wine and art certainly do go hand in hand, wine as art. When the artists at Marqués de Riscal obtained the services of Canadian architect Frank O. Gehry to design the City of Wine, in Elciego, Álava, Spain, they initiated an association that has blossomed for over a dozen years. The City of Wine is extraordinary, covering more than a million square feet. It includes the cellars of the Marqués de Riscal, the Hotel Marqués de Riscal, and the Spa Vinothérapie® Caudalie. In addition to its spectacular visage, and incredible location, the Hotel boasts the Michelin-starred Restaurante Echaurren.

To celebrate this collaboration, representatives from Marqués de Riscal, as well as their importers in the United States, Southern Wine and Shaw Ross, paid their respects to Mr. Gehry. More than a social call, they unveiled a masterpiece in Marqués de Riscal and spending time among their beautiful vines was a huge pleasure. It’s an honor for me, and I am delighted that the bodega has commemorated our friendship with this new special vintage," stated Mr. Gehry. The 2012 Frank Gehry Selection is produced from 100% Tempranillo. Sourced from an elite group of plots, planted from 1910 through 1973, with a majority of them planted before 1910. This allows for fruit to be harvested from vines reflecting the unique character of the soil in Rioja Mavros. A mere 5,000 bottles of this exceptional wine was produced. The bottle itself is a work of art, as the main focus of the label is a reproduction of the drawing used by Mr. Gehry to design the hotel itself. Wine as art, indeed.

Demonstrating their support for Frank O. Gehry, the winery donated large-format bottles for an auction, benefiting Turnaround Arts: California. Dedicated to providing arts education programs to low-performing elementary and middle schools, and located in Los Angeles, Turnaround Arts: California enjoys the assistance of a stellar group of supporters. Luminaries ranging from Jackson Browne to Jane Fonda, Whoopi Goldberg to Elton John, have joined with Mr. Gehry to bring something special into the lives of these students. José Luis Muguiro, General Sales Manager and Marqués de Riscal’s Board of Directors Member, stated: “Before the building we used to receive 3,000 visitors. Since the construction of the building we have received around 90,000 visitors, so this building, like the Guggenheim museum, has been a total success. With Frank Gehry we share his search for grandeur, whether making a wine or designing a building. For us it is a matter of great pride to be here with Frank to present such a special vintage, which pays homage to him and which, at the same time, will bring benefit to the children who he helps in their arts education projects.” Founded in 1858, Marqués de Riscal is one of the oldest wineries in Rioja. By 1862, the first bottled wines of Marqués de Riscal were released to market, after the hiring of Jean Pineau, a winemaker at Château Lamoison. Before the end of the 19th century, the wines of Marqués de Riscal were being honored in France, at the Bordeaux Exhibition. That association between the winery and its neighbors to the north in France has continued to this day. The 1998 hire of Paul Pontallier is evidence of that. By then, Monsieur Pontallier had been with the venerable Château Margaux for fifteen years, rising from technical to managing director in 1990. His talent at guiding Margaux into producing one highly regarded vintage after another drew the attention of Marqués de Riscal. For more than fifteen years, he has worked with the General Technical and Production Manager Francisco Hurtado de Amézaga, Marqués de Riscal’s Board of Directors Member, on the production of many of Riscal’s top wines, including its Barón de Chirel, as well as the Frank Gehry Selection.

The collaboration between the Marqués de Riscal and Frank O. Gehry has many aspects. There is a symbiosis, as all of these different projects seem to perform a ballet of art and wine, consisting of vines, wine, the beauty of Rioja, and the unique place the City of Wine occupies. As stated by Alejandro Aznar, President of Marqués de Riscal, “Frank Gehry is a visionary who has honored our bodega with a building which transmits the essence of Marqués de Riscal and its long history.” Marqués de Riscal and Frank O. Gehry continue to demonstrate that some of the world’s finest pieces of art are nowhere near any museum’s walls.