



BRAND STRATEGY PRESENTATION

The *Cunning* Folk

SOMETHING IS ALWAYS HAPPENING HERE

THE BRIEF

The problem we're *solving*.

I . THE PROBLEM

You're alone in a city full of people. Alone at the screen. Alone at the desk. Alone in the crowd.

II . THE OPPORTUNITY

A room where you're welcomed before you've said anything.

III . THE GOAL

A place that was waiting for you. Something already alive when you walk in.

Why this place *exists*.

Coffee shops have become sterile. Bars have become rowdy and hollow. The Cunning Folk refuses both, not as a gimmick, but as an operating philosophy.

PURPOSE

Prioritizes presence
over productivity.

A living gathering space in
Bushwick where something is always
happening — and belonging is real,
not manufactured.

VISION

A neighborhood
institution.

The kind of place people talk
about the way they talk about a
band they discovered before anyone
else knew them.

MISSION

Coffee, drinks,
music, community.

Served without attitude, in a
room that knows something. Simple
at the surface. Strange
underneath.

SECTION 2

THE AUDIENCE

Who they *are*.

25 to 40-year-old Bushwick creatives — artists, musicians, freelancers, remote workers — and anyone who is lonely in ways they wouldn't name as loneliness. They want a space that inspires, a room that serves both daytime focus and nighttime social, and a place that makes them feel like they belong — without having to ask for it.

SECTION 2

THE AUDIENCE / PERSONAS



THE DAYTIME REGULAR - PERSONA I / III

Maya, 29.

POET · BUSHWICK LOCAL

Arrives at 10am with a notebook and stays longer than planned. Draws inspiration from the books on the shelves, the rotating art on the walls, the conversations happening around her, the people she observes. The space itself fuels her work. Wants atmosphere, good tea, and a room that feels like someone made intentional decisions about it.

VALUES

Inspiration. Discovery. Tactile creativity.

FRUSTRATES
HER

Sterile spaces. Rooms that feel empty or generic.

WHY US

The books aren't decoration—they're chosen. The art changes. The people are interesting. Every visit gives me something new to think about.

RESEARCH NOTE

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The most popular businesses here have sterile, uninviting interiors and maybe one houseplant for contrast.

Medium essay, Bushwick café culture

SECTION 2

THE AUDIENCE / PERSONAS



THE NIGHTTIME LOCAL - PERSONA II / III

Tomás, 25.

MUSICIAN · BARTENDER · QUEER

Shows up after his shift for a beer and whatever's on that night. Deep roots in Brooklyn's queer underground music scene. Loyal to places that remember his name, that have actual programming, that don't feel like they're performing community. Leaves if the energy dies. Comes back every week if something's always happening.

VALUES

Authenticity. Live music. A place that feels earned.

FRUSTRATES
HIM

Manufactured vibes. Performed queerness. Venues that die after 9pm.

WHY US

Programming is consistent. The vibe is genuine — not performed.

RESEARCH NOTE



Caffeine Underground, Bushwick's most community-loved venue, earns its fierce loyalty not through product quality but through recognition. Reviewers name the owner, Ian Ford, before describing the coffee.

Field study, Bushwick venue reviews

SECTION 2

THE AUDIENCE / PERSONAS



THE DISCONNECTED — PERSONA III / III

Jordan, 36.

ACCOUNTANT · LIVES ALONE

Works as an accountant in a corporate office. Lives alone. Has no real community outside work — the people around him don't get him, and he doesn't get them. By night, he's deep in cult cinema and indie music, but he has no one to talk about it with. Craves genuine connection with people who actually understand.

VALUES

Real conversation. Genuine connection. A place where people who get it actually gather.

FRUSTRATES HIM

Loneliness. Corporate spaces. The disconnect between who he is and who his colleagues think he is.

WHY US

A space where people who get it actually gather. Real conversation. Unique art. No pretense.

RESEARCH NOTE

¶ In 2023, the US Surgeon General formally declared loneliness a public health epidemic, citing the decline of informal third spaces — venues outside home and work where people gather casually — as a primary driver.

US Surgeon General Advisory, 2023

What We Learned

i. Warmth beats polish. Every time.

ii. Programming and ritual create loyalty that product alone cannot.

iii. People crave presence, not isolation.

Three venues with strong cultural programing



Pink Frog Cafe

WHAT WORKS

Strong cultural programming. Artist-forward mission. Real community gathering space.

WHAT'S MISSING

Operational consistency in supporting artists. (Concert attendees pay a ten to twenty dollar minimum, yet performers receive no compensation.)

RESEARCH NOTE

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A working musician performed a full set and was not offered so much as a single free beverage.

Direct observation, local musician



Dayglow / Niteglow

WHAT WORKS

Design-forward, trendy aesthetic. Strong social media presence.

WHAT'S MISSING

Optimized for social documentation, not inhabitation. Designed to photograph beautifully, but cold to be in.

RESEARCH NOTE

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A nationwide phenomenon: sterile, predictable, highly Instagrammable aesthetics replacing local character.

South Florida Reporter [paraphrased]



Caffeine Underground

WHAT WORKS

Five-star Tripadvisor. Community-voted venue. Reviewers name owner Ian Ford before the product — community matters more than refinement.

WHAT'S MISSING

Warmth without craft isn't enough. Genuine character without design intention.

RESEARCH NOTE

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The decor felt like a flea market, with random and eclectic furniture thrown together.

Joe Coffee

Three brands with strong visual identity.



Partners Coffee

WHAT WORKS

Sharp visual rebrand from Toby's Estate.
Design-forward and accessible branding.

WHAT'S MISSING

Community and belonging. It's designed for productivity, not connection.

RESEARCH NOTE

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It's a great set-up for work.

Postcard



Brooklyn Roasting Co.

WHAT WORKS

Communal, spacious, working-class-cool aesthetic. Strong branding with visible on-site roasting.

WHAT'S MISSING

Community and connection. No programming or events that build loyalty beyond the product.

RESEARCH NOTE

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A refreshing counter to the typical aesthetic of small-batch coffee roasters.

Eye on Design / AIGA



Devoción

WHAT WORKS

Beautiful room, excellent product, compelling sourcing story.

WHAT'S MISSING

Cold transactional energy.

RESEARCH NOTE

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Laptop workers and aspirational influencers soaking in the airy plant-scaped aesthetic.

Yelp reviewer

What the rooms *taught us*.

- i.* To build a lasting, iconic brand, *intentional design* is non-negotiable.

- ii.* Visual branding catches attention, but consistent *cultural events* make a place truly memorable.

- iii.* A room designed with purpose — to inspire *imagination and belonging* — rejecting both the sterile and the haphazard.

SECTION 3

THE COMPETITOR AUDIT / THE OPPORTUNITY

The Opportunity

Three brands audited. Each excels at some things. None combine all three:

i. Cultural programming

ii. Strong visual branding

iii. Intentionally designed, inhabited space

Here's where we build.

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A place that welcomes you completely, but
doesn't ask permission to be itself. It
operates by its own logic. That's not a
quirk — that's the point.

The Cunning Folk is where you come to belong to something that feels
alive and unknowable.

What holds it *together*.

<i>i.</i>	<i>ii.</i>	<i>iii.</i>	<i>iv.</i>	<i>v.</i>
The Gathering	The Duality	The Knowing	Earned Authority	The Ritual
A room that is doing something – every night, every shift. Programmed, never empty.	Tea and Coffee by day, drinks by night. One room, two lives. The same patrons in different light.	A place that recognizes you. The staff remember your name. The room remembers your last visit.	Everything here was chosen by someone who knows. Confidence without attitude.	Recurring nights, repeating songs, the same opening hour. Patterns make a place feel rooted. Make it home.

Each one is a *position*.

Each one is the room making an argument.

i.

We support
artists.

We pay them, feed them,
platform them. The room exists
because of them.

ii.

The room is
the argument.

Books, objects, music, art
that changes. Every surface
is intentional.

iii.

Leave your
ego at the
door.

You're joining something with
its own logic, its own values,
its own tribe.

i. *Recognized.*

ii. Like you've stumbled into something
already alive , already moving — and now
you're part of it.

iii. *Absolutely seen.*

How *it sounds*.

*A nursery rhyme that knows something you don't. Simple words.
Strange underneath.*

FIVE TRAITS

- i. Direct.**
- ii. Innocent.**
- iii. Unapologetic.**
- iv. Tactile.**
- v. Knowing.**

THE ROOM IS AWARE

Everyone who walks through that door is welcome. The door knows this already.

The walls have been here longer than you. They have opinions.

OBJECTS WITH WEIGHT

New nails in the wall. *A artist showcase. Saturday. Come see.*

Old song, wearing a new face. *Live folk. Friday night. Bring someone.*

A NURSERY RHYME

A cup of tea, strangers three. The record plays for you and me.

An empty beer, a happy tear, a secret that you overhear.

A new old friend, a fountain pen, coffee after four PM.

A book of rhymes, a clock that chimes, stay awake till closing time.

Where the names *come from*.

i.

cunning folk

/ 'kʌn·ɪŋ fəʊk /

NOUN · BRITISH FOLK TRADITION

The village healers and keepers of older knowledge — the ones who remembered how things worked before the modern world rationalized everything away.

ii.

hearthside

/ hɑːrθ·saɪd /

NOUN · OLD ENGLISH

The space beside the fire — the original gathering place, before productivity pulled everyone apart. Where people came simply to be warm together.

iii.

midden

/ 'kʌn·ɪŋ fəʊk /

NOUN · MIDDLE ENGLISH

A prehistoric or historic refuse heap. A communal ground where things accumulated and people left their mark. Unglamorous, essential, alive.

The name we're recommending.

i.

The Cunning Folk

The name carries the claim without explanation. Keepers of older knowledge – the words are unfamiliar and evocative in equal measure. The strangeness selects for the right audience. The people it unsettles were never coming in anyway.

Recommended

ii.

Hearthside

Warm. Folk-coded. Easier to say and easier to sell. But it has the folk without the strange – and strange is the whole argument. Too safe for this brand.

Not recommended

iii.

The Midden

Genuinely strange, and the etymology is strong. But the component words don't carry their own weight. The Cunning Folk is unfamiliar and evocative. The Midden is just unfamiliar.

Not recommended

The work ahead.

<i>i.</i>	Visual Identity	Visual Identity Logo, sigil, color system, typographic language. The room's visual argument made portable.
<i>ii.</i>	Asset Library	Asset Library Photography and illustration bound to a single rule. Seventies folk-horror for the image. Linoleum carving for the line.
<i>iii.</i>	Space Design	Space Design The brand moves off the page and into the room. Objects with history. Art that changes. A calendar on the wall. The room itself becomes the argument.
<i>iv.</i>	Programming	Programming The calendar fills. Events happen. A ritual that doesn't happen is just a broken promise. This is where the brand comes alive.
<i>v.</i>	Brand Guidelines	Brand Guidelines Everything documented so anyone – staff, partner, freelancer – can hold the line. Consistency is how you keep the promise.

BUSHWICK · MMXXVI

The *Cunning* Folk

*Something is always happening here. You
can feel it before you understand it.*

FIN.

(WORKING TITLE)