La vida es una gran cerdada – “Life is a bitch” is the title of the 4 × 2-metre pencil sketch by Austrian artists Peter Hauenschild and Georg Ritter, which depicts a section of a pigsty (cerda means “sow” in Spanish). “A work with a satirical, double meaning,” says Andreas Gfrerer, the owner of Hotel Blaue Gans in Salzburg. “When I acquired it many years ago, I couldn’t have known where someday the perfect place for it would be.” He found that perfect place in the Wine Archive in the vaulted cellar of his hotel. The cellar, which has existed in the building since it was constructed in 1355, was used for centuries as a coal, then storage cellar. In the 1980s it was remodelled into a jazz cellar and for decades was a venue for countless concerts. Gfrerer remembers it as an element of the annual Salzburger Jazz Festival “Jazz and the City”, which he co-founded. During one of the final phases of the hotel renovation, which began in 2005, a new production cellar was established in 2012 opposite what is today the Wine Archive. This was primarily for storing the necessary utilities for the building; additionally, it simplifies deliveries, which can now take place through its own entrance.

The idea not to plan a separate storage area for wine evolved during cellar renovations. Architect Christian Prasser, who had stood by Gfrerer over the previous 10 years during all phases of his hotel
renovation, suggested “combining storage and service”, thereby giving guests the opportunity to “dine in the warehouse”. That was how the idea emerged to present wine in the newly created Wine Archive in the former jazz cellar. It was important for the architect to keep the existing conglomerate stone vaults visible, thereby maintaining the atmosphere of the cellar. The existing stone floor made of marble mosaic from the nearby Austrian town Adnet was kept in its original state and only augmented where necessary. In order to avoid large interventions into the structure of the old building, lighting fixtures were integrated into a construction made of oak wood slats that was set into the vaulted ceiling. The bar area was also covered with oak wood slats, which give the surface a three-dimensional feel. The slat construction also emphasises the warehouse atmosphere of the spaces. The tables were individually welded out of steel channels embedded in rustic oak boards as tabletops. On the whole, the materials were deliberately limited to steel and oak wood, which emphasise the simple charm of the vaulted cellar. The wine refrigerator has a capacity of almost 1,500 bottles. Its front and sides are all glass, but it was left open at the back in order to avoid reflections as well as display the bottles stored in it in front of the historic stone wall. To prevent condensation, a general ambient zone of about 16–17ºC for both white and red wines was created. This puts red wine at its proper drinking temperature; white wine is cooled to the necessary 8–12ºC before serving. Using indirect lighting in the doors of the wine cupboard, attention is drawn to the bottles within it without any adverse effect to the mystical atmosphere of the room. At the same time, it makes the labels easily legible. In the middle of both rooms there is an old Berkel meat slicer, on which special ham delicacies from Lungau, Styria or northern Italy are displayed – sliced paper thin and served with homemade dishes from the hotel’s own food kitchens, and garnished with herbs from its own herb garden. To accompany this, guests can choose an appropriate wine themselves from the wine cabinet. The Wine Archive can accommodate about 60 people. The Blaue Gans is a kind of refuge in the middle of Salzburg. Its guests should feel comfortable in this art hotel and its natural yet modern-looking rooms, art displays, restaurant, brasserie, guests’ garden and library. The owner and architect were successful in augmenting the hotel with the further attraction of the Wine Archive. It’s more than just a wine cellar – it’s a concept for the palate and senses.
WINE + SPACE

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Architectural design for vinotheques, wine bars and shops