

CHILE

Little seen and untamed river stirs Patagonia

By Carolyn McCarthy
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

COYHAIQUE — The Carretera Austral is a lonely place. Its 750 miles of washboard rumbles south through thick Valdivian rain forest and across sprawling steppe, bound for the tip of a continent. But before it can arrive, it's blocked by the Southern Patagonian Ice Field, the biggest chunk of continental ice outside of Greenland and Antarctica.

Chilean Patagonia is also a land of water, its deep glacial lakes and powerful, pristine rivers rushing from the Andes to the Pacific. It's a dream if you're a salmon, a nature lover, or a kayaker. Or a hydroelectric company.

Energy is a hot topic in Chile, where natural resources are few. Ten Patagonian rivers are targeted for dams planned by Spanish-Italian multinational Endesa and Chile-based conglomerate HidroAysén, with the backing of the government.

At stake are pristine ecosystems and rural farms
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Conservationists are concerned about plans to put a dam on the remote Pascua River.



CAROLYN MCCARTHY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



JOE RAY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

From vine to vat, trying new ways to raise the bar

By Joe Ray
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

CENTRAL VALLEY — In a dirt hole with what appears to be a tarantula, I inspect the root structure of wine vines through a plexiglass pane while Jorge Castillo holds the trap door open and laughs. "Don't worry," he says, "It's just a chicken spider!" I suppress visions from "Indiana Jones and The Temple of Doom" and back away calmly.

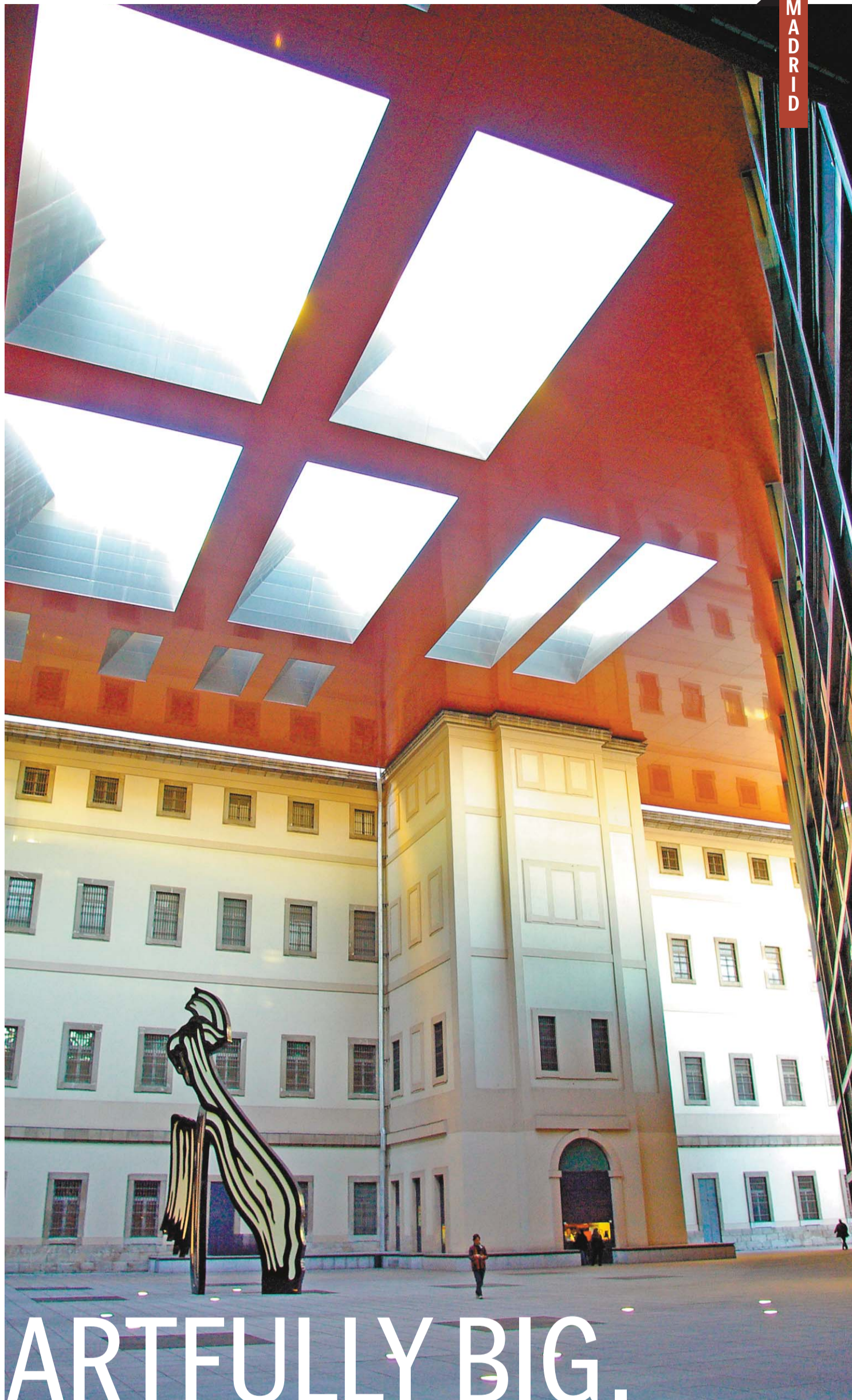
Who knew that a greater understanding of Chilean wine involved sitting in a hole with a furry, saucer-sized arachnid?

Wines produced on this side of the Andes tend to be reliable at a good price, but they rarely knock your socks off. As one winemaker here says, "Chilean wines are like a Volvo."

Despite centuries of growing experience, Chilean wines are historically a bulk product. When
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High-tech Casa Lapostolle in Colchagua Valley does not pump wine from its oak vats.

MADRID



ARTFULLY BIG, tastefully simple

Innovation inspires museum makeovers and cuisine that entices Europe

By Patricia Harris and David Lyon
GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

Coming from a city that endured the Big Dig, we can't complain about a little construction work. Madrid's roads aren't exactly all torn up, but it's still hard to walk a block in the old center without encountering scaffolding or construction tape. With the Spanish economy roaring, the capital city is getting a major makeover.

Two of the most ambitious projects, important additions to the Prado and Reina Sofia museums, are finished. As we look forward to expansions at the Museum of Fine Arts and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, we can only hope Boston fares so well. The two new buildings capture the yin and yang of Madrid style: elegant formal restraint on one hand, playful exuberance on the other.

Despite initial protests against fiddling with the venerable Prado, its \$230 million wing opened in November to universal acclaim. Designed by Rafael Moneo (who teaches architecture at Harvard University), the new wing cuts into the hillside behind the original Neoclassical palace, making it a self-effacing building despite its sweeping interior volume and flood of light. Moneo's choices of light wood, marble, and bronze echo the finish materials of the original Prado. Crowning the extension is the 17th-century landmark cloister of San Jerónimo church, preserved on its original site. Workers dismantled 3,000 blocks of stone and reassembled them inside the top
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The courtyard between the old and new buildings at the Reina Sofia museum, and the vintage 1929 tiled facade at the Taberna Alhambra.