

600+ WINES REVIEWED

MODERN CHILEAN POURS

SOUTH AFRICA'S BEST VINTAGE

AMERICAN WHISKEY

WINE ENTHUSIAST

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ART BEAT

A goddess painted on the label reflects Viña Vik's La Piu Belle, or "most beautiful," wine.

If anyone in Chile was going to take the concept of the wine label as art to a higher level, a smart bet would have been on Alexander and Carrie Vik, the globe-trotting, art-collecting owners of Viña Vik.

ART MEETS WINE

The couple joined the Chilean wine scene in 2006, when they planted 800 acres of vines in the Cachapoal Valley. But it wasn't until 2013 that they decided to blend their longstanding affinity for fine art with their passion for wine.

Knowing that one of their favorite artists, the Belgian surrealist René Magritte, had painted wine bottles back in the 1950s, the Viks invited 20 or so international artists to create works that could be "painted" onto a pending, unnamed, art-label wine.

"We asked the artists to create something they thought was beautiful," says Alexander, a billionaire financier with Norwegian roots. "Many of the images were indeed beautiful. But the image by Gonzalo Cienfuegos, a Chilean painter, was the most beautiful."

RE-CREATING THE MAGIC

An interpretation of Freya, who Alexander describes as a "mythical Norse figure who resides at Vik and oversees our earth, sky, sun and mists," the piece not only struck the couple, but also inspired the name for the wine inside the bottle: La Piu Belle, which means "the most beautiful," a Cabernet Sauvignon blend with Carmenère and other red grapes. The next challenge was to recreate Cienfuegos's work and transfer it onto bottles.

"We started with printers in Chile," says Carrie. "Then we looked in Canada, Taiwan, Italy and the United States. We spent two years looking at samples and trying to find the right machinery to reproduce the image with the colors and texture we wanted."

They settled on a Chilean printer, after which more than 20,000 bottles of the 2011 vintage were hand-wrapped with Cienfuegos's creation. The wine hit the market late last year at \$75.

The Viks said that they'll likely produce more art-inspired wines, because as the back label of La Piu Belle states: "At VIK, science, technology and knowledge are our foundation, passion is our engine, and the wine is the expression of our art." —Michael Schachner



