



Lounge act

Flying Fox Vineyard gets clubby with its new tasting room *By Joe Bergmann*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY VIRGINIA HAMRICK



The richness of the furnishings, in both color and fabrication, contrasts with the building's stark interior, which has concrete floors, whimsical details—such as wallpaper featuring the caricature of a fox in a red hunting jacket and antique flying machines—keep the mood light and enhance the travel theme.

The style of central Virginia's wine-tasting rooms generally reflects their rural, agrarian roots. Some have a rustic, barn-like feel, because vineyards are essentially farms. Others eschew the refinement and grandeur of a country estate, where one might relax with a glass of vignier after a mooning on horseback. There are exceptions. Gabriele Raasse Winery built a trapezoidal modern glass box in the woods, and Stinson Vineyards chose a minimalist design, converting a three-car garage to house its production facilities and tasting room.

Flying Fox Vineyard—which opened its new location in Afton in September 2018—presents something entirely different. "We have a running joke," says George Hodson, who co-owns the winery with his sisters Emily Pelton and Chloe Watkins. "If an old English pub and a '70s carpet factory and a Virginia winery all had a baby, this is what you'd get."

To deliver this unlikely mash-up, Hodson turned to Folly, the Charlottesville home furnishings store and interior design studio of Victoria Pouncey and Beth Ann Kallen. Pouncey is

a friend of Hodson and his wife, Tralyn. "I knew they were working on this project," Pouncey recalls, "and George said, Oh, we need help!"

"I came onboard in mid-June, and they were supposed to open August 1," Pouncey says. "I told them, 'I don't see how you can do that.'"

The clients pushed back the opening one month, which gave Pouncey time to solidify her design ideas, select her color palette, and source light fixtures, wall coverings, art, and furnishings, including a custom leather-upholstered settee and couches. The latter were especially daunting, since made-to-order pieces usually take eight weeks or more to complete.

Luckily, Hodson had friends at Moore & Giles, the leather goods company headquartered in Forest, Virginia, which Pouncey put in touch with custom furniture makers she knows in North Carolina. Everyone agreed to work on an accelerated timeline.

The elements came together quickly. "I wanted it to be industrial with a somewhat old-fashioned look," Pouncey says. "There's a friction between those two styles that creates a unique energy."

The industrial feel is endemic to the building, a stark brick structure with concrete floors that once was a yarn and fabric factory. The old-fashioned theme announces itself with a whimsical mural on a towering exterior wall. Rendered in black-and-white—except for the blazing-red flying fox logos—the painting depicts a wine cask held aloft by a hot-air balloon.

Inside, a wall extends three-quarters of the way across the cavernous room, creating two distinct spaces. The one in front feels like a Victorian parlor, with dark furniture and splashes of color provided by details such as the red leather shades Pouncey selected for the floor lamps. "I wanted this area to be lounge-y, and I think it is," Hodson says.

The rear portion of the room, by contrast, is much larger, with a high ceiling and plenty of open space. Along the back wall stretches the tasting bar, made of concrete that matches the floors. But the clubby feeling is not lost here; it carries through with a rather grand, round leather sofa and sconce-studded walls partially covered with the same material.

What's in a name?

Visitors to Flying Fox may notice the winery's namesake on a table inside the front door. The weather vane depicts a leaping fox and once stood atop a shed at the vineyard's original Nelson County location. Flying Fox Vineyard was established in 2000 to supply grapes to its parent property, Veritas Vineyard & Winery, which is owned by Andrew and Patricia Hodson—George, Emily, and Chloe's parents.

The Hodsons eventually began selling wines with the Flying Fox label, but the brand really came into its own when it moved to the current location. The family now calls the old weather vane Mr. Fox, and is developing the character as a brand symbol and representative.

"Mr. Fox is a world traveler," Pouncey says. "That's why you see the globe in the Flying Fox logo, and also why there are so many maps on the walls at the winery."

There's one of Nelson County, two of Jacksonville, Florida, George and Tralyn's former home, and a very impressive one of London. "George's parents are English," Pouncey says. "At Folly we happened to have this huge map of London—it's really an installation, framed in 18 sections."

While the fictional Mr. Fox travels the world, Pouncey found ways to place other fox imagery in the winery. For instance, on an accent wall in the men's restroom, the caricature of a fox in a red riding coat repeats in a regular pattern against a creamy white background. It's bold, playful, and a clever design choice, perfectly fitting the message Flying Fox wants to convey.

And like the rest of the interior appointments, it came in just under the wire. "I was there, making finishing touches, the day before the winery opened," Pouncey says. "I can't believe we got it done."

“

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Victoria Pouncey



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