BRAND IDENTITY EXPLORATION:

REDESIGNING SPEC'S WINE, SPIRITS, & FINER FOODS BRAND IDENTITY

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of
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for the Degree

Master of FINE ARTS

by

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San Marcos, Texas
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BRAND IDENTITY EXPLORATION:

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Dean of the Graduate College

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving wife, Alexis and son, Johnathan; parents, Ronnie and Jan, brother, Harley; and family for whom I strive to honor each and every day; Claudia Roeschmann, Jeff Davis and Tom Berno, for their exceptional mentorships; and my fellow colleagues in the Communication Design MFA program, whom I am proud to call my friends.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The objectives for creating this brand identity book (BIB) were to modernize the Specs Wine, Spirits, & Finer Foods (SWS) Brand Identity (BI) and introduce the brand into markets where the company does not have brand awareness or equity. The process of modernizing SWS brand identity included preliminary research, methods, and outcomes (i.e. creative process) and resulted in the following illustration.

Company history

In 1962 the Rydman family introduced the world to SWS in Houston, Texas (Southwest). In recent years, it expanded with over 50 stores in Houston, becoming one of the largest proprietors of wine and spirits. Second-generation owner Lindy Rydman expanded the company into new markets, which include Austin, Beaumont, and San Antonio. Within the stores, patrons browse large selections of wine and spirits along with finer foods from Texas and abroad (Nissan, n.d., www.specsonline.com).

Brand identity

BI is one of the most valuable assets a company has, [globally] it accounts "for approximately one-third of all wealth" (Clifton, 2004, p.2). This valuable asset distinguishes businesses in the daily stream of marketing messages (Neumeier, 2007, vii). The building of a BI requires the creation of multiple elements called brand applications. Each brand application has different content and production requirements (Wheeler, 2009, pp 146 – 170). The Brand Identity Applications List (BIL, see page 9) illustrates a variety of brand applications typically associated with the development of a BI. Communication Designers (CD) routinely produce brand applications illustrated on the BIL. Applications listed in the BIL, include letterhead, environmental graphic design (EGD), and advertising campaigns, which are the "outward expression" that comprises the "visual appearance" of BI (Neumeier, 2004, p. 20). Data from the BIL were used to create the Brand Identity Applications Analysis (BIA, see page 8), which indicates 54% of all brand applications are visually oriented. Non-visual brand applications such as speeches, voice mails, customer service and others (see page 9) constitute a 46% minority of BI applications. With less than half of all brand applications being non-visually oriented, much emphasis is placed on creating and developing a cohesive BI system. The key to a cohesive BI system is consistency, especially when each visual media contains assorted nuances (Wheeler, 2009, p. 142).

Consistency in both visual and non-visual brand applications necessitates a robust and thought-out system. Such a system easily coordinates messages from advertising campaigns that build personality and reinforce customer loyalty (Neumeier, 2006 p. 136). Brand application consistency is important because consumers directly experience and

interact with brands through visual brand applications (Ollins, 2003, p. 87). Visual brand applications consist of logos, typography and color palette, visual and narrative content, and derivative elements; that breathe life into the BI.

The visual brand applications proposed in this BIB for SWS provide a comprehensive system that expresses brand messages consistently, concisely, and deliver versatile solutions to establish the SWS brand identity. It capitalizes on equity established in the legacy element—the rabbit icon—of the original SWS brand identity. Along with typography, color palette, and derivative elements, the legacy element was modernized to provide a cohesive BI system. The new rabbit icon is an anthropomorphization of a mammal form: a cottontail rabbit combined with distilled spirits iconography.

Preliminary Research

Research plays an important role in developing BI, and when done properly, it guides the entire process, shapes outcomes, and determines effectiveness. The processes used in this BIB are central to the Communication Design Discipline (CDD). The Competitor Brand Audit (CBA) compares visual commonalities among known competitors. CDs avoid these visual commonalities during the methods phase to reduce "an overabundance of look-alike products and me-too services" thereby ensuring individuality (Neumeier, 2007, vii). Individuality occurs by keeping visual similarities of known competitors to a minimum, which "separate[s] winners from the clutter" (Neumeier, 2007, vii). For SWS BIB, the CBA compared two visual brand applications, logos and web sites. Results from the CBA provided data for the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) method.

Methods: SWOT & VB

The SWOT method provided insight for devising strategy by highlighting positive and negative attributes of SWS. It also identified key brand attributes (viz., customer experience, customer focused, family owned, and value centered) that were incorporated into the new BI. Another method utilized in creating the BI was the Visual Brief (VB). The "visual brief takes what the client wants us to achieve and puts it into a form designers can work from" (Duffy, 2010). The VB is an essential step in converting non-visual content (i.e. words) into a visual context (i.e. images). In this method of "making intelligence visible," the CD selects images that visually represent a brand's key attributes (Wheeler, 2009, p. 11). These images focus the CD's visual vocabulary during the outcome phase (i.e. creative process) and keep visual brand applications unified.

Outcomes: Designing The SWS Brand Identity

SWOT and VB methods provided the basic information needed to create the following visual brand applications for SWS brand identity: stationary system, interactive media, ephemera, EGD, vehicle graphics, advertising print campaigns (APC), and uniforms. SWS elements (viz., logos, typography and color palette, visual and narrative content, and derivative elements) were consistently used in creating the aforementioned visual brand applications.

Stationary system: Letterhead, envelopes and business cards

Letterhead, envelopes, and business cards constitute "a core application in the BI" (Wheeler, 2009, p. 146). The first step was to create numerous sketches—though not all are shown. Multiple designs were refined resulting in the final design which reflects SWS' brand identity.

Interactive media: Web site and digital mobile media

Web sites are one of the most interactive visual brand applications. Technological advancements create entirely new experiences for consumers (Wheeler, 2009, p. 152). SWS web site design consisted of a home page and subsequent web pages. These secondary pages provided information about products and company history. Functionality was the overriding feature in designing the web site. It had to be simple and flexible, allowing for planned growth and unforeseen expansion. In recent years, digital mobile media arose as a popular offshoot of web sites. With digital mobile media "information moves freely and can reach specific recipients," made possible by "devices [that] are portable (Groebel, Noam, & Feldmann, 2006, p. xi). Similar to web sites, functionality was an important consideration for designing SWS digital mobile media. The digital mobile media design was not simply a miniature version of the web site, it was designed to communicate brand messages directed at consumers more immediate needs that can only be addressed with the digital mobile media application.

Ephemera: Shopping Bag and Gift box

A reusable shopping bag functions as free advertising and necessitates a design conforming to the BI. Keeping the shopping bag design minimal ensured cost effectiveness as production methods inhibit intricate designs. Shopping bags are produced for consumers to carry purchases and are either given away free of charge or sold at a nominal cost. As shopping bags leave store locations they act as brand ambassadors and must be designed with this in mind (Neumeier, 2004, p. 14). Similar to shopping bags, gift boxes also become brand ambassadors when consumers take them into their homes (Wheeler, 2009, p. 160).

EGD: Exterior, Directional, and Informational.

EGD applies visual brand applications to both interior and exterior business environments. Exterior EGD brand applications serve as identifiers for consumers, which are especially useful in tenant development sites where businesses share a structure. Legibility was a key consideration in the creative process for EGD brand applications. Complex designs were avoided on exterior brand applications to ensure maximum legibility over distance. The EGD brand applications explored for SWS brand identity were exterior (viz., main site, building, anchor, tenant, and light pole signage), directional (viz., departmental and aisle identifies), and informational (viz., product, wine points, and key price signs). Generally, exterior anchor signage is used when a business owns the developments site. It allows extended branding compared to tenant signage that must conform to landlord specifications, which vary at each development site. Light pole signage generates brand awareness and identifies parking lanes. Directional signage is not only aesthetic; it also provides important functionality to consumers by signifying locations of departments, products, or services. Typically, signs contain more detailed information as they approach eye level. For example, department identifiers that hang from the ceiling specify department locations only. Whereas aisle identifiers that mount above shelving units display more general information about products or product categories located on an aisle. After reaching an aisle, consumers use informational signage such as a wine points sign to help with more informed decisions about products.

Vehicle graphics

The function of vehicle graphics is to "make the brand identity immediately recognizable" to consumers on a daily basis (Wheeler, 2009, p. 166). The absence of

vehicle graphics is a lost opportunity to reinforce brand messages because large portions

of consumer goods are transported using semi-trucks. Designs for SWS vehicle graphics

reinforce brand messages with brand elements and simple content.

APC: Billboards and Print Advertisements

Advertising is the one area that allows for the introduction and use of brand

attributes in brand applications. APC consist of three or more advertisements that follow

the same structure, contain similar content, and/or build upon one another's message in

succession. These messages may be distributed across different visual brand applications.

Billboards are brand applications utilized in the barrage of "3,000 marketing messages"

consumers receive daily (Neumeier, 2007, p. 7). But, "with the decline of print,"

billboards are becoming less important (Wheeler, 2009, p. 162). This once monolithic

brand application is now part of, but not integral to, a BI. Print advertisements continue to

be an impactful media. Additionally, print advertising allows CDs to incorporate more

information (i.e. narrative) and personality (i.e. visual content) into brand messages as

identified by SWOT.

Uniforms

Uniforms provide consumers an easy way to identify employees during their

shopping experiences. They establish employees as brand ambassadors while interacting

with consumers. The uniforms created for this BI color-coordinate with department

identifier signage to indicate which department employees work in. Most importantly, by

using brand elements the uniforms are part of the overall SWS comprehensive BI.

Conclusion

This thesis, *Brand Identity Exploration: Redesigning Spec's Wine, Spirits, &*

Finer Foods Brand Identity, used preliminary research, industry practices, and

methodologies to explore solutions for modernizing SWS brand identity (see illustration).

The aforementioned processes resulted in key brand attributes (viz., family owned,

customer focused, value centered, and customer experience) that were incorporated into

the outcomes (i.e. creative process): a comprehensive BI system. The BI system of

unified visual applications (i.e. Specs Wine, Spirits, & Finer Foods brand identity book)

cohesively expresses brand messages, heightens awareness, and increases equity for

SWS.

ILLUSTRATION

SPECS
WINE, SPIRITS,
& FINER FOODS
BRAND IDENTITY
BOOK

INTRODUCTION

"What really matters here is that a logo, or any other kind of trademark, is not the brand itself. It's merely a symbol for it."

(Neumeier, 2007, p. 1)

Introduction

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Wine, Spirits, & Finer Foods (SWS) Brand Identity (BI) and introduce the brand into
markets where the company does not have brand awareness or equity. The process
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Brand Identity Ideals (continued)

typography, color palette, and derivative elements, the legacy element was modernized to provide a cohesive BI system. The new rabbit icon is an anthropomorphization of a mammal form: a cottontail rabbit combined with distilled spirits iconography.
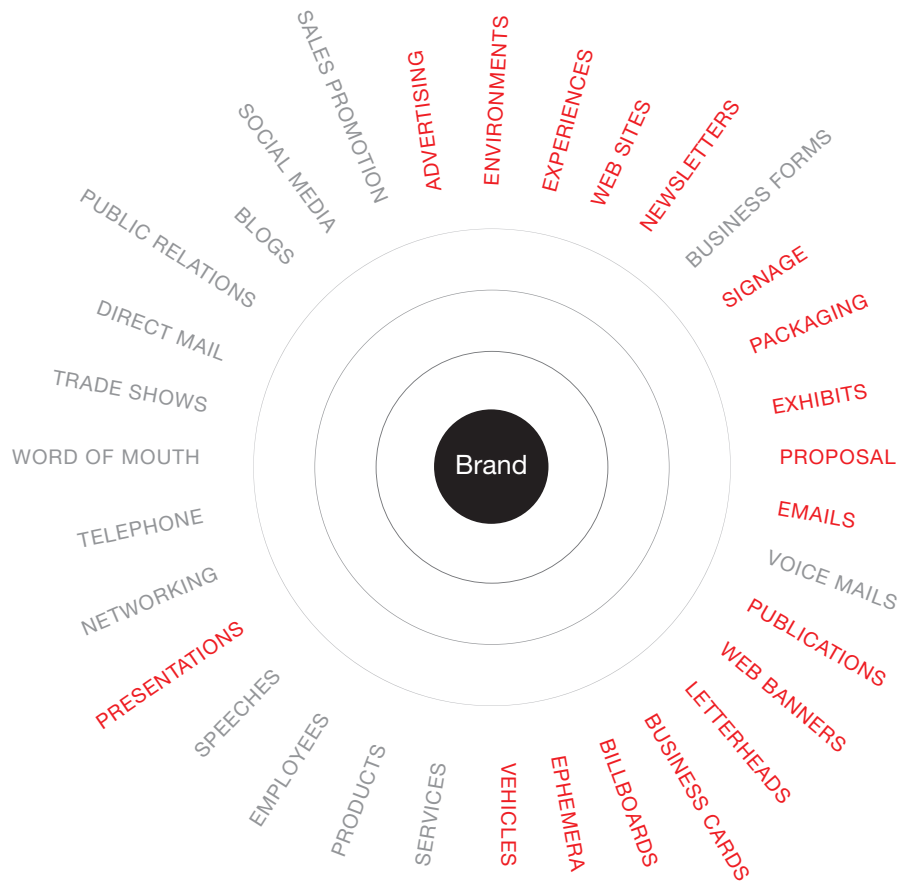
BIA
Visual vs nonvisual

Visual 54%
Nonvisual 46%
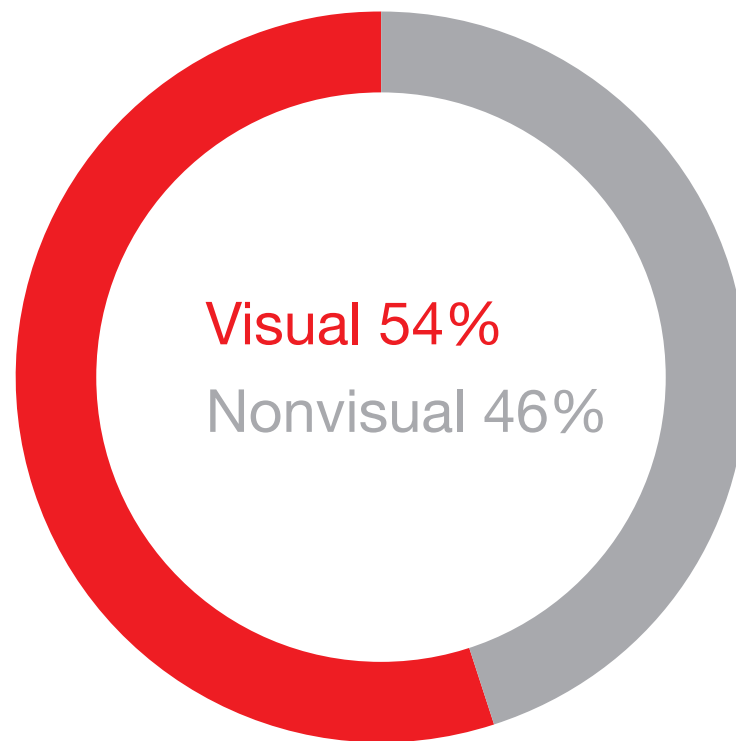
Over half of all applications are visually oriented, so, great detail must be placed on a cohesive system supporting the other 46% of nonvisual applications.

A presentation of concept, Brand Identity for **Specs**

BIL
Visual and non-visual applications

An important aspect of a brand are the visual applications. The visual applications shown above (Wheeler, 2007) indicated in red, represent many of the applications explored in this brand book. The remaining nonvisual applications highlighted in gray are not explored in this brand book.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

"Applying traditional research methodology to the process of graphic design also positions the designer in a consultative role. Armed with this supporting evidence, the commercial artist (traditionally viewed as a vendor) instead becomes a strategic consultant."

(Viscoky O'Grady, 2006, p. 11)

Preliminary Research

Research plays an important role in developing BI, and when done properly, it guides the entire process, shapes outcomes, and determines effectiveness. The processes used in this BIB are central to the Communication Design Discipline (CDD). The Competitor Brand Audit (CBA) compares visual commonalities among competitors. CDs avoid these visual commonalities during the methods phase to reduce "an overabundance of look-alike products and me-too services" thereby ensuring individuality (Neumeier, 2007, vii). Individuality occurs by keeping visual similarities of known competitors to a minimum, which "separate[s] winners from the clutter" (Neumeier, 2007, vii). For SWS BIB, the CBA compared two visual brand applications, logos and web sites. Results from the CBA provided data for the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) method.

CBA

Main competitor logos

Nissan, D. (n.d.) *Twin Liquors*. Retrieved from www.twinliquors.com

Squidz Ink Design. (n.d.) *Block7*. Retrieved from www.block7wineco.com

Sharkmatic. (n.d.) *Gabriel's Wine & Spirits*. Retrieved from www.gabrielsonline.com

CBA (continued)

Main competitor web sites
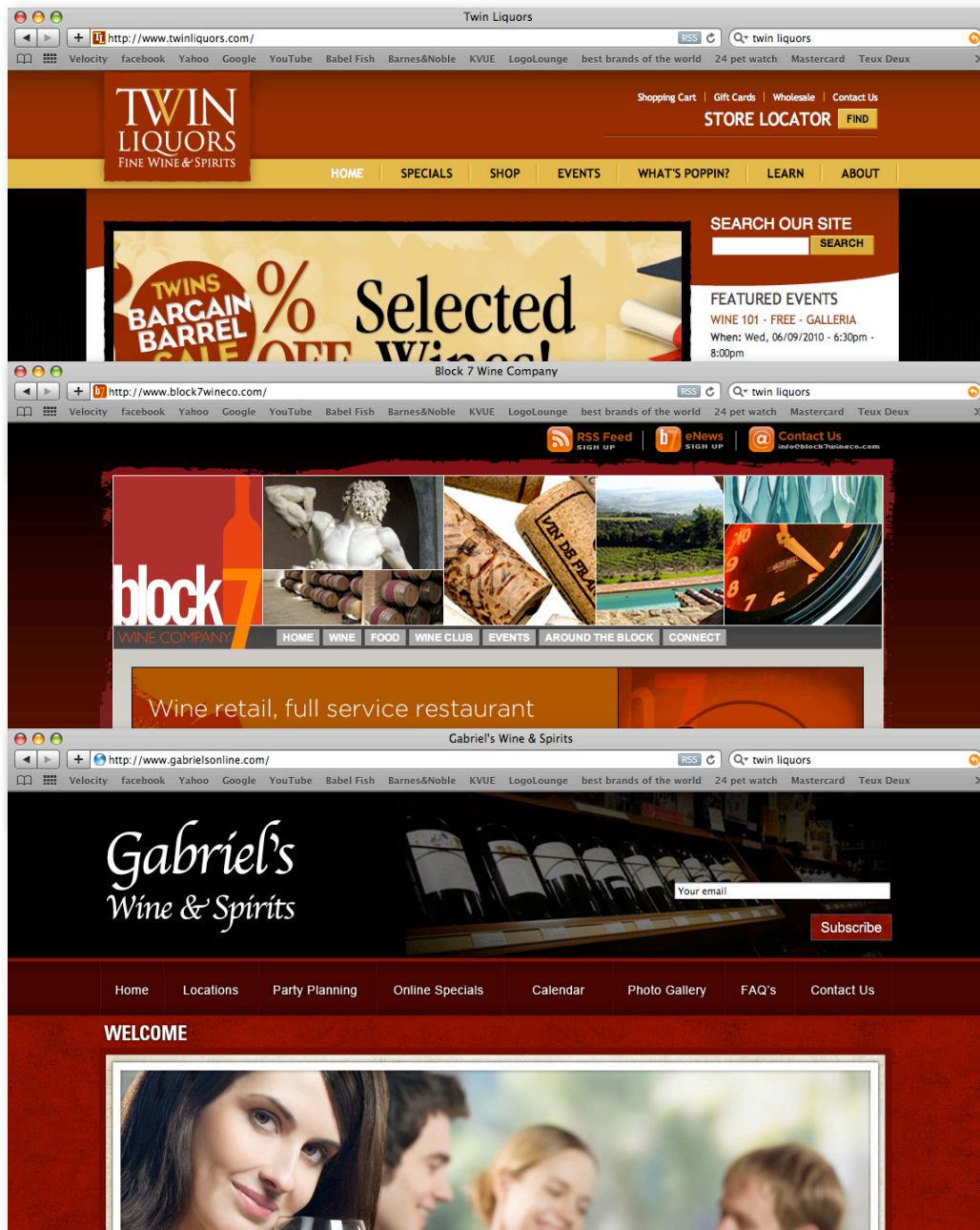
METHODS: SWOT AND VB

"Every detail matters, because detail is what people notice and live by. You can't eat, drink, or sit on vision and value statements."

(Olins, 2003, p. 87)

Methods: SWOT & VB

The SWOT method provided insight for devising strategy by highlighting positive and negative attributes of SWS. It also identified key brand attributes (viz., customer experience, customer focused, family owned, and value centered) that were incorporated into the new BI. Another method utilized in creating the BI was the Visual Brief (VB). The "visual brief takes what the client wants us to achieve and puts it into a form designers can work from" (Duffy, 2010). The VB is an essential step in converting non-visual content (i.e. words) into a visual context (i.e. images). In this method of "making intelligence visible," the CD selects images that visually represent a brand's key attributes (Wheeler, 2009, p. 11). These images focus the CD's visual vocabulary during the outcome phase (i.e. creative process) and keep visual brand applications unified.

SWOT

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
1. Family owned and local. In a time of big corporations, SPECS can capitalize on perception of being a smaller company.	1. Identity application is inconsistent.
2. The use of an animal icon in identity allows for creative anthropomorphism.	2. Messaging is inconsistent in tone.
3. SPECS name is concise & easily understood.	3. Mission and values are not evident or established across applications
4. Large infrastructure allows quick response to market opportunities.	4. Brand drivers (principle, personality, and associations) are unfocused and vague.
5. Southern customers are acclimated to large format stores.	5. Store environments don't create destinations, instead they feel like storerooms.
6. Southern hospitality is evident in Specs friendly employees.	6. Advertising lacks brand personality.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
1. Capitalize on larger customer base by creating friendly identity and personality.	1. Grocery stores compete for beer & wine sales.
2. Introduce own brand label of liquor or wine.	2. Competitor—Twin Liquors—has a better grasp on its brand and identity.
3. Consolidate and rollout own brand product lines of finer foods.	3. Twin liquors is growing in San Antonio, Austin and surrounding communities.
4. Transform store into destinations.	4. Twin Liquors acquired two local competitors in the past decade giving them over 60 locations in a 100-mile radius.
5. Reinforce message that Specs is community member.	5. Twin liquors actively supports over 500 community events annuals.
6. Imbue brand with southern hospitality and family owned traits.	6. Twin liquors has compelling story dating back to prohibition era.

SWOT (continued)

SWS Key brand attributes as identified by SWOT

   » Customer experience

   » Customer focused

   » Family owned

   » Value centered

VB Key Brand Attribute: Customer experience
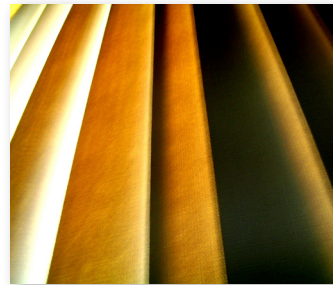
VB Key Brand Attribute: Customer focused
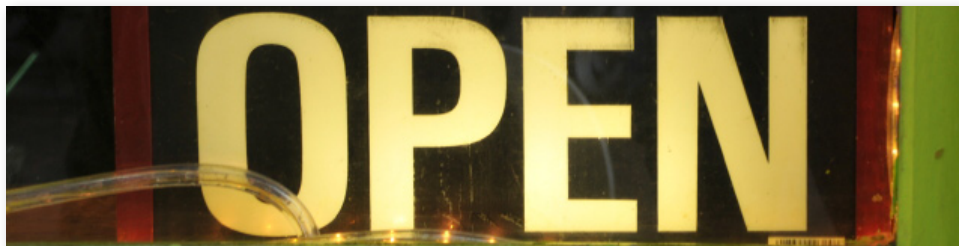
VB Key Brand Attribute: Family owned

VB Key Brand Attribute: Value centered

OUTCOMES: DESIGNING THE SWS BRAND IDENTITY

"A logo should have an appearance unlike that of other logos. Ideally, the distinctive logo will stand out in a crowded field by virtue of its unique appearance. A distinctive logo may, and probably will, have an appearance that is in some way similar to imagery that has preceded it, but will have an essence all its own, separating it from the pack."

(Gernsheimer, 2008, p. 54)

Methods: Designing the SWS Identity

SWOT and VB methods provided the basic information needed to create the following visual brand applications for SWS brand identity: stationary system, interactive media, ephemera, EGD, vehicle graphics, advertising print campaigns (APC), and uniforms. SWS elements (viz., logos, typography and color palette, visual and narrative content, and derivative elements) were consistently used in creating the aforementioned visual brand applications.

Creative Process Sketch: Primary Identity

Identity Element
Typography Palette

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
123456789&?!

Knockout JuniorLiteweight

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
123456789&?!

Knockout Welterweight

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
123456789&?!

Knockout FullMiddlewt

Identity Element
Color Palette

PMS 448	PMS 7502	PMS 1245	PMS 4625	PMS 432	PMS 429	PMS 179

Icon Anthropomorphization

Old Legacy element

Updated legacy element
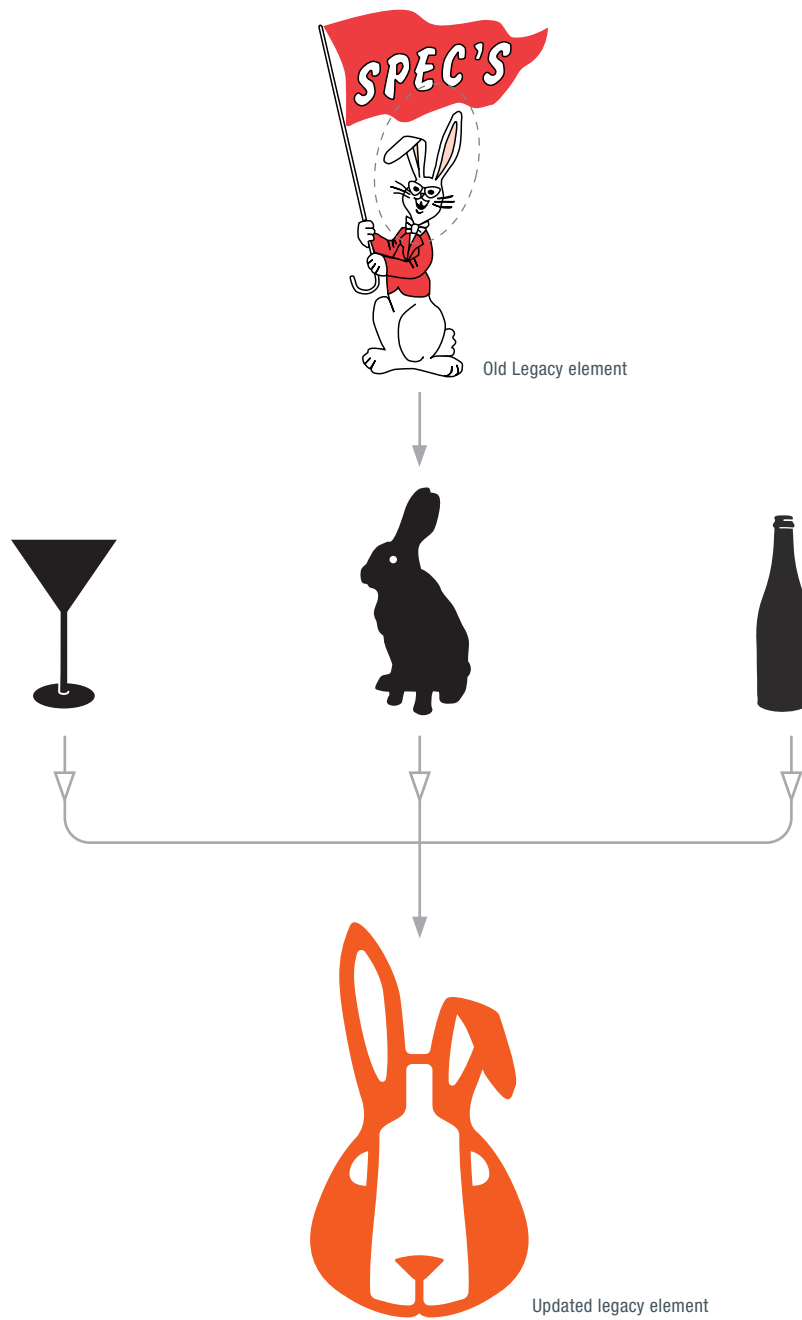
Primary Identity
Full Signature Comparison

Current Specs full signature

Updated Specs full signature

Secondary Identity: Emblem

Secondary Identity: Icon
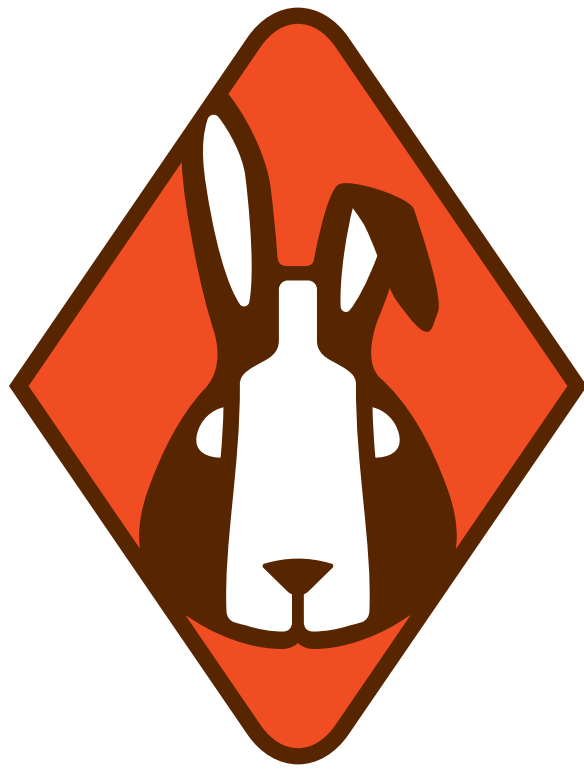
Secondary Identity: Logotype 1

Secondary Identity: Logotype 2

Identity Element
Derivative Patterns Palette
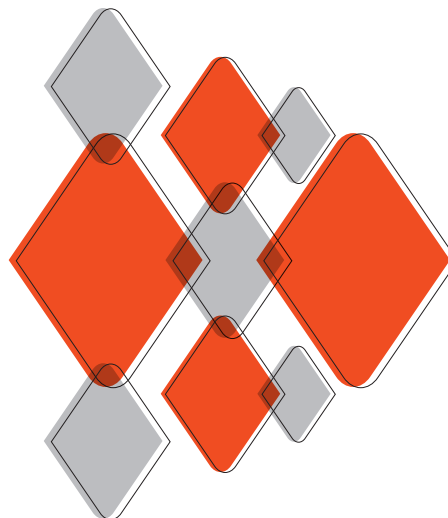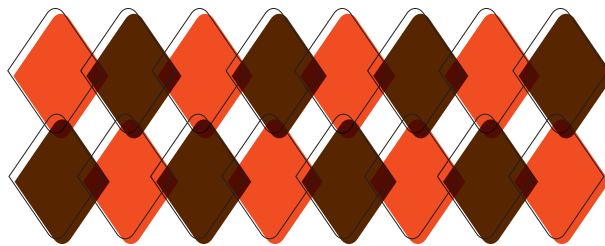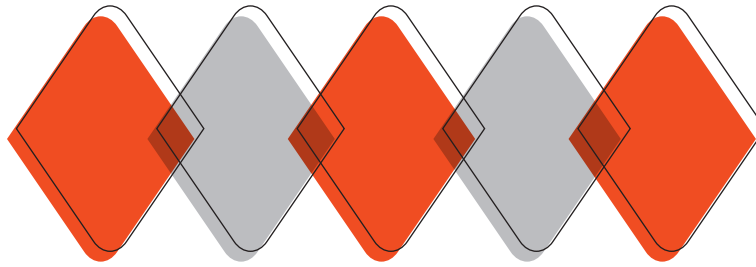
Stationary system: Letterhead, Business Cards, and Envelope

Letterhead, envelopes, and business cards constitute "a core application in the BI" (Wheeler, 2009, p. 146). The first step was to create numerous sketches—though not all are shown. Multiple designs were refined resulting in the final design which reflects SWS' brand identity.

Creative Process Sketch: Letterhead, Business Card and Envelope
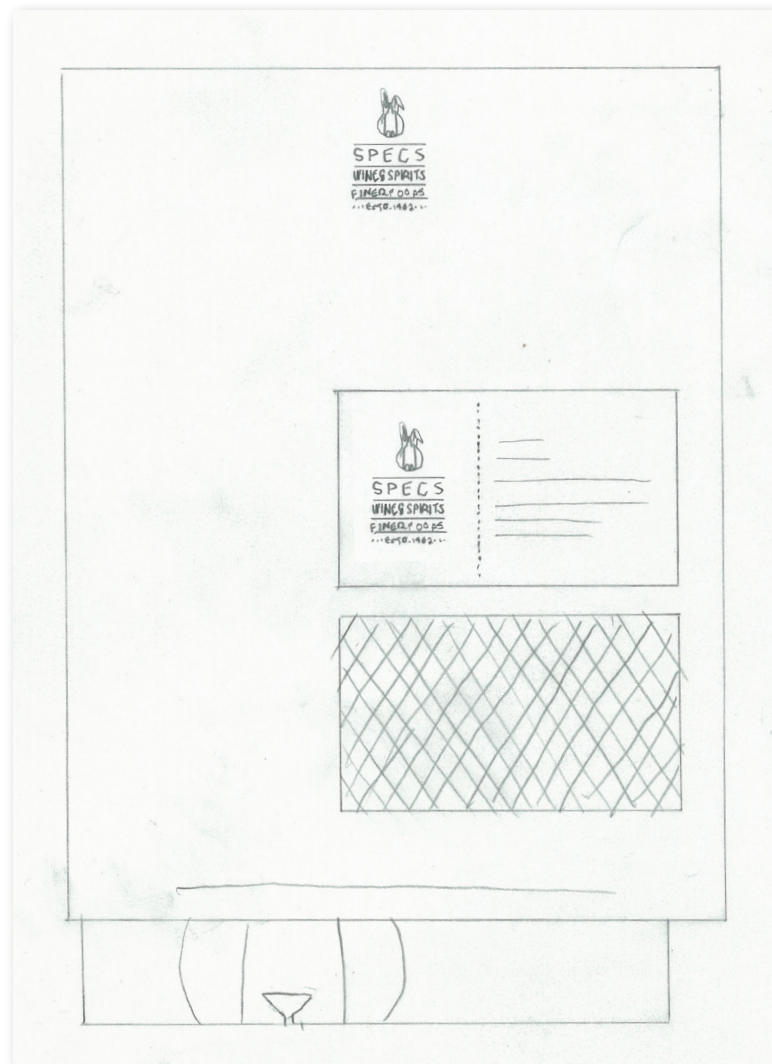
Letterhead

2410 SMITH ST. HOUSTON, TX 77006 | 713.526.8787 W | 800.526.8787 T | WWW.SPECSONLINE.COM

Business Card

Envelope

Interactive media: Web Site and Digital mobile media

Web sites are one of the most interactive visual brand applications. Technological advancements create entirely new experiences for consumers (Wheeler, 2009, p. 152). SWS web site design consisted of a home page and subsequent web pages. These secondary pages provided information about products and company history. Functionality was the overriding feature in designing the web site. It had to be simple and flexible, allowing for planned growth and unforeseen expansion. In recent years, digital mobile media arose as a popular offshoot of web sites. With digital mobile media "information moves freely and can reach specific recipients," made possible by "devices [that] are portable (Groebel, Noam, & Feldmann, 2006, p. xi). Similar to web sites, functionality was an important consideration for designing SWS digital mobile media. The digital mobile media design was not simply a miniature version of the web site, it was designed to communicate brand messages directed at consumers more immediate needs that can only be addressed with the digital mobile media application.

Creative Process Sketch: Web Site
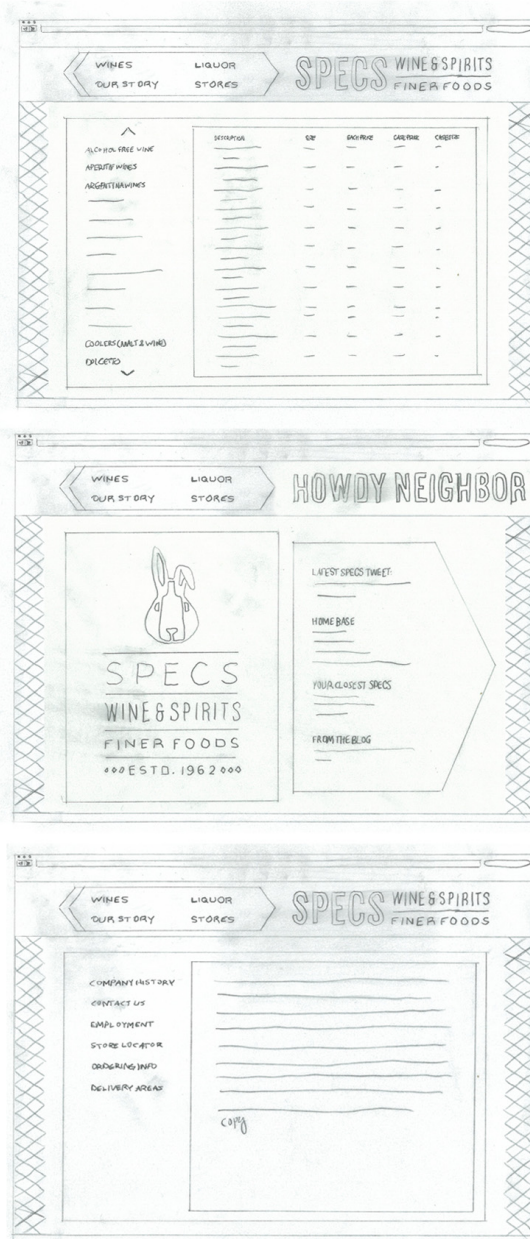
Web Site: Home page
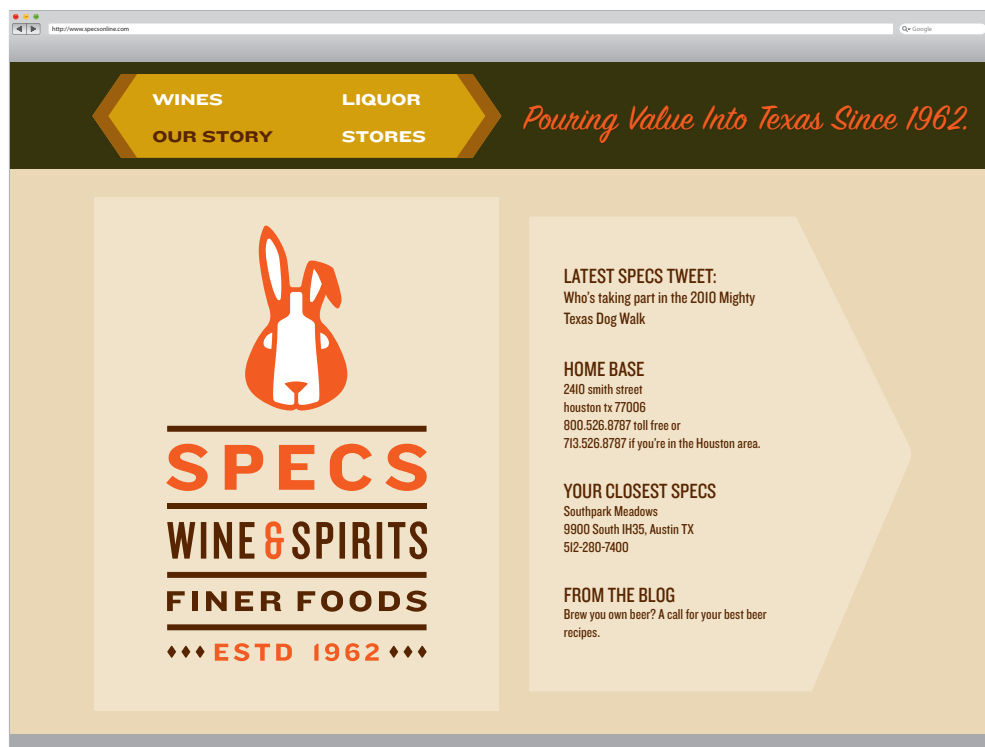
Web Site: Company History Page
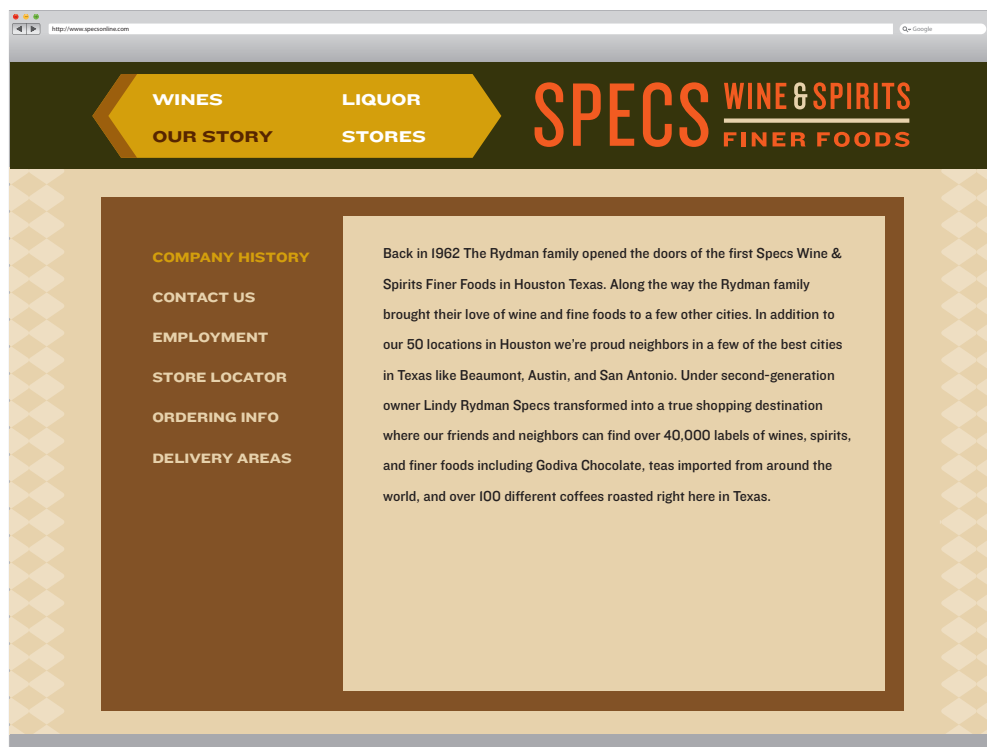
Web Site: Wine Listings Page

Creative Process Sketch: Digital mobile media

Digital mobile media: Home Screen Icon

Digital mobile media: Splash Page

Digital mobile media: Store Locator
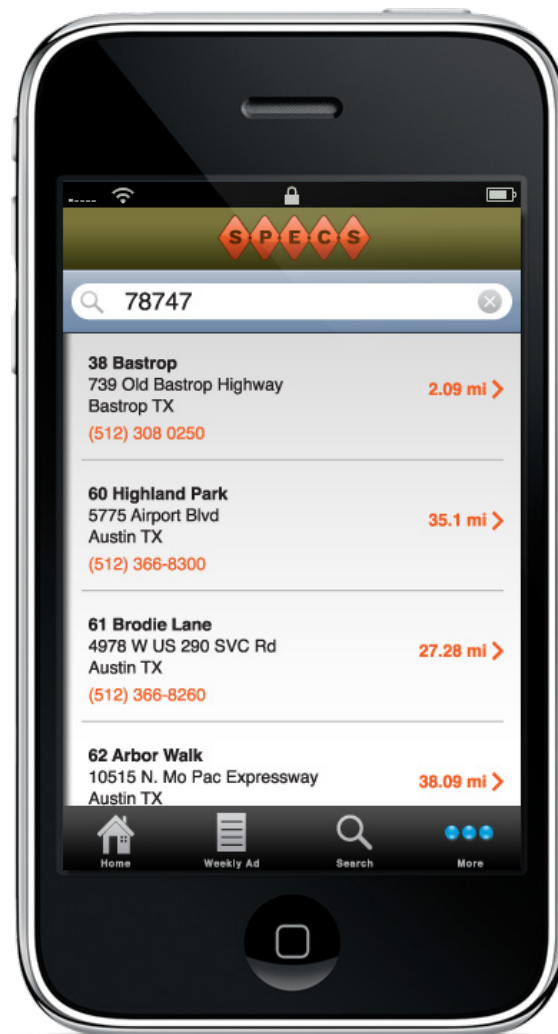
Digital mobile media: Wine Listings

Ephemera: Shopping Bag and Gift Box

A reusable shopping bag functions as free advertising and necessitates a design conforming to the BI. Keeping the shopping bag design minimal ensured cost effectiveness as production methods inhibit intricate designs. Shopping bags are produced for consumers to carry purchases and are either given away free of charge or sold at a nominal cost. As shopping bags leave store locations they act as brand ambassadors and must be designed with this in mind (Neumeier, 2004, p. 14). Similar to shopping bags, gift boxes also become brand ambassadors when consumers take them into their homes (Wheeler, 2009, p. 160).

Creative Process Sketch: Shopping Bag

Shopping Bag: Side 1

Shopping Bag: Side 2

Creative Process Sketch: Gift Box
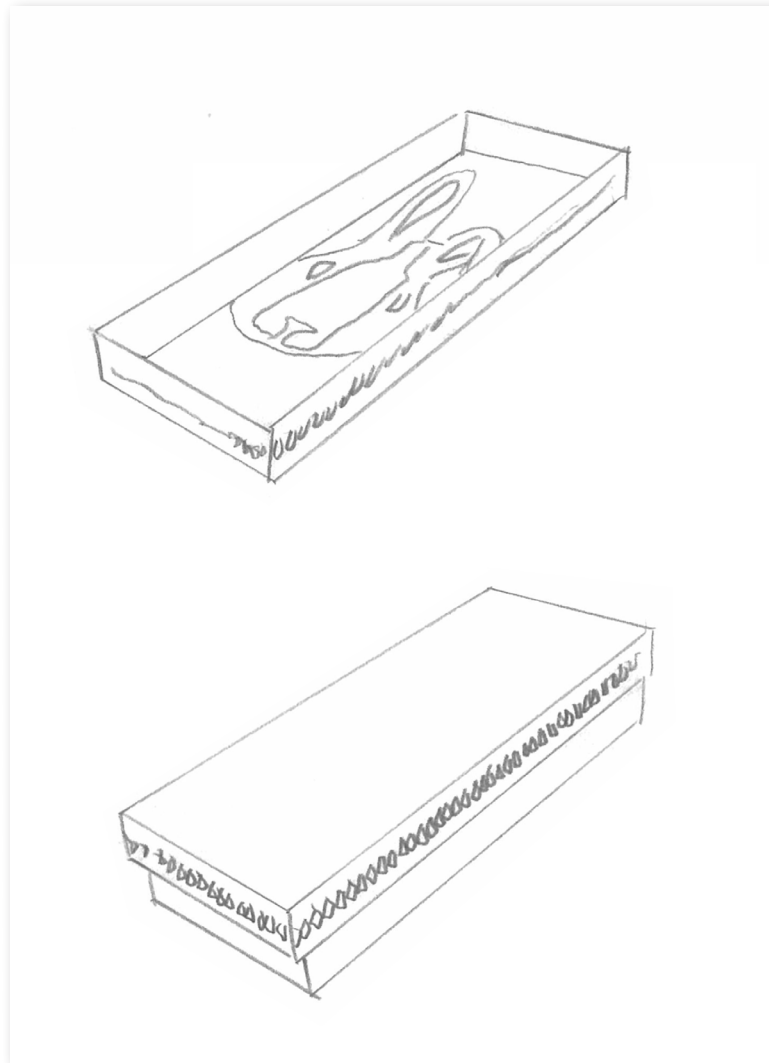
Gift Box: Dimensional Mock-up Interior and Exterior

EGD: Exterior, Directional, and Informational

EGD applies visual brand applications to both interior and exterior business environments. Exterior EGD brand applications serve as identifiers for consumers, which are especially useful in tenant development sites where businesses share a structure. Legibility was a key consideration in the creative process for EGD brand applications. Complex designs were avoided on exterior brand applications to ensure maximum legibility over distance. The EGD brand applications explored for SWS brand identity were exterior (viz., main site, building, anchor, tenant, and light pole signage), directional (viz., departmental and aisle identifies), and informational (viz., product, wine points, and key price signs). Generally, exterior anchor signage is used when a business owns the developments site. It allows extended branding compared to tenant signage that must conform to landlord specifications, which vary at each development site. Light pole signage generates brand awareness and identifies parking lanes. Directional signage is not only aesthetic; it also provides important functionality to consumers by signifying locations of departments, products, or services. Typically, signs contain more detailed information as they approach eye level. For example, department identifiers that hang from the ceiling specify department locations only. Whereas aisle identifiers that mount above shelving units display more general information about products or product categories located on an aisle. After reaching an aisle, consumers use informational signage such as a wine points sign to help with more informed decisions about products.

Creative Process Sketch: Main-site
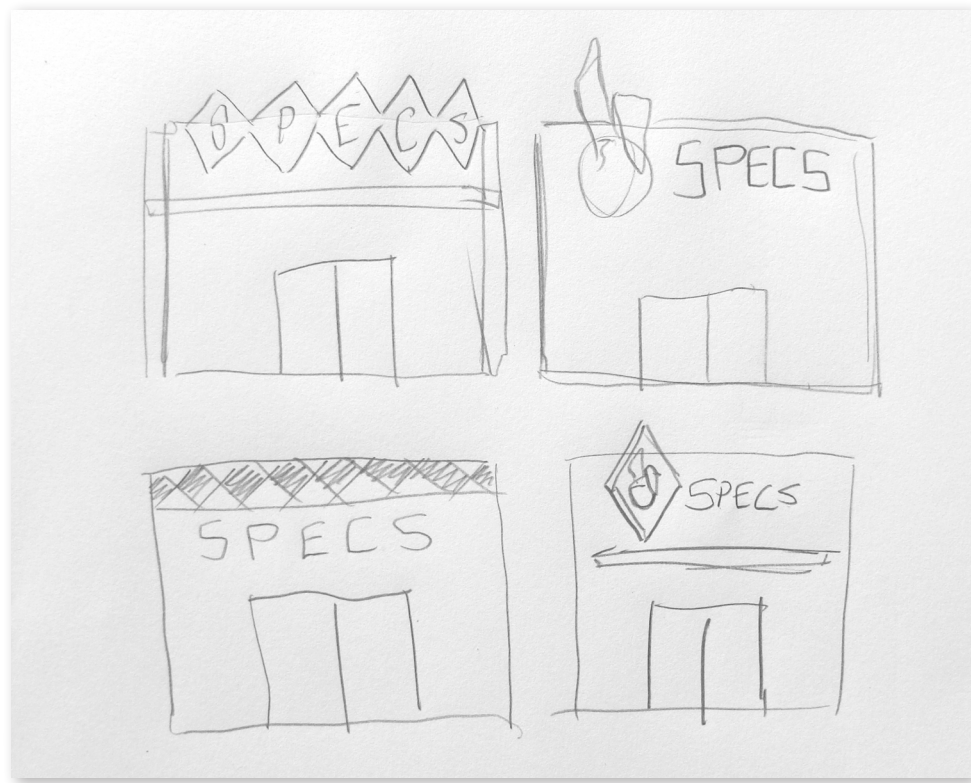
Building

Anchor

Tenant

Light Pole

Creative Process Sketch: Aisle Identifier
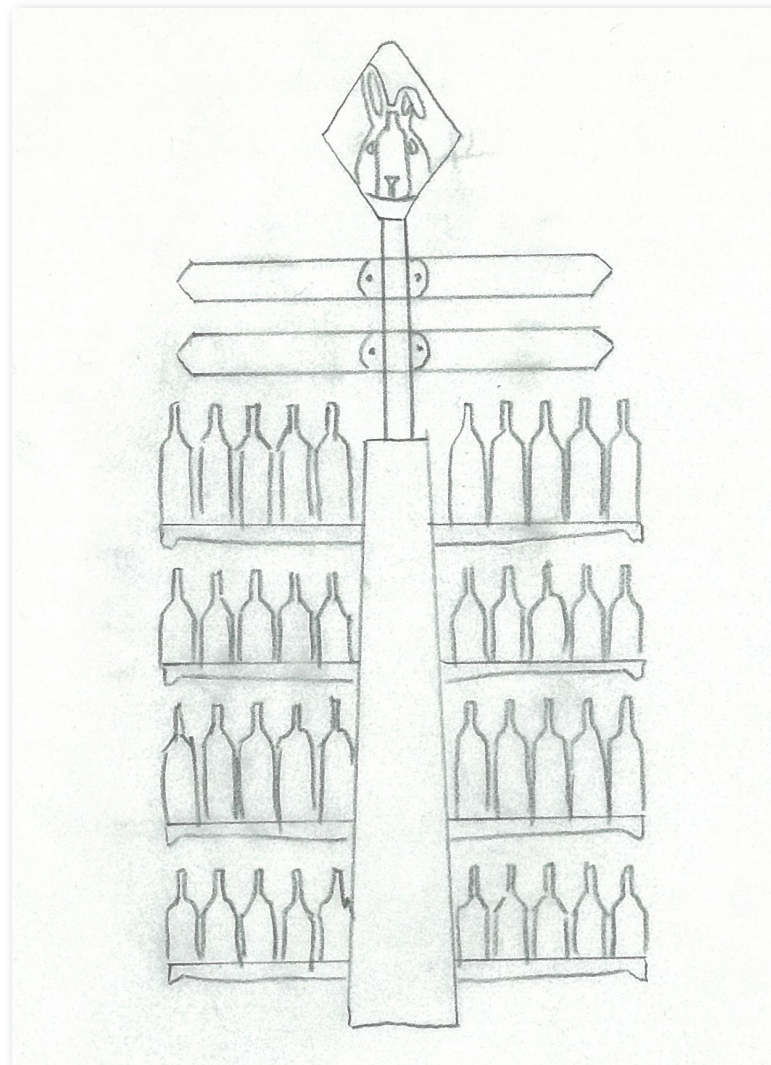
Aisle Identifier
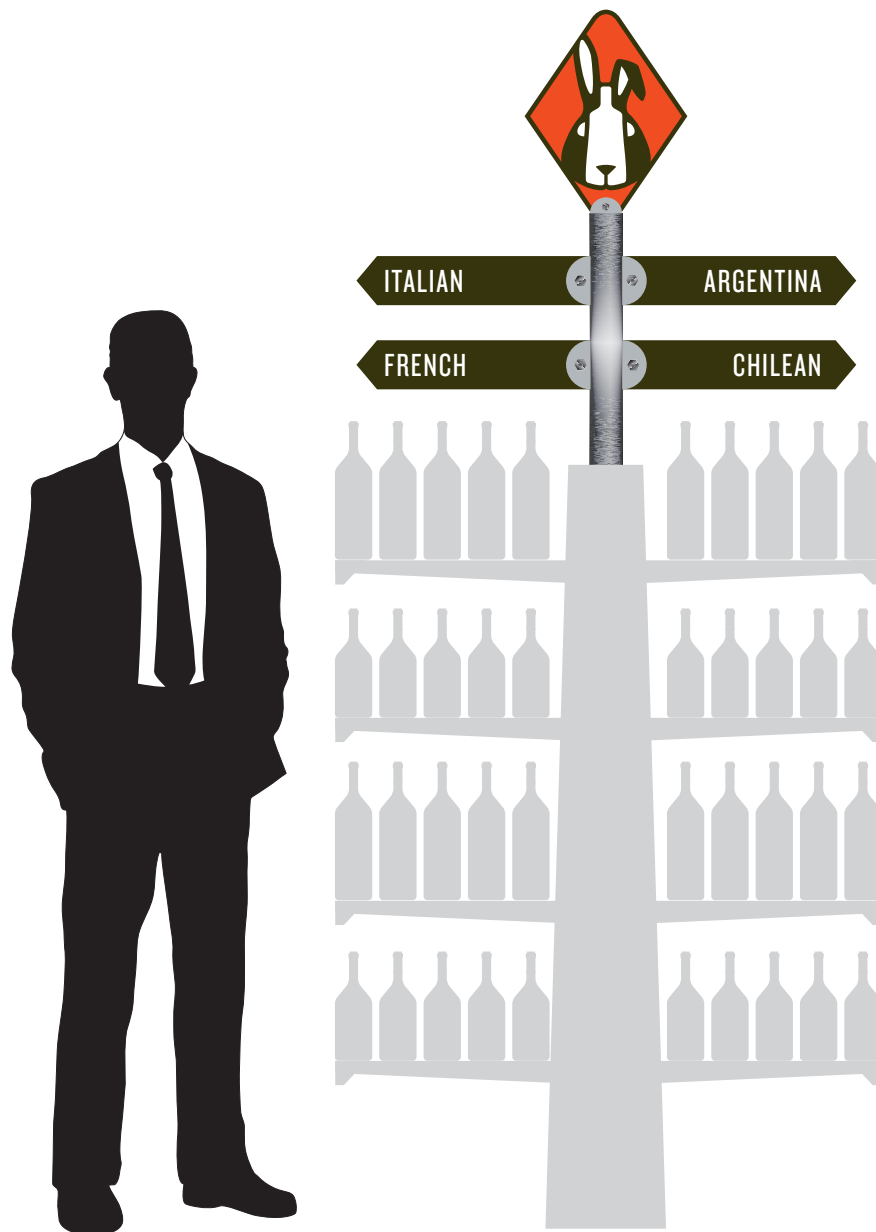
ITALIAN   ARGENTINA

FRENCH   CHILEAN

Department Identifier

FINER FOODS

A presentation of concept, Brand Identity for **Specs**

# Creative Process Sketch: Product Sign

Product Sign

Schloss Johannisberger Rotlack Riesling, Kabinett Rheingau .75l

GRAPE VARIETIES: Riesling

COLOR: Bright Yellow

TASTING NOTES: It's sprightly fresh, still full-bodies bouquet harmonises fine fruit and lively acidity.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS: Ideal for poultry, veal and Asian cuisine.

RECOMMENDED SERVING TEMPARATURE: 50°F

S • P • E • C • S
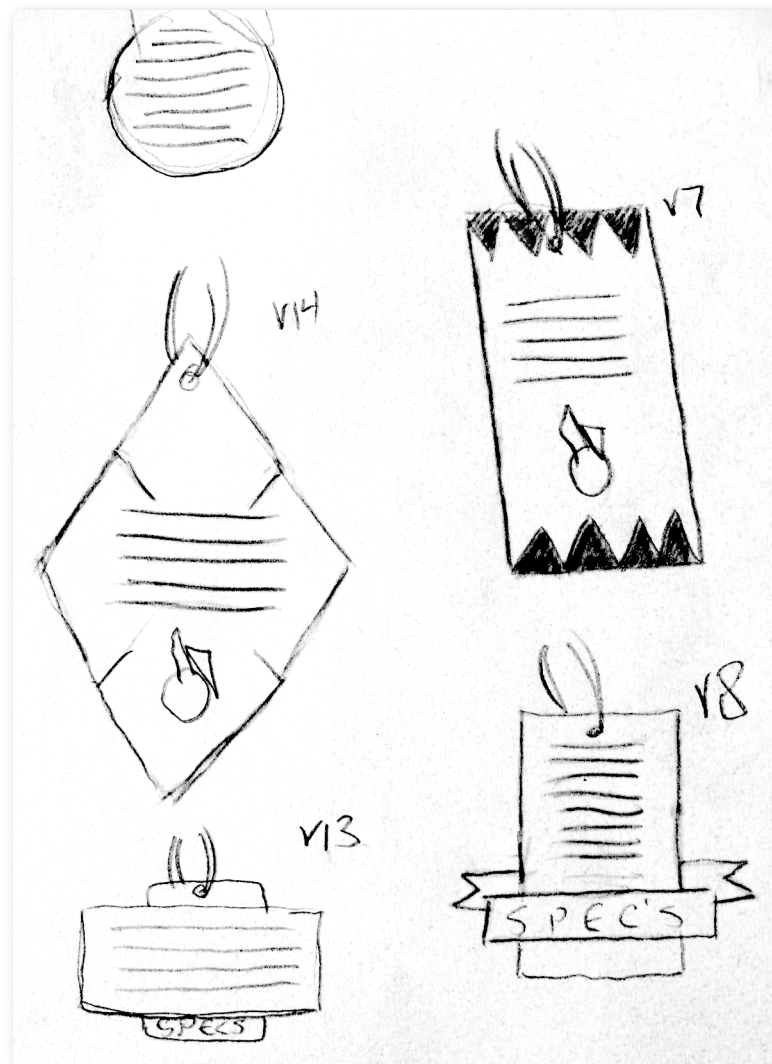
Wine Points Sign

Key Special Price Sign

Vehicle Graphics

The function of vehicle graphics is to "make the brand identity immediately rec-ognizable" to consumers on a daily basis (Wheeler, 2009, p. 166). The absence of vehicle graphics is a lost opportunity to reinforce brand messages because large portions of consumer goods are transported using semi-trucks. Designs for SWS vehicle graphics reinforce brand messages with brand elements and simple content.

Creative Process Sketch: Vehicle Graphics
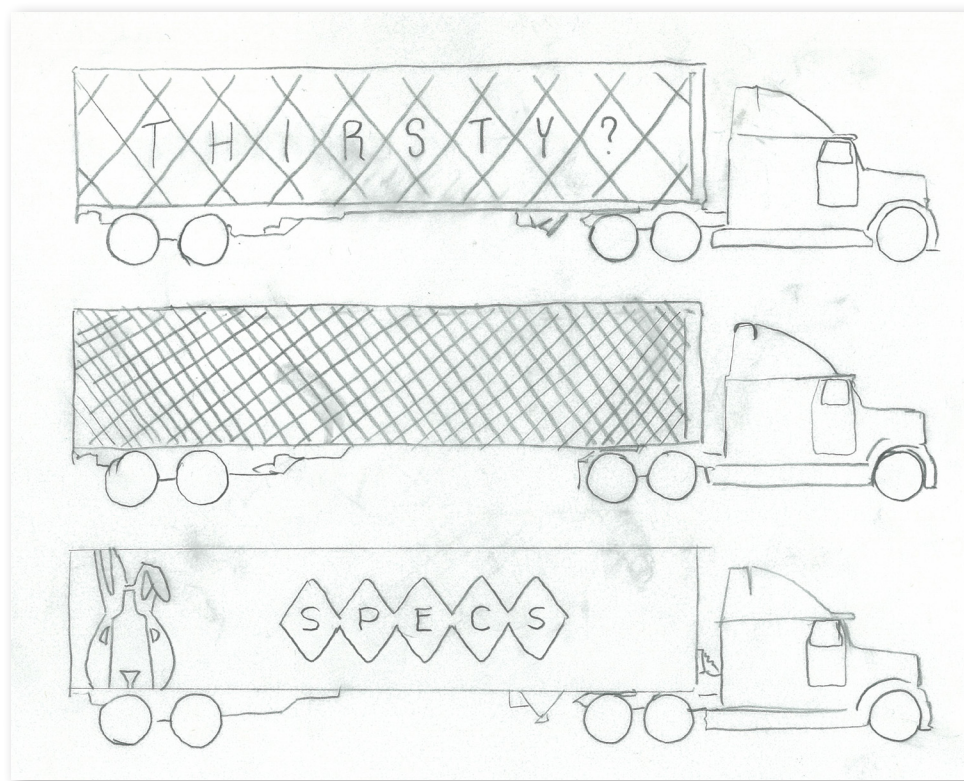
Vehicle Graphics: Design 1 & 2, Sides A & B

APC: Billboards and Print Advertisements

Advertising is the one area that allows for the introduction and use of brand attributes in brand applications. APC consist of three or more advertisements that follow the same structure, contain similar content, and/or build upon one another's message in succession. These messages may be distributed across different visual brand applications. Billboards are brand applications utilized in the barrage of "3,000 marketing messages" consumers receive daily (Neumeier, 2007, p. 7). But, "with the decline of print," billboards are becoming less important (Wheeler, 2009, p. 162). This once monolithic brand application is now part of, but not integral to, a BI. Print advertisements continue to be an impactful media. Additionally, print advertising allows CDs to incorporate more information (i.e. narrative) and personality (i.e. visual content) into brand messages as identified by SWOT.

Creative Process Sketch: Billboard
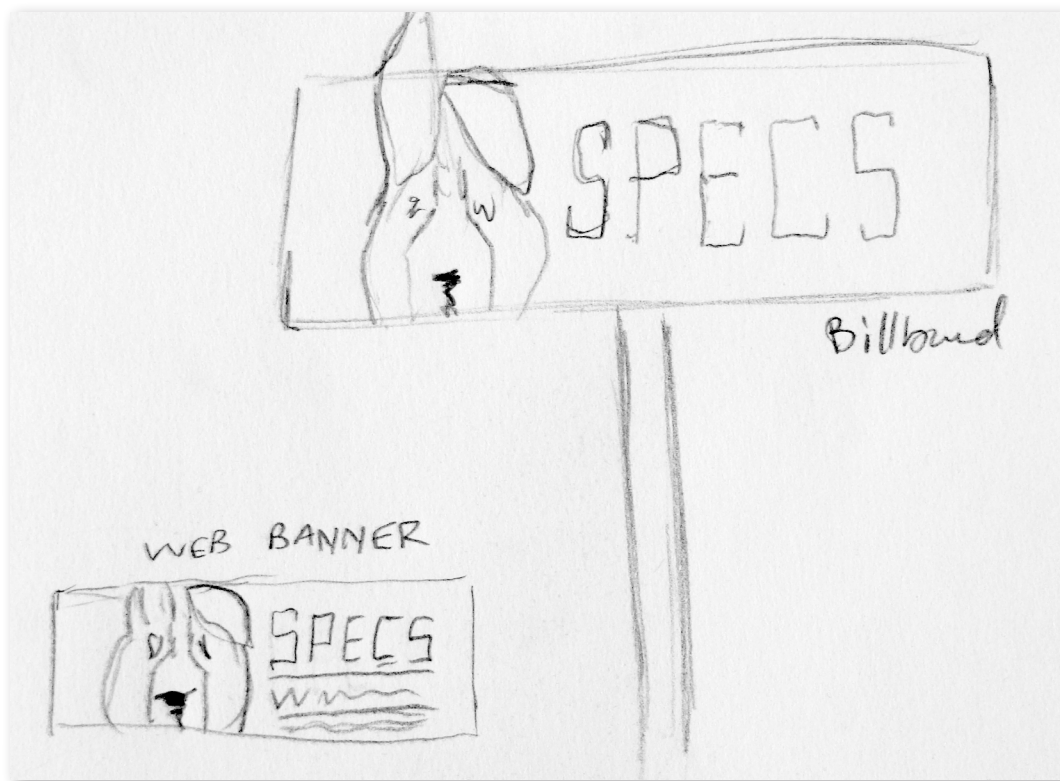
Billboard: Design 1

Billboard: Design 2

Billboard: Design 3

Creative Process Sketch: Print Advertisement
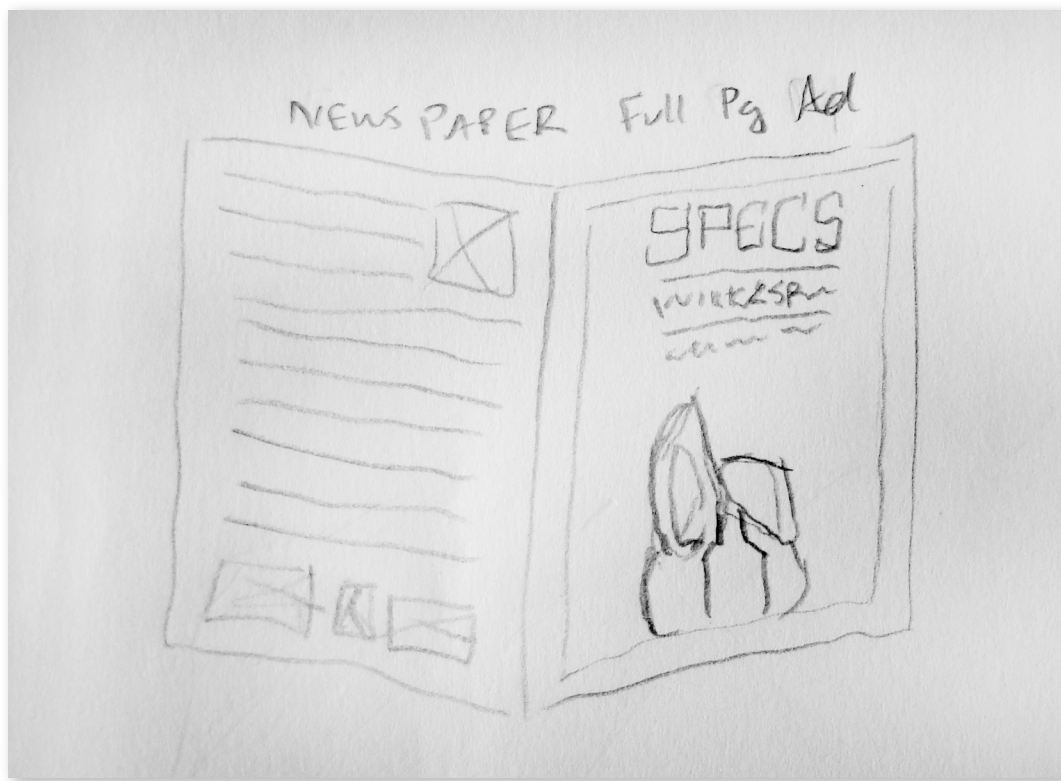
Print Advertisement: Design 1

"If you drink don't drive.
Don't event putt."

Dean Martin

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Print Advertisement: Design 2

Print Advertisement: Design 3

Uniforms

Uniforms provide consumers an easy way to identify employees during their shopping experiences. They establish employees as brand ambassadors while interacting with consumers. The uniforms created for this BI color-coordinate with department identifier signage to indicate which department employees work in. Most importantly, by using brand elements the uniforms are part of the overall SWS comprehensive BI.

Creative Process Sketch: Uniforms
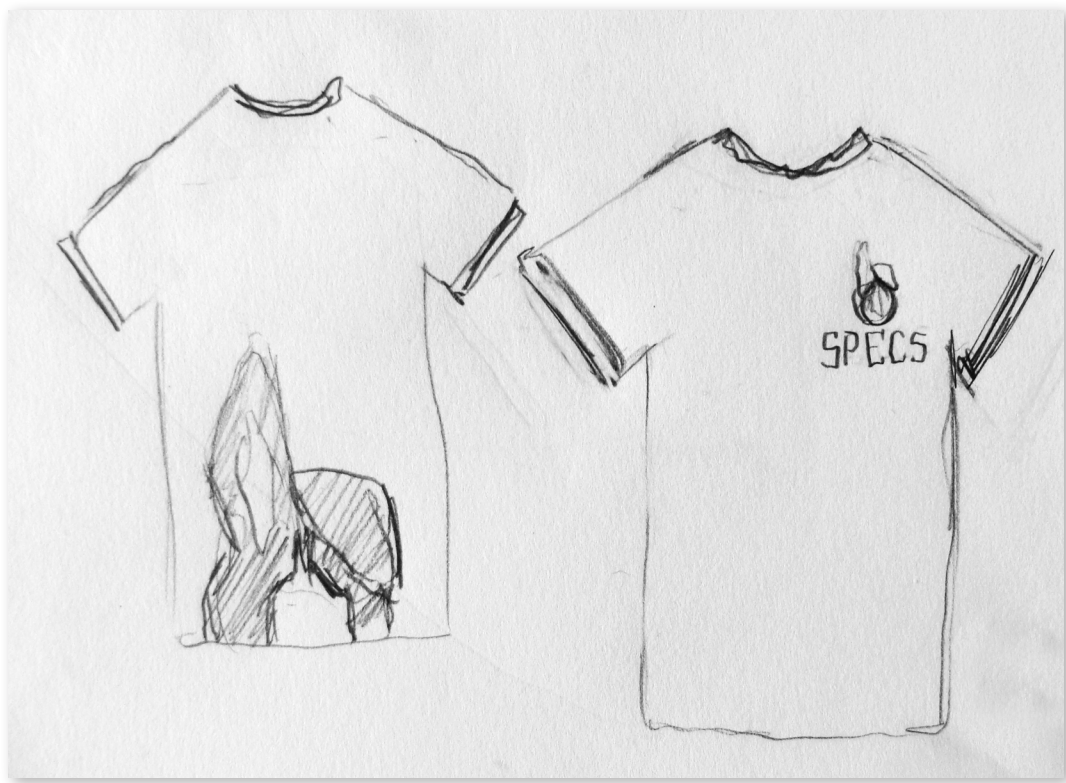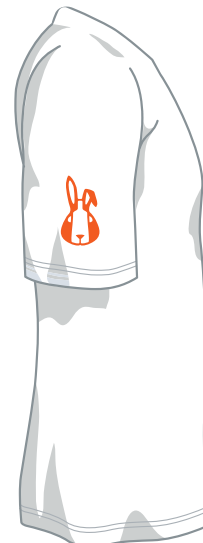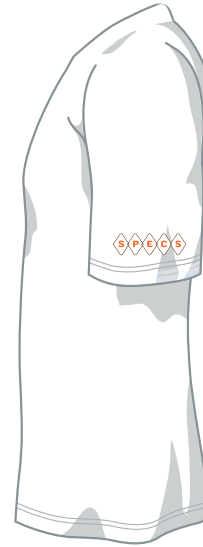
Uniforms: Manager Collared Shirt Design

Uniforms: Employee T-shirt Design

SPECS
WINE & SPIRITS
FINER FOODS
••• ESTD. 1962 •••

S P E C S

Pouring Value Into
Texas Since 1962
◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
WWW.SPECSONLINE.COM

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VITA

Hoyt Haffelder was born in Austin Texas, the son of Jan E. and Ronnie L. Haffelder. After completing his work at Jack C. Hays High School, Buda, Texas, in 2001, he entered Texas State University-San Marcos. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Communication Design in May 2006. Afterward, he worked as an environmental graphic designer for H.E.B. Grocery Company. In August 2007, he entered the Graduate College of Texas State University-San Marcos in pursuit of a Master of Fine Arts in Communication Design.

His communication design has been featured in publications from this discipline including *Communication Arts, For Print Only: A Division of Underconsideration, STEP Inside Design, and Logo Lounge*. Additionally, his communication design has received awards and been honors in national and international design competitions including *Dallas Society of Visual Communication, Art Directors Club of Houston,* Good 50X70, *Logo Lounge,* and *Logo Lounge Master Series.*

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