

Small Vancouver firm wins big with innovative wine labels

**Brandever Strategy Inc.
has clients in B.C.,
Australia, New Zealand**

BY FIONA ANDERSON
VANCOUVER SUN

A small Vancouver company has swept up seven of the eight Double Gold awards handed out at this year's San Francisco International Wine Competition for its innovative labels on made-in-B.C. wines.

Brandever Strategy Inc. designs the labels, as well as developing the marketing strategy (including naming the vineyard), for wineries including Blasted Church, Laughing Stock, Lotusland Vineyards and Dirty Laundry. The company also has clients in New Zealand and Australia.

Brandever's principal, Bernie Hadley-Beauregard, said the success of the company's labels is in breaking away from standard naming protocol and design.

Most wineries name themselves after a family, a geographical landmark or an animal, Hadley-Beauregard said in an interview.

"The biggest problem with that is that 90 per cent of consumers can't remember the name of the wine they had with dinner last weekend.

"If everyone follows the standard protocol and names themselves after a geographical land-

mark, for example, it becomes a geographical nightmare," Hadley-Beauregard said. "And with thousands and thousands of choices that doesn't make the wine distinguish itself.

"We try to break away from that protocol," he said.

Brandever also tries to break away from the use of "minimalism" or "the pursuit of beauty" to package higher-priced wines, Hadley-Beauregard said.

Brandever's target audience for the wines is "people who share a common state of mind, who don't want attitude

with their wine," he said.

"I think one of the flaws of the early state of the industry is that those who want to sell their wines at a high price took the high-end luxury snobbery approach and there has been some resistance to that," he said.

The company's first wine-label project was Blasted Church, notable for its cartoon-like design that, if looked at across the different varietals, tells the true story of a church that was moved in the 1920s with the help of dynamite.

When Blasted Church was launched everyone in the industry thought the wine couldn't sell for a premium price with cartoons on the label, Hadley-Beauregard said.

"Meanwhile, it's turned out to be the contrary," he said. "It's been one of the more successful brands in the [Okanagan] valley and selling at a super-premium price and they just can't produce enough of it."

Labels for Laughing Stock Vineyards, which like Blasted Church won a Double Gold award for its series of bottles as well as for a single label, includes a ticker tape of stock prices from the day the grapes were picked, a special touch that reflects the financial backgrounds of the winery's owners.

"We really try to make things very different from the norm and for the most part in the industry we've rattled the cage quite a bit," Hadley-Beauregard said.

To receive a Double Gold each of the three judges in the competition had to find the label to be gold-medal quality, the competition's assistant director Chandler Moore said in an interview. With seven Double Golds, "Brandever just knocked their socks off," Moore said.

In addition to the seven Double Gold awards, Brandever received six silver and four bronze medals.

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Vancouver-based marketing strategy and design firm Brandever has won awards for labels used on wines from B.C. vintners including Blasted Church, Laughing Stock and Lotusland.