



PRESS RELEASE | September 2016

A New Way to Think About Wine

Above Sea Level: Issue 01

For many people, the wine industry is a foreign language, full of obscure terminology that only the initiated understand, and characterised by snobbish attitudes and status-seeking showmanship.

That's about to change.



Photography by Dan Tom

'Creating a visual dialogue around wine and bringing people into contact with it in an intuitive way is important. As an industry, we need to make sure that wine is culturally relevant, and a natural fixture in people's lives, or it will simply become another luxury commodity.'

– **Aimee Hartley**, Above Sea Level

Launching its first issue during **The London Design Festival**, new independent magazine **Above Sea Level** seeks to reframe the way we think and talk about wine. Founded and edited by wine enthusiast **Aimee Hartley**, the publication and associated events platform are designed to be an antidote to the elitism surrounding wine culture, bypassing the industry jargon and closed-door insiderism, and opening up the conversation to anyone interested in the craft and culture of wine.

Above Sea Level stems from Hartley's passion for wine and her decade-long mission to demystify the industry and engage people with wine in new, creative ways. She is particularly interested in how wine overlaps with other areas of our lives – at the dinner table, on our travels and with the people that we



meet – and believes these experiences and stories help us to form a richer narrative around what we're drinking.

By focusing on wine in the context of the places and people that make it, and considering the points of overlap between wine and design, nature, food and society, Above Sea Level represents a bold new voice and a striking new vision for one of the world's oldest industries.

Features include:

- A photo essay exploring the vessels used to store wines and the effect different materials have on the character of a wine
- A visual response to some of the more ridiculous wine terminology from This is Mold's LinYee Yuan and Lazy Mom
- A study on 'The Nature of Fog' with photographer Dan Tom and writer Elizabeth Schwyzer
- An exploration of the connection between architecture and place, shown through a photo series of wineries, Scribe and Corison, taken by Luke Abiol and written by David Michon.



THE WINE
The oldest drink in the world, wine has been around for over 10,000 years. It's a product of the earth, a reflection of the land and the people who grow it. In this photo essay, we explore the diverse landscapes and cultures that shape the world's wine regions. From the rolling hills of France to the rugged mountains of Italy, we see how the land and the people have shaped the wine we drink today.



The Architecture of Place

Words by Arnon Hartley & David Michon / Photography by Luke Abiol

Architecture, like wine, is a product of place. It draws from its surroundings but also on the emotions and personality of those who create it. Arnon Hartley and David Michon speak to the families behind Scribe and Corison about the connection between people, place and design.



PRESS RELEASE | **September 2016**

Launching during LDF, the inaugural issue is a visually rich exploration of the wine scene in California, with contributions from photographers such as Michael A Muller, David Abrahams and Daniel Dent; writers and editors including David Michon (formerly of ICON), Josh Elias (Alquimie) and LinYee Yuan (MOLD); illustrators (Alexis Jamet); designers (Lazy Mom); winemakers, shopkeepers, bakers and many more.

Available to buy at the magazine website abovesealevel.co and independent magazine shops across London, Above Sea Level's launch is being marked by an exhibition at design store Clerkenwell London, running throughout The London Design Festival, showcasing magazine artwork and accompanied by specially selected wines at **Clerkenwell London's 155 Bar and Kitchen**. The invite-only launch party will be held on **Monday 19 September**, where the first fresh-from-the-press copies of the magazine will be available, followed by a press event on the evening of **Monday 26 September** at **Ellory** in London Fields.



photography by Luke Abiol

Notes for Editors

Release date 19 September 2016

Cover price £12

Above Sea Level launch exhibition

19–27 September 2016



Clerkenwell London
155 Farringdon Road
London
EC1 3AD

Opening times

Monday – Wednesday: 10am – 6pm

Thursday – Friday: 10am – 7pm

Saturday: 10am – 5pm

Sunday: Closed

Events

Soft launch: Monday 19 September | 7pm

Press and trade event: Tuesday 26 September | 6–9pm

Website above-sea-level.co

Twitter + Instagram @_abovesealevel_

Interview: Aimee Hartley, Founder of Above Sea Level

You founded Above Sea Level to start a 'different conversation' around wine – why do we need to talk about it differently?

Wine out of context can be difficult for people to connect with. Like chemistry or perfumery, it has its own language that tends to be geared towards 'insiders'. When I write about wine, I start with a different topic – the architecture of a winery, or what craft means in relation to winemaking – and make sure its accompanied by a photo essay, for example. I think creating a visual dialogue around wine and bringing people into contact with it in an intuitive way is important. As an industry, we need to make sure that wine is culturally relevant, and a natural fixture in people's lives, or it will simply become another luxury commodity.

How did the idea for the magazine come together? What was your eureka moment?

Making the magazine has been a bit of a cathartic process for me – it is the culmination of seven years of ideas and experiences since I began my own adventure with wine. It makes it very personal, which is wonderful, but also comes with its own set of challenges. There is also something very tangible about print that lends itself to the topic, that I don't feel is being captured with 'modern' wine journalism. Drinks publications such as Alquimie and Noble Rot are challenging that, but they are still among the few.

Why is it called 'Above Sea Level'?

Vines are often talked about in relation to how far above sea level they grow. They are subject to the laws of nature – aspect, weather, geology, proximity to mountains and bodies of water, but also to the whim



and ambitions of the winemaker. I'm interested in how nature, place and people all influence one another and the effect that this has on the character of a wine.

What can we look forward to in the first issue?

The first issue is dedicated to California – a place that has influenced my outlook on wine, and whose revolutionary spirit I can relate to. It is as much about celebrating people and place as it is about wine, with themes like memories, language, materials and natural elements running through it. You'll find a photo essay exploring the different vessels winemakers use to store or age their wines, and the influence these materials – wood, clay and concrete – play in shaping the nature of the wine. I worked with LinYee Yuan, Editor of This is Mold, and New York design duo Lazy Mom to capture their visual response to (ridiculous) wine terms such as 'cats pee', 'petrol' and 'wet dog'.

There are other pieces like 'The Nature of Fog', which act almost as a palate cleanser between different chapters. I asked a photographer, Dan Tom, to capture the fog in different environments in northern California. Native Californian writer Elizabeth Schwyzer then narrates her own personal story about what the fog means to her. 'The Architecture of Place' looks at two very different wineries: Scribe and Corison. David Michon and photographer Luke Abiol explore the history behind an old crumbling hacienda that sits next to Scribe's winery. I asked them to capture the building in transition, between old and new, with a focus on changes in light and textures within the building, with an understanding too of how California's Spanish roots influenced its architecture. I've commissioned a lot of unique content, which I felt was really important to set the tone of the magazine.

You've lived in both San Francisco and London – how does the cultural perception of wine differ across the Atlantic?

I first lived in San Francisco 10 years ago. There was an openness and a culture around wine that I hadn't experienced before in London. People made an effort to talk to me about it in a way that just made sense. The wine country – Sonoma and Napa – is also on your doorstep, which means that it is naturally woven into the lives of those that live nearby. Over the last decade London has come on leaps and bounds in its food and wine offerings, but wine still has quite a lot of work to do before it is considered in the same way, and with the same weight, that we think about our food.

You've spoken before about the relationship between wine labels and design – what role does a label play in reflecting the contents of the bottle?

Without being able to smell or engage with what is inside the bottle, the wine label often acts as an important conduit between drinker and winemaker. Wine labels can fall into the trap of being crass, or alluding to a certain lifestyle myth or fantasy, but at their best, they can tell us something about the values and the philosophy of the person that made it.

Where do you like to drink in London?

If I'm drinking, I'm usually eating. 10 Greek Street and 8 Hoxton are always on my classics list. Fresh, simply cooked British food with a brilliant selection of reasonably priced wines. I really like Verden in Clapton, for a nicely curated list and generous selection of cheese and charcuterie. Noble Rot, Ellory and



PRESS RELEASE | **September 2016**

Brawn are also doing a top job in both the kitchen and on their wine offerings and are places I like to go back to – which can be a hard thing to find in a city that is constantly evolving and tempting us with new bar and restaurant openings.

When is the mag out and where can we buy it?

The magazine will be available to buy on the Above Sea Level website (above-sea-level.co) from 19 September. Sign up to the newsletter or follow us on Instagram to stay informed.
