



The sweeping curves of the Amastuola vineyard in Puglia, Italy, designed by Fernando Caruncho, with the property's early 19th-century stone farmhouse in the distance.

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Photograph by Gareth McConnell.

THE  
NEW YORK  
TIMES  
STYLE  
MAGAZINE

RICARDO LABOUGLE



July 19, 2015

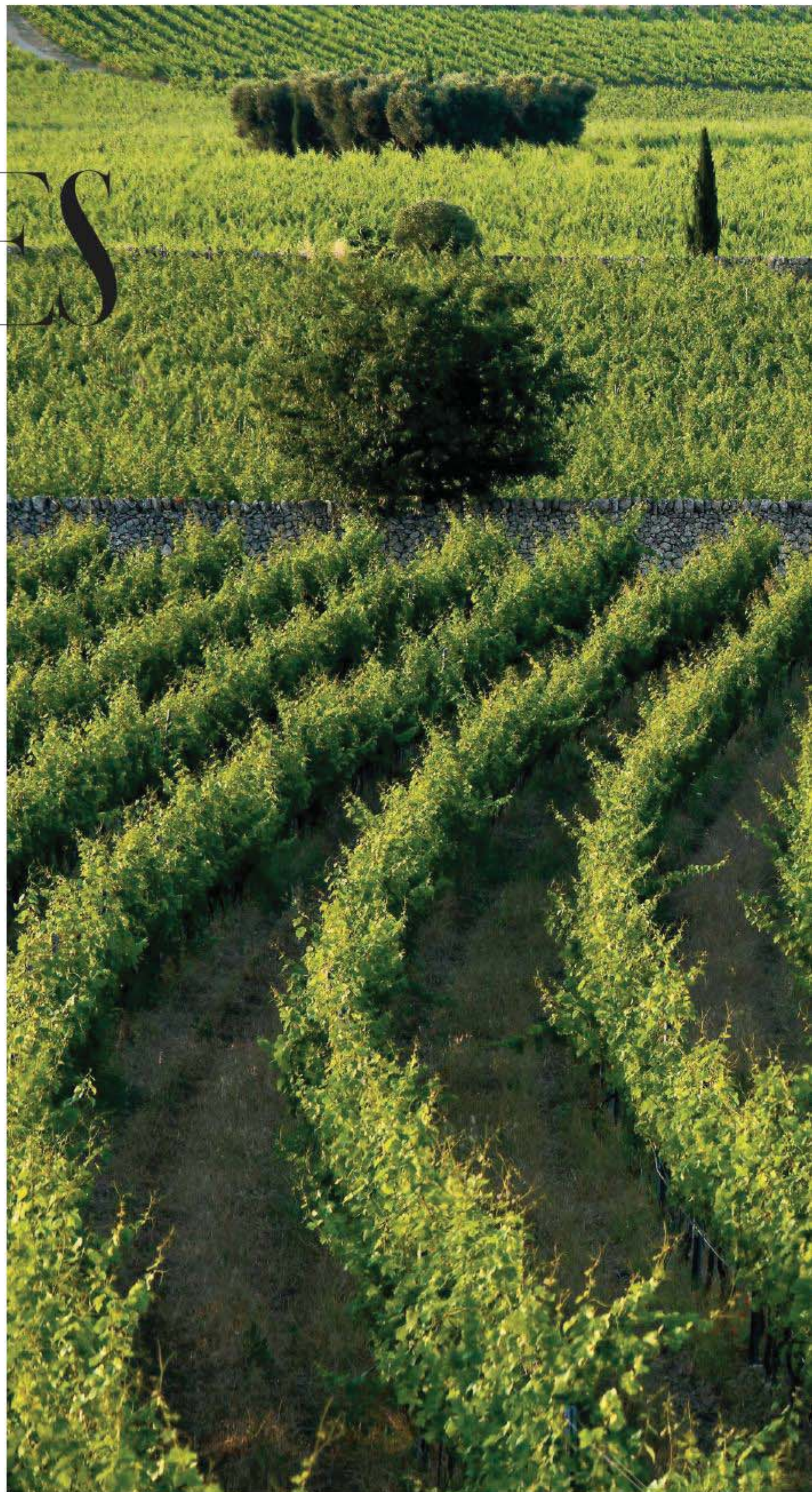
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PHOTO: CAMEL STEER; RICARDO LARONGLE; PAUL COSTELLO

# SHOCK WAVES

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICARDO LABOUGLE



**L**IKE DIZZYINGLY AMBITIOUS land art or a hedge maze gone wild, the espaliered grapes at Amastuola, a vineyard in Puglia, Italy, play tricks on the mind. Instead of planting in a traditional, rigorous grid, Fernando Caruncho, the celebrated Madrid-based minimalist landscape architect, conceptualized the 250 acres as a green sea of voluptuous, undulating waves that “traverse the landscape of this ancient place.” The property, which is owned by the family of Giuseppe Montanaro and produces several excellent organic wines, including an esteemed red made from primitivo grapes, the Puglian version of zinfandel, is situated on a stretch of land that was first cultivated about 3,000 years ago. Along an arid, sun-bleached strip, the area played host to few tourists until the fields’ mind-bending design recently began attracting art-world attention.

In addition to planting the sinuous rows of shoulder-to-shoulder vines, which flow for more than two miles and took nearly four years to complete, Caruncho also had workers move 2,000 enormous olive trees — most from the 13th century, some by now nine feet in diameter — from one corner of the property. He placed them in groups that punctuate the arcs of vines and line the paths to the apex of the property, where there is an elevated centuries-old masseria, a Puglian stone farmhouse. Relocating the trees, whose leathery foliage and gnarled trunks provide contrast with the shiny grape leaves, took almost two years; the roots are as deep as the imposing trees are tall.

At first glance, the hypnotic curves of Amastuola seem uncharacteristic of Caruncho, whose work was collected in the 2000 book “Mirrors of Paradise: The Gardens of Fernando Caruncho.” He is a master of the right angle, of near-impossible planes and monochromatic environments trimmed to a Bauhaus fare-thee-well and defined by squared-off stonework; his love of the grid is writ large in formal gardens throughout Spain and Europe. But the vineyard, he says, combines an allegiance to straight lines with an organic impulse; the rodlike roads bisect the ripples of vines in a balance of utility and natural beauty. “Visually you have the shock of the grid against the waves,” he says. “That shock is everything.” — NANCY HASS

