

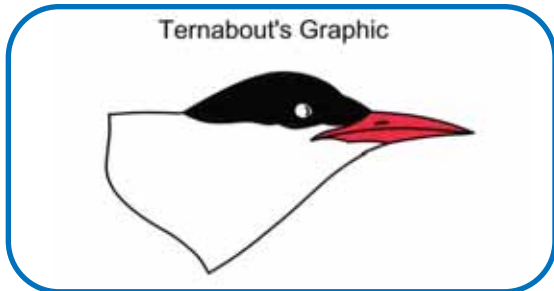


Hull Graphics

Paul Esterle has been building or repairing watercraft, of all descriptions, for longer than he cares to admit, from hovercraft to power and sail boats. Paul specializes in boat improvement and repair projects utilizing wood, epoxy, and fiberglass. If you have any questions about your boat project, contact Paul at pesterle@comcast.net

by Paul W. Esterle

I named *Ternabout* back in 1985, but it wasn't until this year I got around to displaying that name on her. I wanted a little more than just the name in letters. I had carved two tern heads a while back, thinking to use those on the hull side.



The artwork for the custom graphic part of the boat name.

They turned out so nice that I didn't want to expose them to the elements. Never the less, my design would have to include a graphic of some sort.

After painting the hull, it cried out for some decent hull graphics. I looked at various suppliers of vinyl hull lettering as I didn't think the cost of a custom, hand painted graphic would be in *Ternabout's* price range. There are a multitude of vinyl sign suppliers, local ones that usually do more than just boats, suppliers that hang out at boat shows and on the internet as well as the Boat/US graphics operation.

Many of those on the internet will allow you to design sample layouts with different fonts, colors and effects. I started out using one of those sites, using a red background similar to *Ternabout's* hull color. I first tried different colors for the letters, to find the combination that stood out the best.

Some of the options offered, in addition to the font color, are borders around the letters and drop shadows. The site I was using (www.boatus.com) allowed me to view a sample of the *Ternabout* name using combinations of all those effects. As I tried various combinations of fonts, colors and effects, I copied the samples to my



A proposed layout taped to the hull for evaluation.

computer and then printed them off on my color inkjet printer.

After I had exhausted all the likely combinations, I laid the most promising on the living room floor so I could compare each one for their look and readability. There is a large selection of fonts available but many of them proved to be hard to

read. Seeing the samples next to each other really helped narrow the selection. In the end, a simple Arial font looked the best. White letters with black borders as well as a slant turned out to be the winning combination.

The next decision to make was the size of the letters. I had done vinyl lettering for one of our other boats and did it wrong. I ordered the lettering at a boat show, by memory, guessing at the sizes. I got the color right but the lettering was way out of proportion for the stern of the boat. I was determined not to make than same mistake again.

Speaking of the stern, I decided to apply the graphics to the aft sides of *Ternabout's* hull, as the stern was too crowded with the swim ladder, rudder and outboard.

I scanned the original drawing I had made for the carved Tern heads into my computer and used it to generate the graphic to go with the lettering. If you don't have a computer drawing program, good old-fashioned paper, ink and markers do as well.



Sample of a proposed boatname. Printed out full size, it could be taped to boat for evaluation.

I used that graphic in conjunction with a banner program to print out samples in varying sizes. I then taped the samples to the hull and stood back to evaluate the sizing. As it turned out, four-inch high letters with an appropriate sized tern graphic worked the best.

I then packed off the samples and the graphics to my lettering vendor. I asked for a quote and delivery time. The web site I used gave the cost of the base lettering but the graphic required a custom quote. It took a follow up call, but I finally received my quote.

Installation

Installation of simple vinyl graphics like these is straightforward. The first thing I did was to wash the hull with soap and water where I planned to install the graphics. This was to make sure any dirt, grease or wax was removed prior to installing the graphics.

The graphics came in several pieces, the boat names were separate from the custom graphic and each would be installed separately. The vinyl comes on a paper carrier strip and is covered on top with another protective strip.

I placed the boat name section upside down, on a flat surface, and peeled off the paper backing. I had filled up a spray bottle with water and a little dish soap and sprayed this on the back of the vinyl graphic.

I also sprayed the hull where the boat name would go. While both the hull and the name were

Complete Sample Hull Graphic



A final sample downloaded from the graphics supplier's web site.

still wet, I placed the name in its proper location. The soapy water under the vinyl allowed me to slide it around until I was pleased with the exact location.

Once the name was in place, I secured it with several piece of masking tape. The graphics come with a plastic squeegee that is used to finish the installation. I used this squeegee to squeeze out all the water from between the vinyl and the hull and to ensure there were no air bubbles underneath the vinyl.

After thoroughly squeegeeing the letters, I let the name dry for an hour. This allowed the vinyl to bond to the hull. Once it was dry, I then peeled off the top protective layer, folding it back 180 degrees and slowly pulling it away from the letters.

I used the same procedure to install the tern's head graphic ahead of the boat name. I also followed the same procedure on the other side of the hull. I measured from the first side to make sure the boat name and tern head were in the same relative location as on the first side.

Installation was quick, only the drying time took any appreciable time. The result is a custom boat name and a custom graphic, all suited to both the boat and the owners. Let your imagination help you put your boat name and designs on your boat.



The name portion of the graphic drying on the hull.



The finished installation.