



WINE LABEL
DESIGN
AWARDS

— EST 2015 —

The Wine Label Design Awards 2015 - Results

Introduction

The Wine Label Design Awards 2015 proudly sponsored by self-adhesive label supplier Rotolabel were convened by Winemag.co.za. Labels are a vital component of product branding serving to identify ownership, show origins, describe contents and ultimately to persuade buyers. The motivation for the competition was therefore to reward outstanding design as an influence on wine purchases.

Methodology

Wines were judged in three categories: 1) under R60 a bottle; 2) over R60 a bottle and 3) labels forming a series. Judging criteria include originality of concept, execution, shelf appeal and effectiveness as a piece of communication.

A panel of five judges officiated, this made up as follows: Christian Eedes, editor of Winemag.co.za; Sean Harrison, executive creative director of Whitespace Creative; George Jardine, executive chef of Jordan Restaurant in Stellenbosch, Ivan Oertle, wine buyer for retailer Woolworths and Joanne Thomas, creative director: design at Jupiter Drawing Room.

A total of 92 entries were received, 31 of these emerging as finalists. Full results below.

Key findings

In order to be considered effective, a label should be viewed as a piece of communication containing an original idea and then this should be executed with respect for the various design disciplines such as illustration, typography and so on. Does this apply when it comes to the South African wine industry?

Unfortunately, not very often. Reflecting on her judging experience, Joanne Thomas said “I found a lot of stuff very similar – not atrocious but very average.”

Fellow judge Sean Harrison concurred. “There’s a lot of work here that’s so expected. Everything centred, name of brand above black and white illustration. It’s formulaic.”

Ivan Oertle spoke of “good bland” and “bad bland”, his point being that wine packaging often uses a subtle but well established visual language. When done with care and craft, this results in effective communication with the market (even if not award worthy) but too often, it is done by rote and results in packaging that has no impact.

“Too much that was meaningless or inappropriate to its market segment – producers need to be clear about whether they’re trying to sell to an older, more conservative consumer or one who is younger and more experimental. Route to market also matters. Are you selling mostly through supermarkets or restaurants?” he said.

The award winners were those “that stood out from the crowd” as Thomas put it. Harrison, meanwhile, wanted to reward labels that showed “courage” rather than were “mainstream and boring”.

But labels that were overly experimental weren't going to cut it, either. "I don't want to see experimentation at the sacrifice of craft. If you've got an original idea and beautiful craft, then you've got a winner," said Thomas.

The BLANKbottle range won gold and the Grand Prix because it showed really brave design backed up by strong strategic thinking. Winemaker Pieter Walser sources grapes from across the winelands, designs his own labels and then uses QR codes and the Internet to tell his story.

"Any thoroughbred designer is going to scream when they see how uncrafted the BLANKbottle stuff is but it's one person's idea followed through without compromise. Wine, art and technology come together with these labels. Walser is single-handedly taking the wine industry to another level," said Harrison.

The only other gold award went to Infiniti Noble Late Harvest 2012 from Stellenbosch Vineyards, and here the design was in stark contrast to the BLANKbottle range showing immaculate craftsmanship. The wine is packaged in a long-necked 375ml bottle, a little neck tag fulfilling the function of a back label. "There's no great concept involved but I'm charmed by its beauty," said judge George Jardine. "Simplicity is the ultimate elegance," agreed Oertle. "The designer didn't get in the way here. She's retained only the necessary and it comes across as very considered," said Thomas.

In the end, the panel was happy that they rewarded a variety of approaches from classic to quite whacky. No doubt there will be those who disagree with the outcome but hopefully what the Wine Label Design Awards do on the most basic level is facilitate the discussion and thereby promote change for the better. See you all next year!

Winner of a gold award for wines in a series, the People's Choice Award and the Grand Prix

BLANKbottle range: DOK 2013, Professor Kukurowitz 2013, Hinterhofkabuff 2013, The Original Spaniard 2013, Confessions of a White Glove Chaser 2013, Col. Mulscal Roos 2013

Design firm: Self designed

Winner of a gold award, single wine selling for over R60 a bottle

Infiniti Noble Late Harvest 2012 (Stellenbosch Vineyards)

Design firm: Vanessa Fogel Design

Winners of silver awards, single wine selling for over R60 a bottle

One Man Band by Iona 2009

Design firm: Code

Mr P Pinot Noir 2013 (Iona)

Design firm: Code

Mulderbosch Barrel Fermented Chardonnay 2010

Design firm: Anthony Lane Design Consultancy

Sophie Te'blanche 2014 (Iona)

Design firm: Code

Winners of silver awards for wines in a series

Marvellous range: Yellow 2012, Red 2012, Blue 2012

Design firm: Fresh Identity

Paserene range: Chardonnay 2013, Marathon 2013

Design firm: Self designed (in collaboration with Lorraine Loots, Lauren Ann McCarthy and Carmen Ziervogel)

Villiera range: Cabernet Sauvignon 2013, Merlot 2013, Pinotage 2013, Jasmine Fragrant White 2014, Sauvignon Blanc 2014, Barrel Fermented Chenin Blanc 2014, Bush vine Sauvignon Blanc 2014, Chenin Blanc 2014

Design firm: Anthony Lane Design Consultancy

Winners of bronze awards, wines selling for over R60 a bottle

Ashbourne Sauvignon Blanc Chardonnay 2014

Design firm: Pearly Yon

DeMorgenzon Maestro White 2014

Design firm: Fanakalo

Elgin Ridge 282 Sauvignon Blanc 2013

Design firm: Whitespace Creative

Quinta do Sul 2008

Design firm: Self designed (in collaboration with Warren Wilsnach of Coastal Labels)

Winner of a bronze award for wines in a series

La Bri range: Viognier 2013, Chardonnay 2013, Merlot 2012, Cabernet Sauvignon Limited Release 2012, Affinity 2012, Syrah 2012

Design firm: Anthony Lane Design Consultancy

Finalists

Single wine selling for R60 or under

Bellingham Pinopasso 2013

Design firm: Just Design

Rare Earth Shiraz 2011

Design firm: The Butcher's Shop

Single wine selling for over R60 a bottle

Alphabetical 2012

Design firm: Owl & Vine Brands

Ataraxia Sauvignon Blanc 2014

Design firm: At Pace Design & Advertising

Beau Constantia Pas de Nom Red 2013

Design firm: Fanakalo

Cape Heritage Inception 2011

Design firm: Just Design

Carol Boyes MCC 2011

Design firm: Carol Boyes Functional Art

Fable Jackal Bird 2012

Design firm: Alice Edy in collaboration with Fanakalo and Anthony Lane Design Consultancy

Klein Constantia Meits Sauvignon Blanc 2013

Design firm: At Pace Design & Advertising

Mount Abora Saffraan Cinsaut 2012

Design firm: Adams Rib Creative Solutions

Uva Mira The Mira Sauvignon Blanc 2014

Self designed in collaboration with Donna Christie & Soil Design

Wildeckrans Cabernet Franc Merlot 2009

Design firm: Garage East

Wines in a series

Diemersdal Heritage Range: Private Collection 2013, Pinotage Reserve 2013, Grenache 2013, Sauvignon Blanc Reserve 2014, Chardonnay Reserve 2014

Design firm: Anthony Lane Design Consultancy

Glen Carlou The Curator's Collection: Pinot Noir 2011, Chenin Blanc 2013

Design firm: The Hardy Boys

Glen Carlou The Haven Range: Cabernet Sauvignon 2013, Syrah Mourvèdre 2013

Design firm: The Hardy Boys

Runnder Duck Range (Vergenoegd): Red 2012, White 2014, Rosé 2012

Design firm: Bittersuite

Yardstick Range: Pinot Noir 2013, Chardonnay 2013

Design firm: Fresh Identity