New winery museum - at 2,300m

25 Mar 2009 by Jancis Robinson

Donald Hess's winery and estate Colomé in the Andes in northern Argentina is already remarkable. It is the country's oldest winery (founded in 1831) and, at 2,300m (7,546 ft) above sea level, it is one of the highest in the world. It also has a small five star resort hotel attached (complete with special quarters for a writer in residence, I have been told) and is in quite stunning scenery.

It now has another distinction, the James Turrell Museum that will be opened officially on 22 Apr. James Turrell is one of America's most famous contemporary artists, renowned for his light installations. One of his most spectacular projects is the Roden Crater in Arizona (where Turrell is pictured below) with a labyrinthine system of skyspaces, tunnels, and meditative pools of water set in this bowl formed by a volcanic eruption over 300,000 years ago. The interior gallery spaces of the James Turrell Museum of the Hess Art Collection at Colomé were designed by the artist to offer the visitor a unique combination of light and architecture in the awe-inspiring natural scenery of the pristine high valley in which the estate is set.

The nine light installations and numerous drawings and prints span five decades of Turrell's artistic career and are all part of the world-renowned art collection Hess has been amassing since the 1960s. He already shows some of it at the Hess Collection on his wine estate in Napa Valley and also has a modern art museum at his South African winery Glen Carlou. How long before a gallery will be installed chez Peter Lehmann in the Barossa Valley? Below is a Turrell he might consider...

We are told that all these museums are open to the public 350 days a year and are free of charge - although I would have thought that is the least reward for anyone who makes it as far off the beaten track as Colomé.