not surprisingly, the client's dreams for his own fully custom-designed store took a momentary hit when he realized the high price tag. Every custom feature he had hoped for would not only set back his budget, but it would take more time to design and manufacture. To salvage an otherwise cordial client relationship, MADLAB immediately changed tactics by scrapping the typical conventions of design practice. "Unfortunately, in this economic climate, budgets for design are the first to go," Morozov admits. "If our competition was going to be a trip to IKEA, we knew we'd have to rethink the entire design process."



Le Vigne's storefront captures the glimpse of curious collisions between familiar objects of everyday life.



Wine bottles populate every nook of Le Vigne, and occasionally appear out of nowhere.

Act 3: The Fix

Over a luscious bottle of red from Orrico's private collection, Morozov proposed an unusual solution that would require the client to relinquish all creative control in exchange for a fast, cheap and ingenious outcome. MADLAB brought in the artist collective SPURSE on a design/build enterprise of creative problem solving on the fly. Orrico agreed to a turnkey solution that would compress the design process into a series of three's: 3 client meetings, 3 design drawings and 3 weeks of installation.

The client recruited his best friend to excavate through layers of retail conversions – from its last state as a travel agency back to its original 1902 interior. What they found was an austere yet genuine space, with its painted plaster walls, brick fireplaces, hardwood floors and tin ceilings, worn but intact. Armed with tools, truckloads of thrift shop furniture and a knack for experimental carpentry, MADLAB + SPURSE decided to leave the excavated space as is, moving in to hack, carve and create the look and feel of the store as they went along. Recycling and radically repurposing second-hand furniture was the primary design approach to discovering new forms and functions.

At Le Vigne's center is a massive assemblage of tables, drawers, lids and legs that collide like the tectonics of Italy's complex geology – the same rich geo-morphological terroirs that produce the shop's amazing artisanal wines. This 25-ft long, ultra-white unit displays and stores wine in nooks and clusters, as if moving through Italy's wine regions from north to south.

MADLAB

morozov alcala design laboratory

The window display and two wall displays have an equally provisional feel to them. SPURSE member Iain Kerr describes the approach: “As we worked on the central table, we gradually stockpiled all the chairs, and remaining dressers and drawers, along every edge of the space. With a little tweaking, we turned these piles into gleaming white stacks onto which wine bottles could be displayed in various arrangements.”

The final result is a unique retail environment that intensifies Orrico’s passion for Italy’s eccentric vineyards, beckons every customer to discover his careful collection of exceptional wines and turns “recession” into a dreamy tale of design innovation.



Project Summary

Project Name: Le Vigne

Project Location: 35 Greenwich Avenue, New York, NY

Project Type: Interior design and fabrication of a 600 sq-ft. retail space. This turnkey remodel of an existing retail space takes a fast-track, improvisatory approach to design and fabrication, transforming stockpiles of recycled furniture into a unique retail environment for artisanal Italian wines

Client: Carlo Orrico

Architects: MADLAB – Petia Morozov (principal)

Consultants: SPURSE – Iain Kerr and Brian DeRosia (design and fabrication);
Dead Skin Press – Megan O’Connell and Leon Johnson (logo and graphics)

Fabricators: Marissa Gregory (MADLAB), Carolyn Hopkins (artist)