

We assist our clients in deciding what part of their artwork gets etched into the glass and which parts remain unetched and unpainted. The process can be as long (per bottle) as 20 minutes for the hand-etching and five hours for the hand-painting,” McFarland said.



View video in the Wines & Vines Digital Edition. See the entire hand-etching process at Napa's Etched Images.

Stencils are created and applied with multiple meticulous steps before each individual bottle is etched in a sandblasting machine. Only then does color application begin: first typically sprayed with a base color, then painstakingly painted with the finest of brushes to build up texture and full color, as ordered. Only a handful of veteran artisans are qualified for this “capping” process. So far, McFarland quipped, none have gone blind.

“The hand-etching and painting is very labor intensive, and not an automated process like screen-printing. We typically have 30-40 orders in-house at any given time and have a two- to eight-week lead time after the artwork has been approved,” he said.

**Wine on screen**

Not so long ago, this process was called “silk screening,” a luxurious term for an artsy-craftsy means of printing posters and T-shirts. The silk is long gone (the screens are now made of fine and still-finer weaves of aluminum), but the basic technique remains the same: a practical method of imprinting durable labels on bottles for spirits, wine, olive oil and myriad other products that merit safekeeping.



Screen printing easily wraps an entire bottle in a design, as seen on the 2009 Rosso Corsa package from Monvera.

In recent years, screen printing through technically applied color labeling (ACL) has carved deep inroads into the beverage bottling industry. Mike Bergin, who founded Napa's Bergin Glass Impressions some 20 years ago, paid tribute to the spirits brands that popularized the technique for the most practical of reasons.



*\*Please stare responsibly.*

Screen printing, etching and label design so attractive, it's almost intoxicating.



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