

Process Portfolio

A look at how I approach
branding projects and how I
develop my work from
beginning strategy to final
client deliverables

Rough Cut

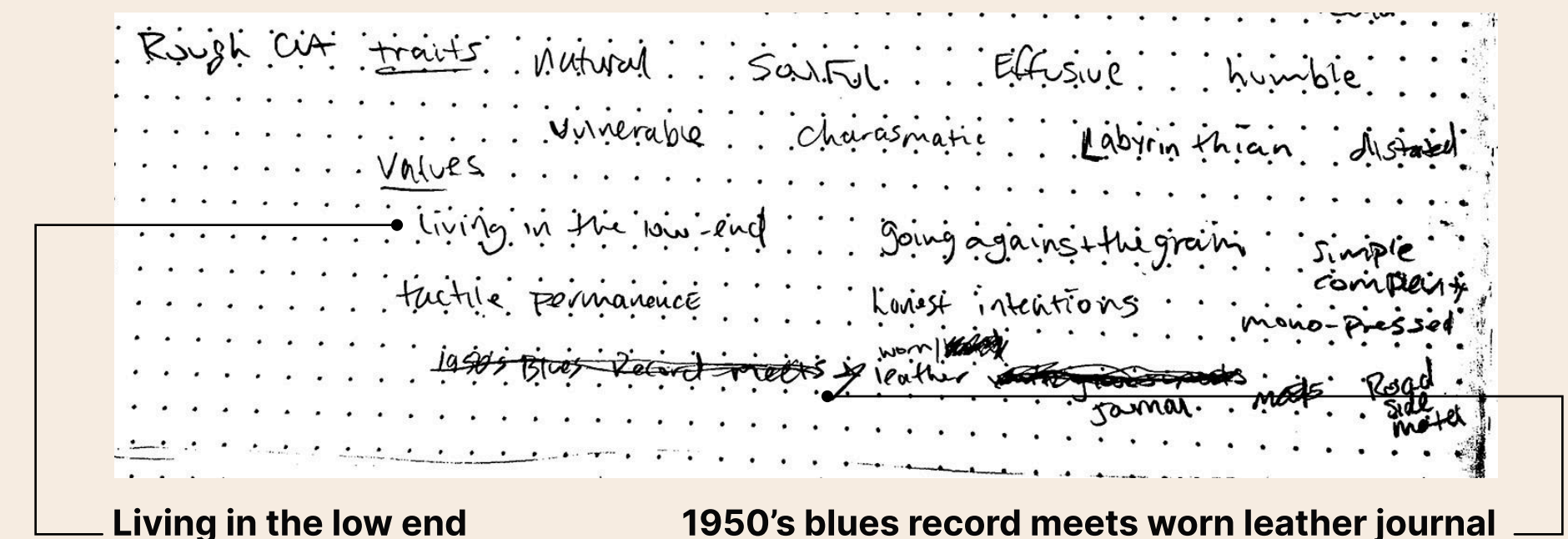
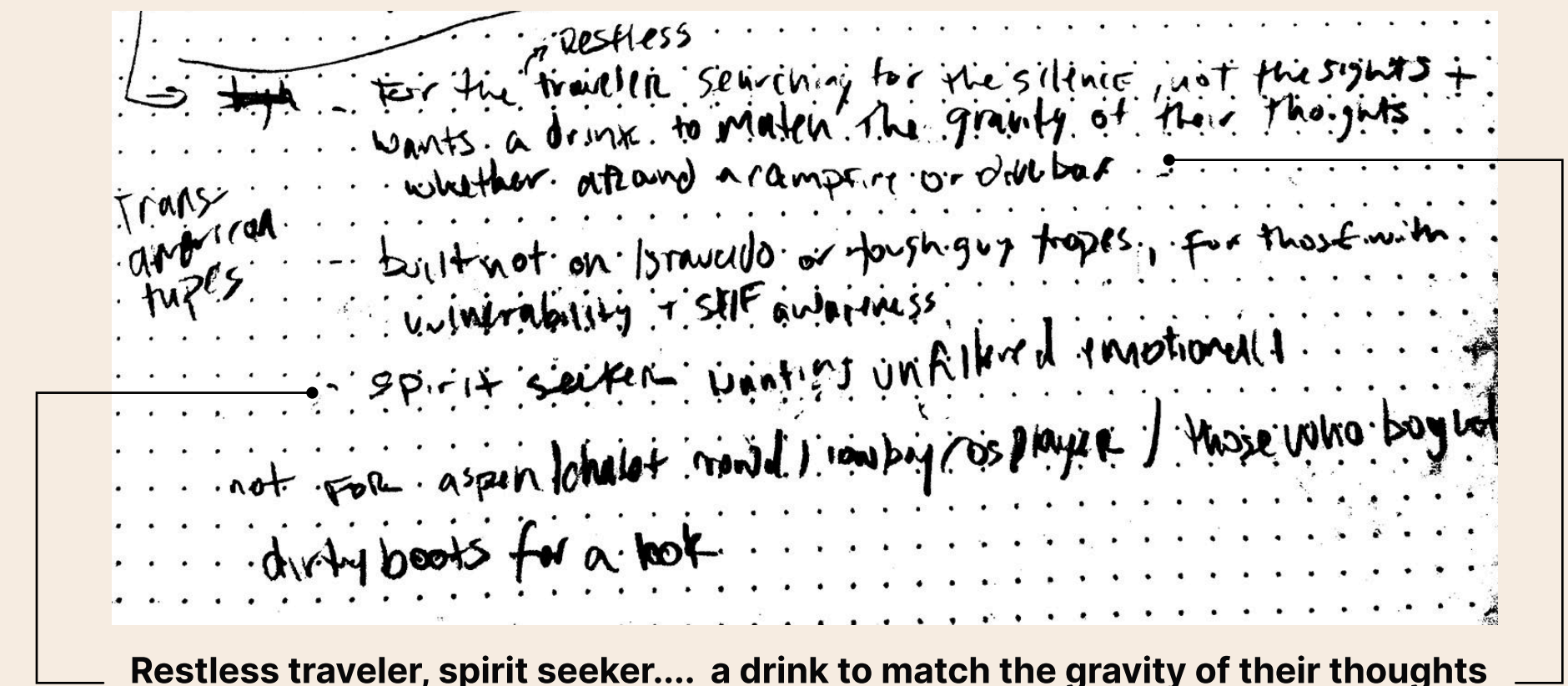
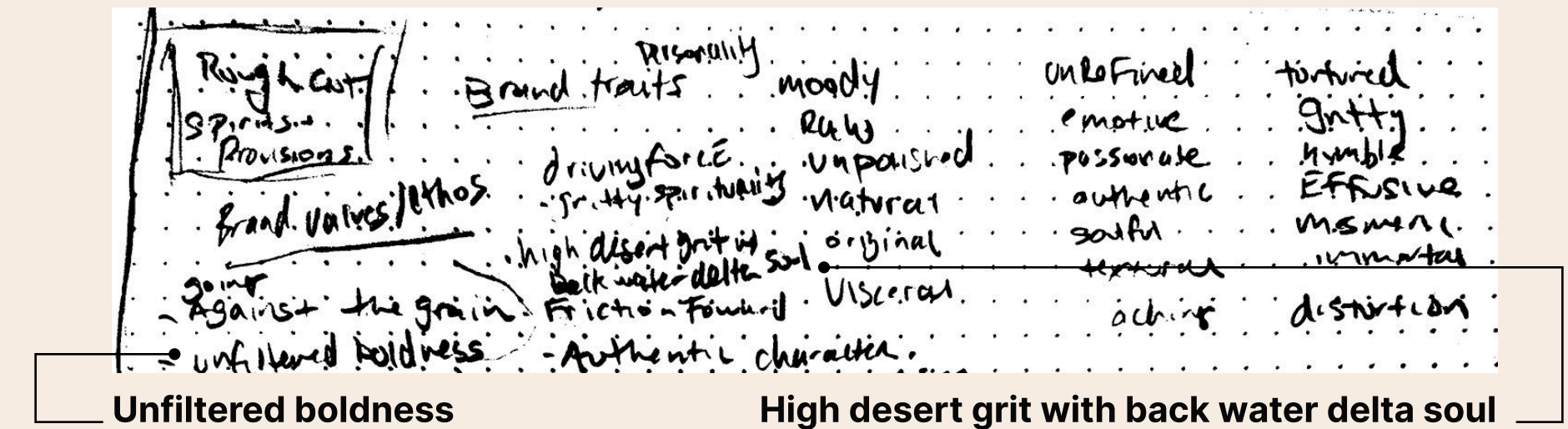
Spirits and Provisions

The owners behind Rough Cut Spirits and Provisions approached me with an issue: they had just started their own distillery, but could not translate their inspirations and desires into a brand that felt right. Inspired by their home city of Flagstaff, AZ as well as vintage blues vinyls, the fledgling distillery has plans for two flagship liquors, canned non-alcoholic mixers, and a line of syrups and liqueurs.

Since early spring of 2026, I have been at work designing Rough Cut's brand identity, product lines, and merchandise. Here is a look into my process and how the brand is built.

STEP 1: MAPPING OUT THE FOUNDATION

Loose notes and word associations based off clients' input and details of their needs and wants.



From there, I put together a set of brand values and traits, along with a target audience and market positioning.

Rough Cut’s grounding in vintage blues sound and gritty nuance provides a clear, defined direction and aesthetic for the brand.

Positioning ——— The slow-paced, heavy spirit

Current landscape

The "Smoothness" Obsession: Most spirits are filtered until they are thin and clinical. They are built to be "easy-drinking" and go down fast

Polished Labeling: Modern craft brands look like minimalist software or kitschy Western souvenirs

The Performance: Most "rough" brands are just a costume. They sell a fake cowboy story using theatrical grit while selling mass-market liquid

The "Smoothness" Sea: A market drowning in easy-drinking spirits and kitschy zero-proof "souvenirs" designed to disappear in the glass or be used as theatrical afterthoughts

Where we can stand out

High-Viscosity Intent: We keep the raw oils and natural cloudiness in the spirit and the mixers. This grit physically requires you to slow down and experience the weight of the spirit

Unrefined Aesthetic: Stark, screen-printed ink makes the bottle look like a a visual stop-sign that feels permanent and unpretentious

Abrasive Sincerity: Raw, visceral integrity bridges the high-peaks wilderness and backwater delta, treating every bottle and mixer as anti-mass market

Tactile Permanence: Heavy glass and hand-dipped wax create a physical object worth keeping. It anchors you in a quiet moment and is designed to stand out in your mind

There is a distinct void in the slow-consumption arena

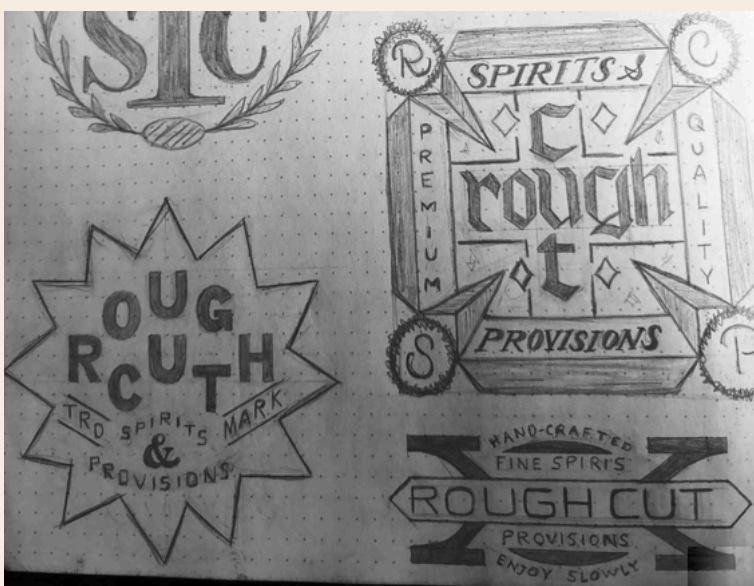
Intentionally unpolished. Most craft spirits still aim for a version of "luxury" or "smoothness," but Rough Cut’s abrasive sincerity cuts through

Chill filtration is the common practice that prevents louching. Rough Cut retains the botanicals and cloudiness as a differentiator that we want to highlight.

With client sign-off on the fundamentals and general direction, the custom design process begins. Hand sketches tap into influences from guitar logos, heraldry, motorbike patches, blues records, and more.

At this stage I'm resolving three issues. Blackletter has gravity but tips into cosplay. Three potential icons need hierarchy assigned, or cutting. And "provisions" needs to sit as forward as "spirits" in the marks.

STEP 3: LOGO SKETCHING



When sketching options, I refer back to traits like 'visceral, deliberate, and against the grain' looking not to stray into the realm of 'cosplay or theatrical'. Industrial and blue-collar influences are incorporated through the various badge and seal forms which tie back to the sincerity and gravity I'm after.

After sketching different directions, I create groups and present them as distinct paths for further refinement.

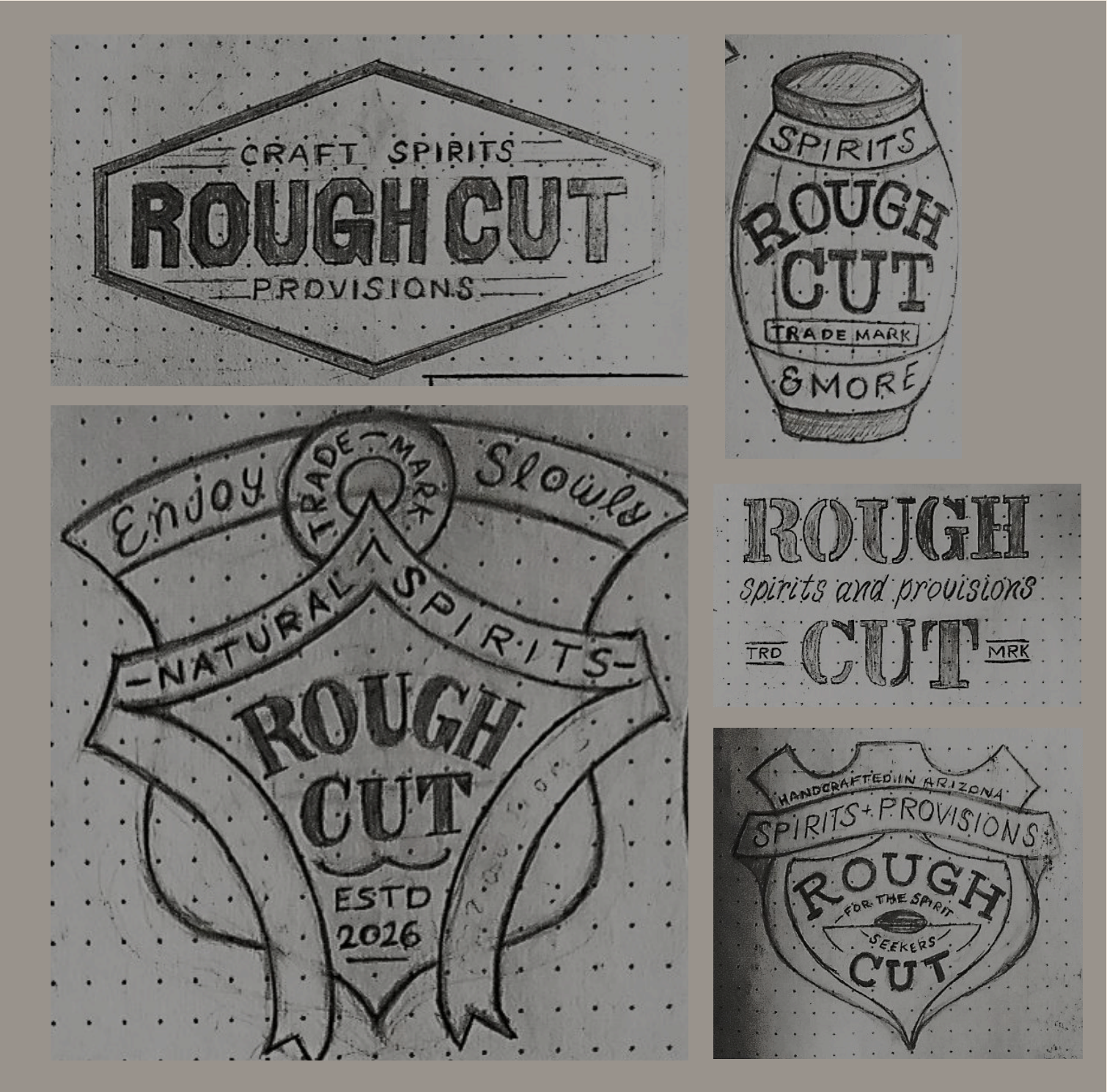
The clients felt that only a few of the sketches really worked, those being the top few in the “edgy artifact”.

Either too kitschy, detailed, theatrical, or vintage, most marks were unfit to properly represent Rough Cut.

I advised picking the edgy artifact direction, and the clients landed there on their own.

STEP 4: CHOOSING THE CORRECT DESIGN DIRECTION

Trans-American heritage



This direction did not feel ownable enough to be distinctly Rough Cut. The barrel, badge and stencil options feel solid but too familiar.

Detailed craftsman

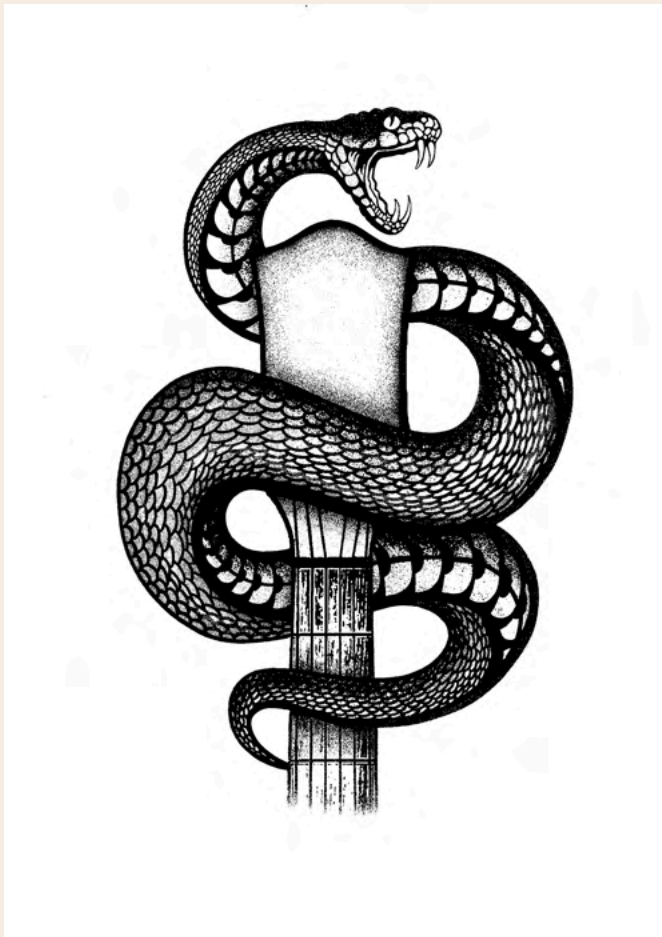
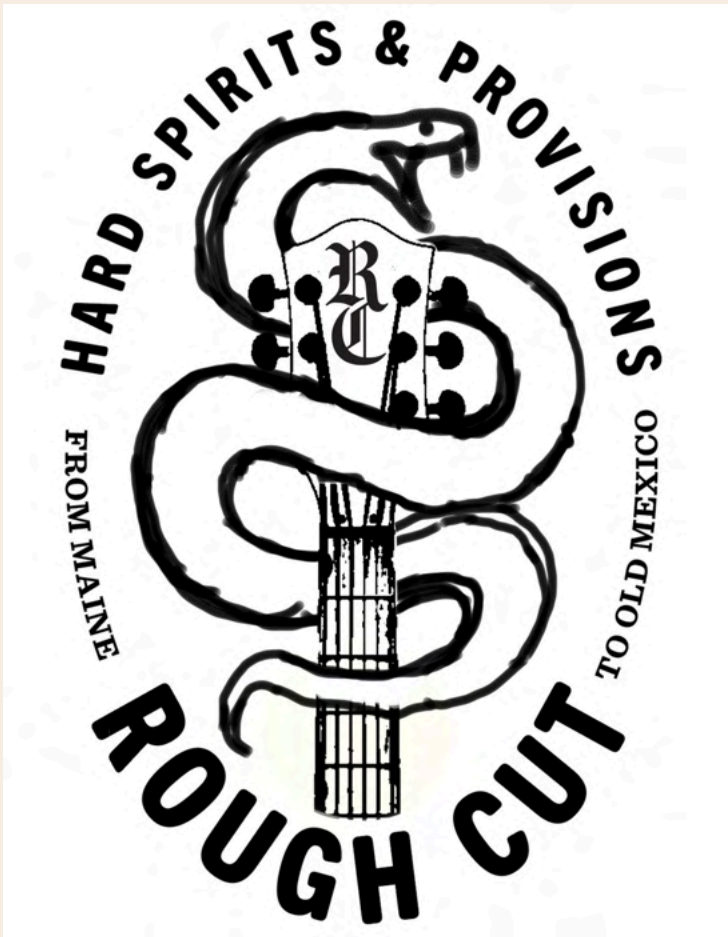


This direction was too complex and ornate in its shape and type use, shown in the monogram.

Edgy artifacts



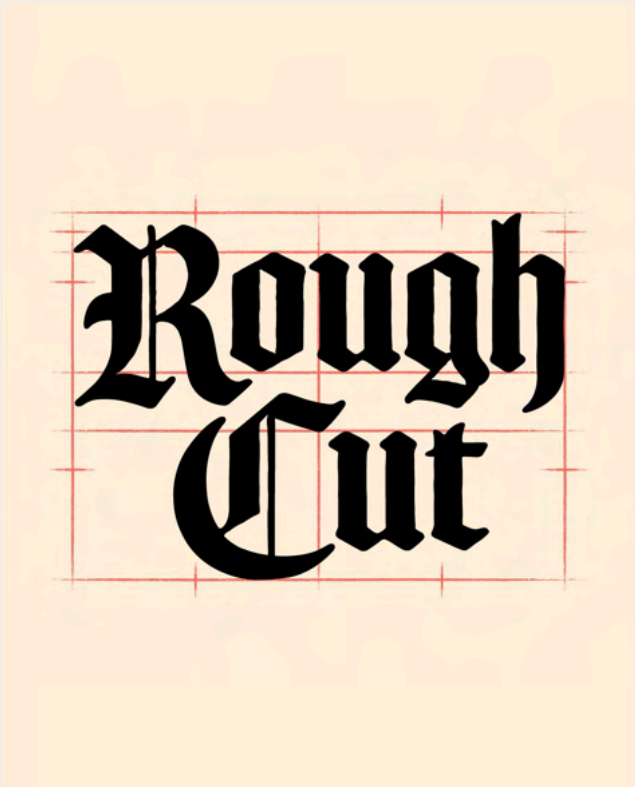
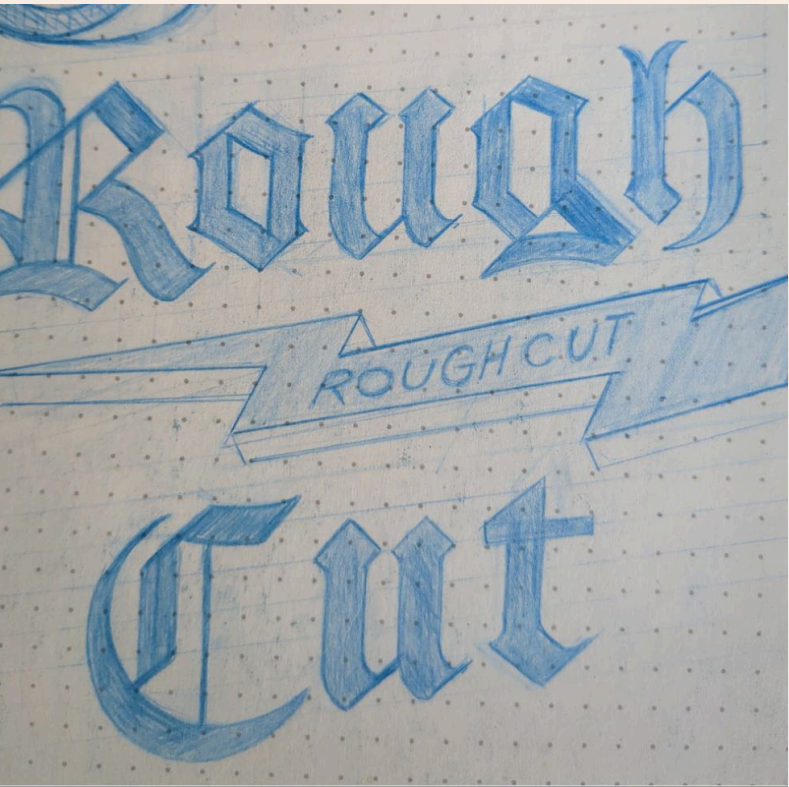
This direction had the most potential, with further refinement needed. Clients were drawn to the blackletter type and oval forms. Bolts and headstock linked clearly to undercurrent of blues and grit.



Primary seal initial sketch

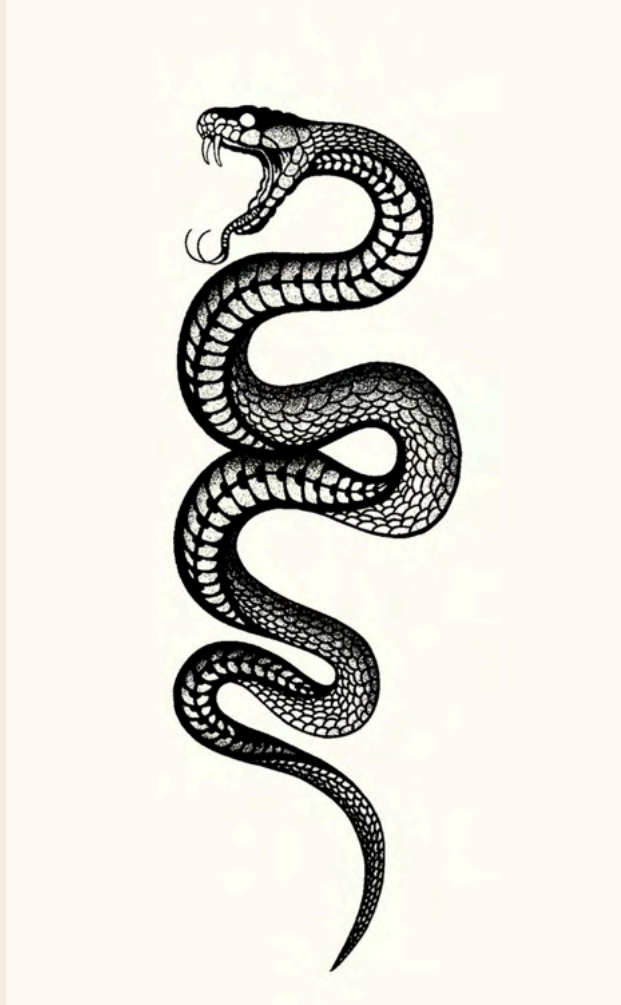
Blocking in snake and headstock for correct spacing

Rendered and spaced final version



Primary wordmark initial sketch

Final render



Hero illustration initial sketch

Mapping out correct anatomy and shading on scales

Rendered and spaced final version

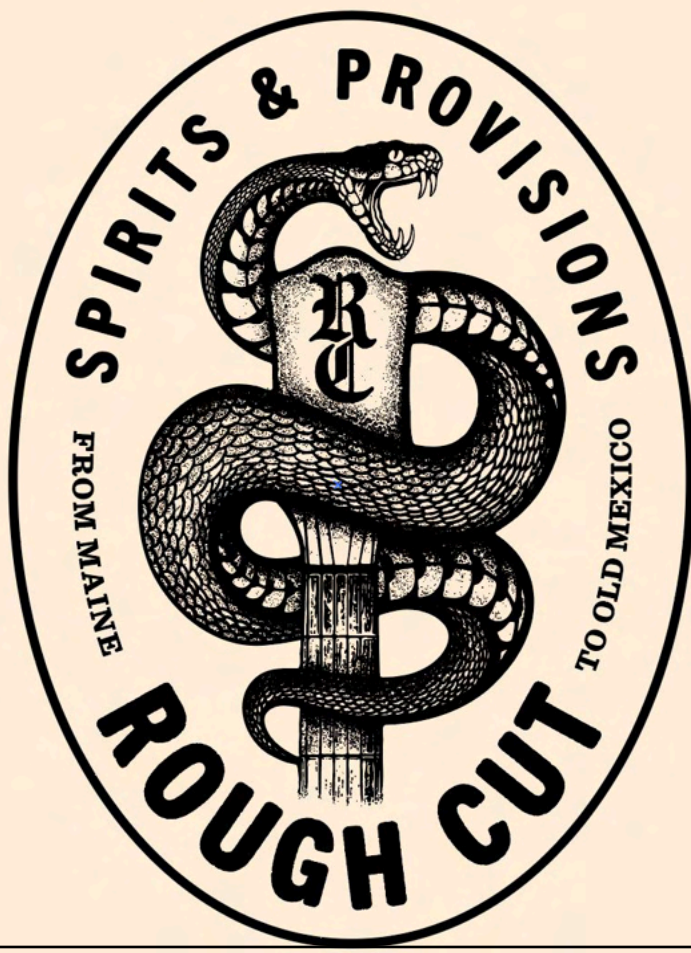


Primary badge initial sketch

Final render

STEP 5: LOGO REFINEMENT

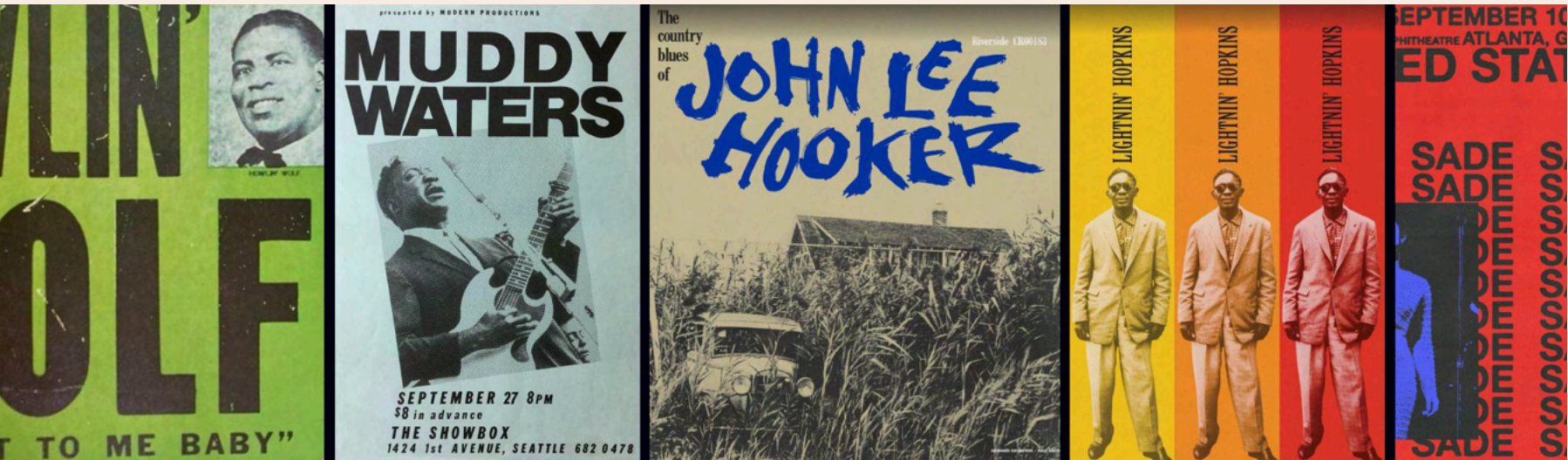
With the general design direction and rough sketches culled down, I start on the refinement of the primary marks. I render out several snake and guitar illustrations for the various logo sizes and render out the custom workmark.

Signage and apparel Min~3”	Front liquor label Min~2”	Front syrup label Min~1.25”	Front mixer label Min~1.25”	Headers Min~.75”	Caps, embossing Min~0.25”	
Intricate details prevent scaled-down applications	Engraving details muddy below 2” so smaller areas will switch to wordmark or monogram	Lower contrast between illustration and type permits smaller usage, suitable for backs	Sunburst shape holds at smaller sizes better than thin type, which fills in. Suitable for front chest on apparel or stickers	Wordmark drawn to prevent ink pooling at small sizes. Uses can cross to apparel and bottle backs	For smallest applications only. Where monogram loses contrast or floods, icon can be swapped in, including stamping	
						
Hero lockup	Primary seal	Primary badge	Secondary starburst	Wordmark	Monogram	Icon

STEP 6: SCALING THE SYSTEM

Rough Cut runs multiple product lines at different scales, from liquor bottles to syrup to apparel. One or two marks couldn't carry that range, so each mark gets a defined role based on what survives at its size.

Color palette sourced from vintage blues vinyls and posters, anchoring the brand in backwater Delta soul



neutrals

Rough Cut_Midnight
HEX #1B090A
RGB 27, 9, 10
HSB 357, 67%, 11%
CMYK 64, 72, 66, 83

Rough Cut_Eggshell
HEX #FFDEAE
RGB 255, 222, 174
HSB 36, 32%, 100%
CMYK 0, 13, 34, 0

brand primary

Rough Cut_Oxblood
HEX #702427
RGB 112, 36, 39
HSB 358, 68%, 44%
CMYK 34, 90, 77, 44

primary accent

Rough Cut_Sunburst
HEX #FF79A4E
RGB 247, 154, 78
HSB 27, 68%, 97%
CMYK 0, 47, 76, 0

Rough Cut_Slate
HEX #3F6A7D
RGB 63, 106, 125
HSB 198, 50%, 49%
CMYK 79, 49, 38, 12

Rough Cut_Pine
HEX #275632
RGB 39, 86, 50
HSB 134, 55%, 34%
CMYK 82, 41, 90, 39

Rough Cut_Carnation
HEX #F0736A
RGB 240, 115, 106
HSB 4, 56%, 94%
CMYK 1, 69, 53, 0

brand secondary

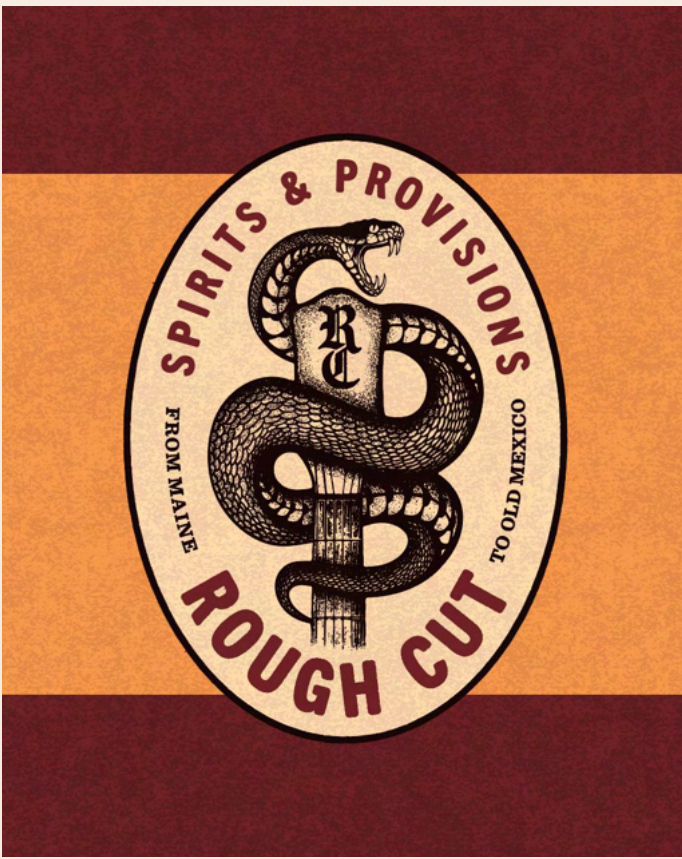
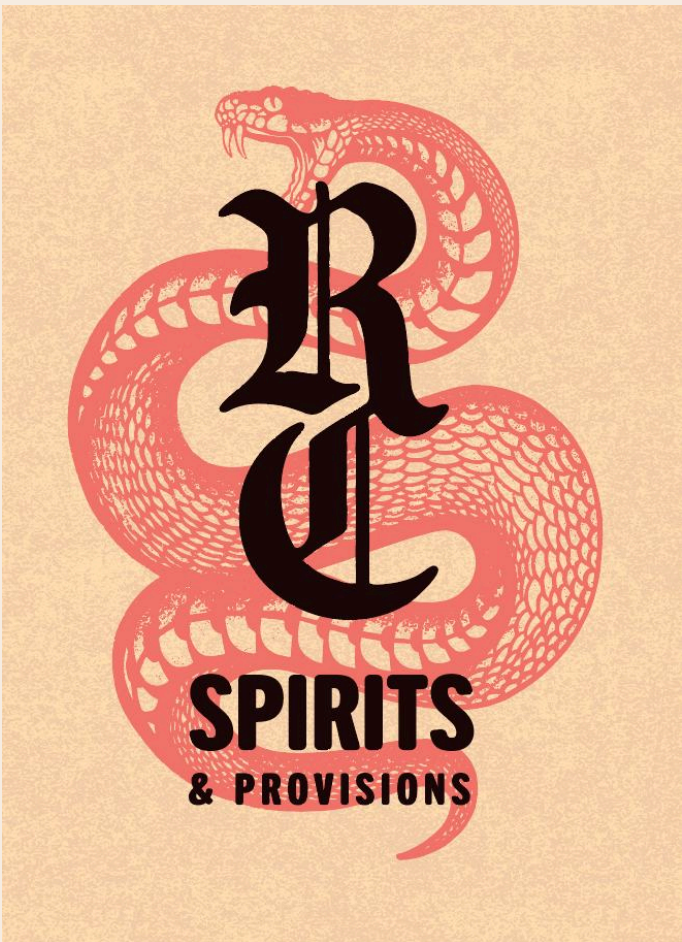
secondary accents for mixer and syrup lines

Correct value, but hue needs to move further into yellow tones

Correct hues, saturation & values need to deepen for better contrast

Cut swatches, only one dark neutral needed

Testing palette on brand assets



Testing type on brand assets

Rough Cut

• SPIRITS & PROVISIONS

Built for the Spirit Seekers

Sentinel, with low contrast and tall x-height, is perfect as a detail type for labels.

Amador, base of the wordmark, is assigned to large headings. Fine points and high contrast flood with ink at small sizes.

Trade Gothic serves as the workhorse font. Highly legible at small scales in a number of weights, holds up well in print applications.

STEP 7: COLOR AND TYPOGRAPHY Choosing an appropriate color palette and type system is what I tackle next. Considerations for both are based in production demands: Spot colors for labels that also pair well on digital, glyphs that retain shape and definition at small print scales, and a usage system that carries the brand from shelf to screen.



Seal typography and illustration hold detail during the printing process



Debossed monogram stamp. This production method keeps counters clean and distinct which allows form to read at small scale.



Embossed icon stamp. Robust shape of the R icon is preferred for an embossed application as the form retains detail better.

STEP 8: PROOFING THE SYSTEM At this stage, I run several pre-production proofs to ensure the brand assets retain quality across different applications. The seal details remain crisp, small type is not flooded with ink, and the wax stamp can use either the monogram or the icon. The proofs show that the mark to use depends on production method, not just size.

That's my process, from start to finish!

Happy to walk through any of it in more detail.

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