

By Annette Reeves

# ADULT ART CAMP

Orange County Estate Partners invites design industry professionals on a creative journey to Villa Con Cuore in San Diego County

Nestled in Fallbrook, miles off the main highway, amidst avocado groves and acres of lightly weeded paths, there is a hidden jewel begging for the world to sit down, take deep breaths, and drink in nature's beauty. Owned by well-known artist Jerome Gastaldi, Villa Con Cuore is a four-acre property, where Gastaldi creates his art pieces, hosts group retreats, and provides a getaway for individuals, teams, and corporate America. Designed with the vision of an Italian villa, the property is lined with olive trees and lavender bushes leading to multiple studios, a pottery shack, and a beautiful art retreat where guests can paint overlooking trees, mountains, and wildflowers.

Gastaldi's creations can be seen from every vantage point of the land. In each corner, heavy metal abstract shapes emerge from the ground, horse paintings line the walkways, and religious artifacts provide a spiritual tranquility for those in need. If that's not enough, Villa Con Cuore has a small chapel with a confession stand, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and arched open windows. Close the doors, kneel at the cross, and forgive yourself for whatever burdens you.

Natasha Hogan, director of the Orange County Estate Partners, believed that a day away in this scene with industry friends could be an opportunity for reset, for those mired in the day-to-day challenges of the residential remodeling and building industry. Estate Partners, founded in 2010, is an association of trusted trades who call on and service Orange County and Los Angeles' most discerning architects, designers, and builders. The group embodies the art of classic networking, bringing the best of the best together to create beautiful homes with professionalism and integrity.

"There is no doubt that we have faced challenges due to COVID. The pandemic affected businesses and people in ways we have never experienced previously. Creating a day for our colleagues and friends to come together in a beautiful, peaceful setting is ideal for everyone to reconnect, have fun and enjoy each other!" explains Hogan.



Left: Art is everywhere at Villa Con Cuore.

Above: Estate Partners guests enjoy the creative opportunities at the design trade retreat.





Estate Partners and guests enjoying a day at the oasis of creativity that is Villa Con Cuore.

Certainly, this is no small undertaking, and Hogan and the Estate Partners group coordinated a day away for over 40 valued clients to load two luxury buses from Oceanside and leave the world behind just for a few hours. Laughter and fun-filled banter along with lively music paved the way for the 45-minute windy route, but as the group got closer, and art appeared from out of nowhere, the guests grew quiet as they took in the beauty of Villa Con Cuore. “It’s amazing to witness the transformation of our guests when they get closer, it’s like art possesses each person in a different way, finds a path to their soul and gives permission to each individual to let go of work and take a deep breath,” Hogan describes.

As the group disembarked, wine and champagne greeted them and it took no time for everyone to begin their journey, whatever that journey looked like. The pottery shack to the right allowed individuals to throw clay and find their creativity through sculpting. To the left, a huge art studio beckoned guests to enjoy Gastaldi’s prized art, which covers every wall from small and demure to large and breathtaking. Continuing down the path, an open beam forum with massive glass doors invited guests to grab a paintbrush and create their vision, their dreams, or just see what transformed when brush finds canvas.

That was Gastaldi’s dream for Villa Con Cuore. “It’s a very special place, lots of miraculous things happen here,” he describes. “I was an artist from when I was very young, there’s something about it, there’s a purity to me. When I found the ranch here, I fell in love with it immediately. Of course, being an artist and having an opportunity to shape the land, is like creating art. It’s hard to describe, this is a place that is meant for people to meditate, just get into nature, connect, and collaborate on ideas and projects.”

The Estate Partners group certainly found their connection with nature, friends, and colleagues. Throughout the day, one could find guests commenting on each other’s paintings, enjoying the delicious food served by Middleby Residential and Lynx Outdoor BBQ,



Kitchy Krouse, of KC Interior Design, with Jerome Gastaldi, artist and Villa Con Cuore owner.

or doing some wine tasting. A little talk of work, maybe some networking and business deals on the side but, for the most part, the day allowed everyone to escape reality, ignore phone calls, and enjoy life. As Rick Campos, owner of Design Biz Survival Guide explained eloquently in a thank you note to the group, “It was more than just a day of art and networking—it was a valuable opportunity for me to connect with industry professionals outside of my normal circle of influence. This opportunity to re-engage is priceless to my business and my role as a leader in the design community.”

The sentiment was shared by many but most revealed by the smiles on each person’s face as they put the finishing touches on their masterpieces, nibbled their last morsel of dessert, and boarded the bus. “Something for everyone,” many commented. “A little slice of heaven,” some murmured. And maybe not spoken but in many hearts: “I never want to leave this place.”

**Villa Con Cuore**  
**Fallbrook, California**  
[villaconcuore.com](http://villaconcuore.com)