

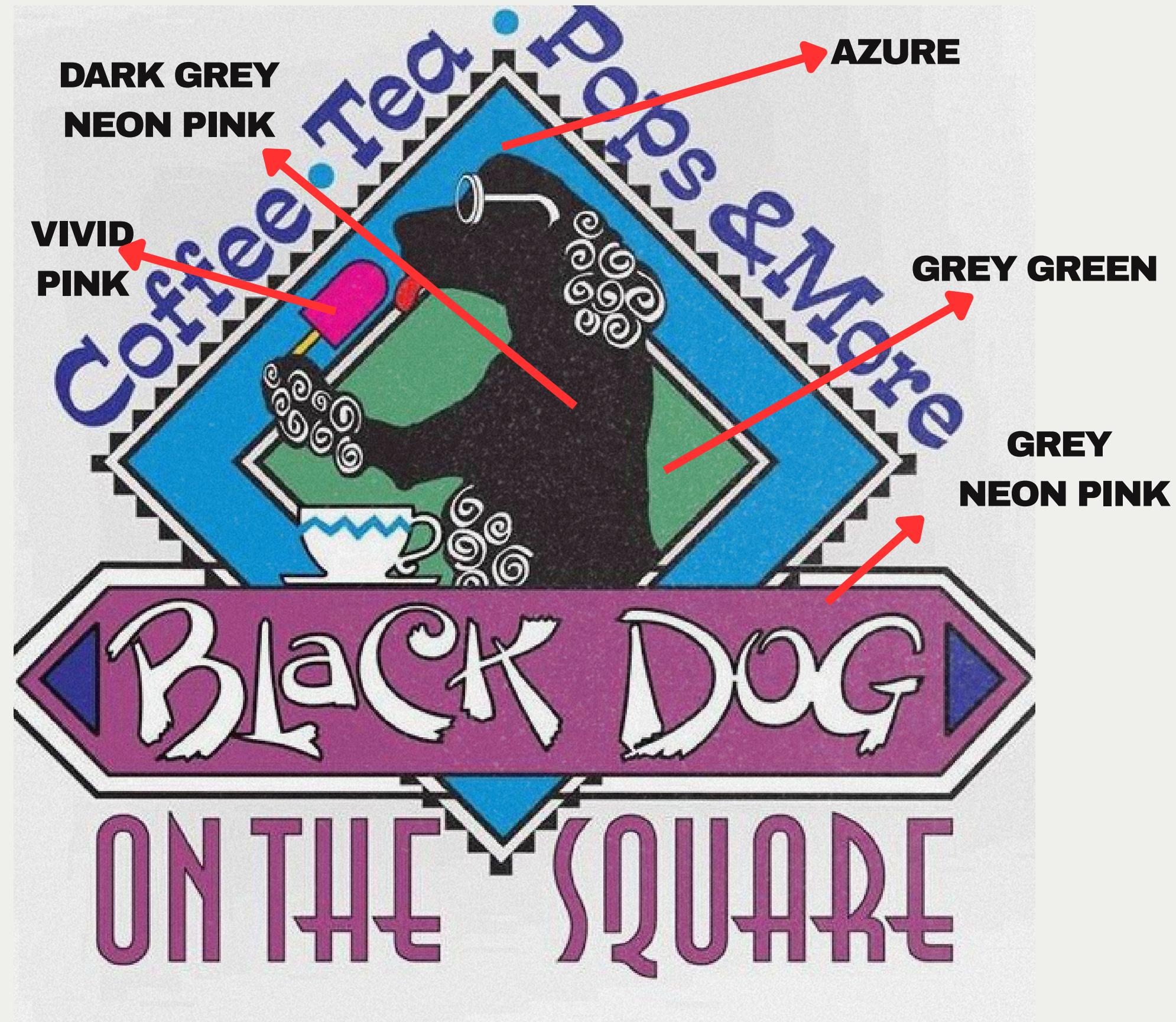
COMMUNITY
BASED PHOTO
ESSAY



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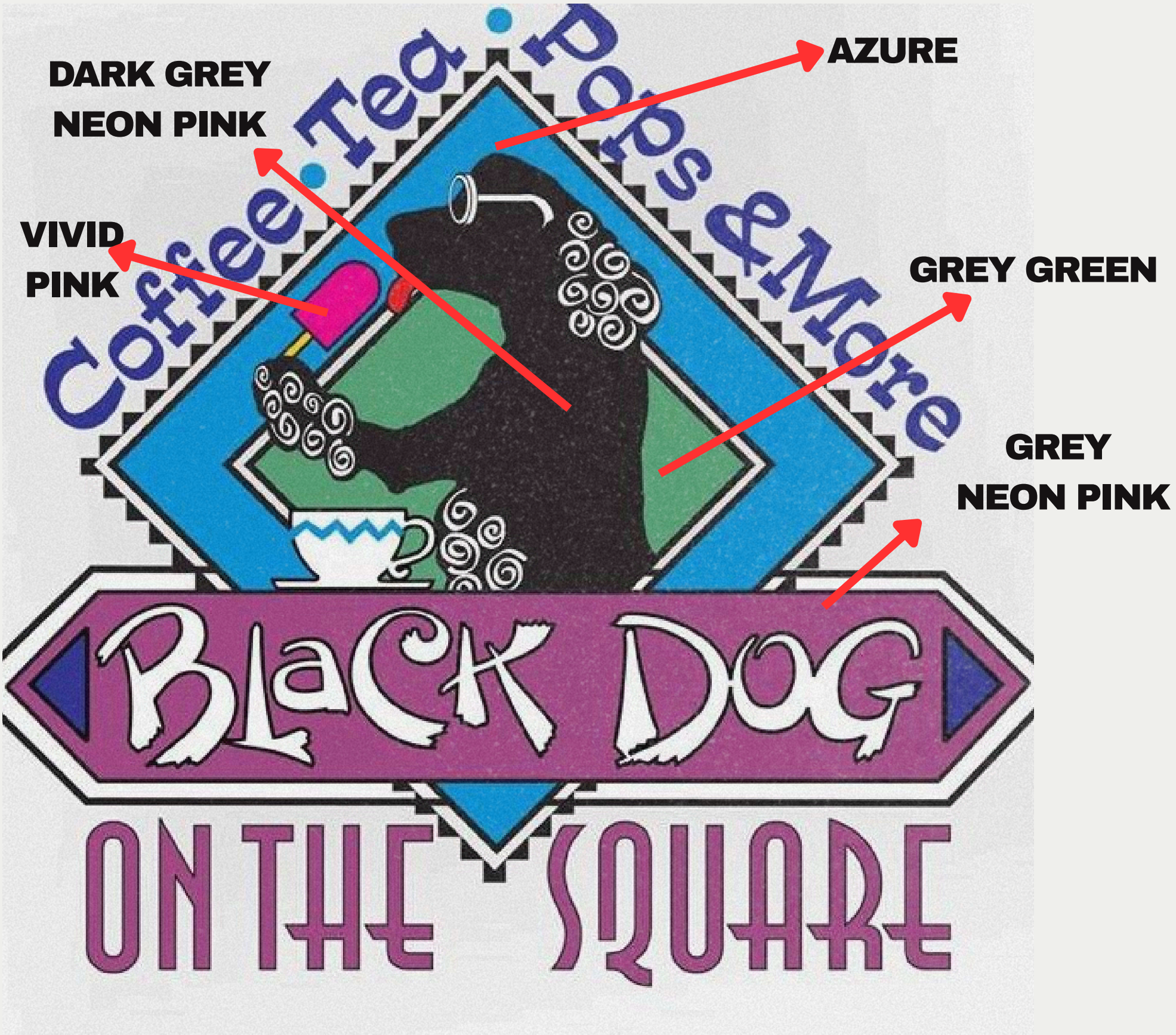
VISUAL SYMBOL

The term "Black dog" is often associated with depression, things that are negatively perceived or stigmatized by society, and marginalization.

Blackdog Cafe adopts the image of Blackdog and surrounds it with vivid *colors* such as

- 1) Azure (a bright and vivid blue color that resembles the day sky),
- 2) grey neon pink (a mixture of grey color and neon pink reveals the unique combination of subtleness and boldness, which matches the overall atmosphere of the Blackdog cafe),

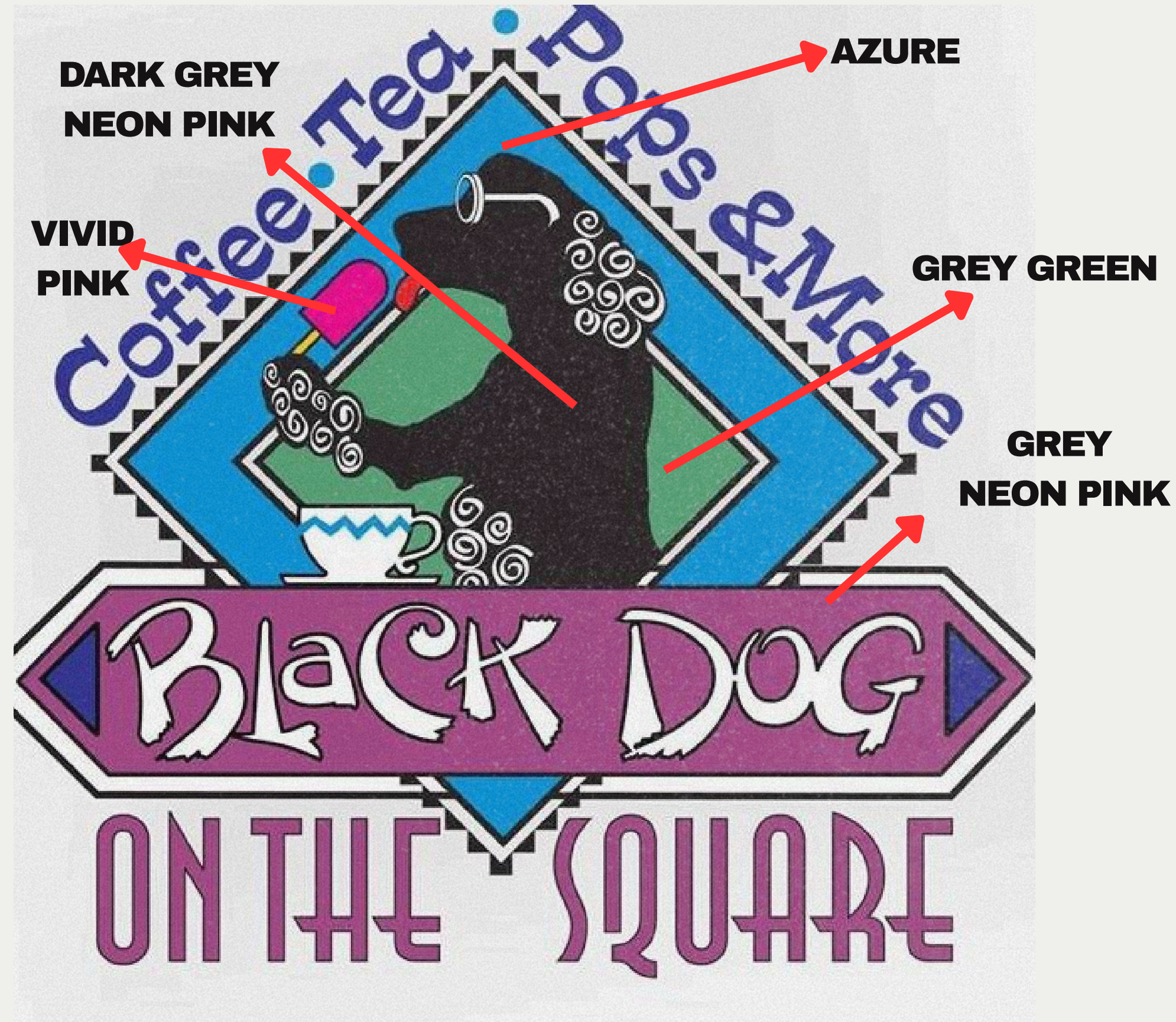
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VISUAL SYMBOL

- 3) dark grey neon pink (with a blend of a darker grey color, it still contains both calmness and boldness, complementing the other color schemes), and
- 4) grey-green (implying the growth, healing, environment, and nature).

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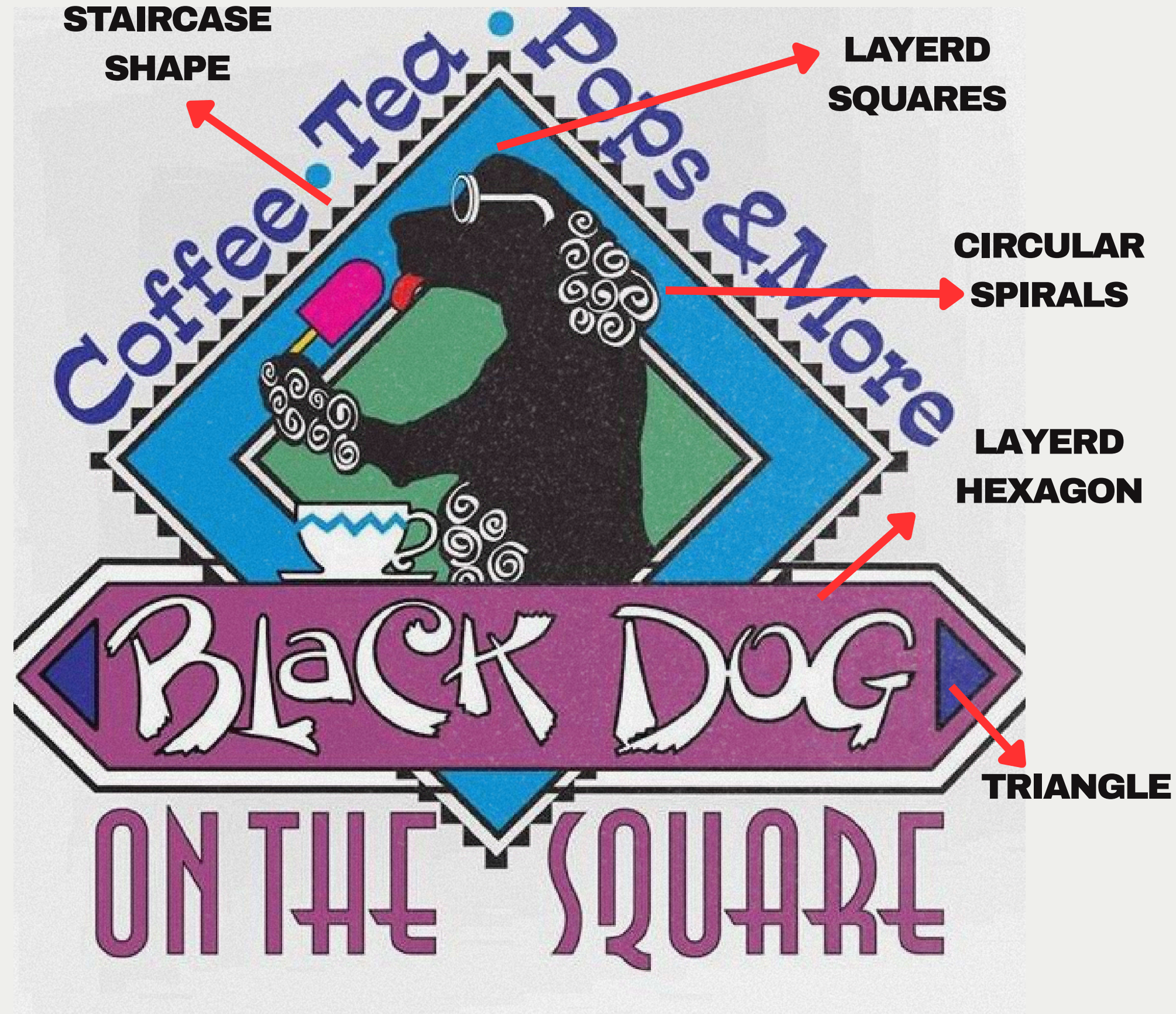


VISUAL SYMBOL

In a world full of franchise cafes operated by big companies, the *value* and *ideologies* of the cafe, aiming for

- 1) local business and economy support,
- 2) sustainability through composting, and
- 3) ethical local sourcing advocacy, is revealed in the choice of the visual elements.

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VISUAL SYMBOL

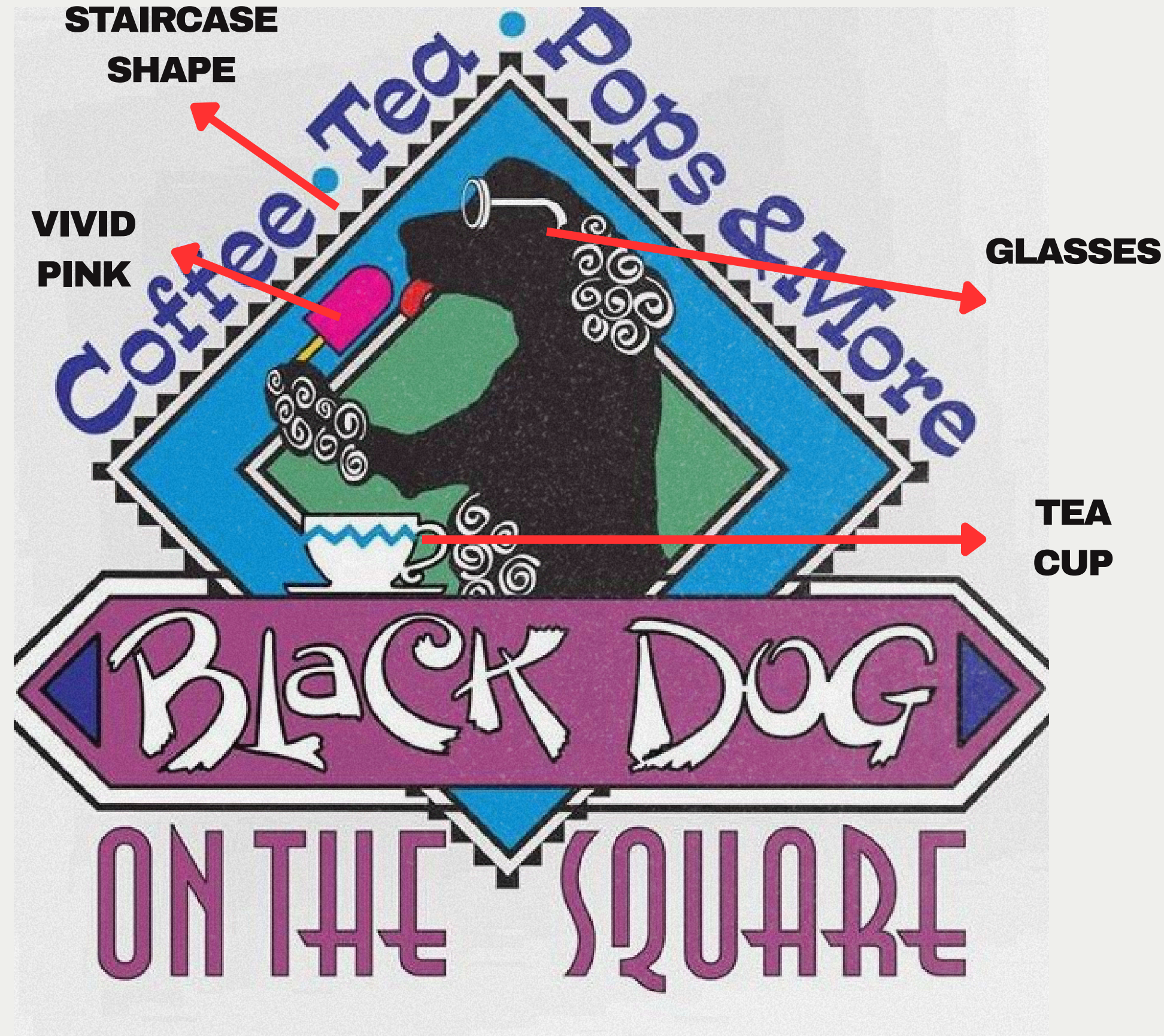
The incorporation of various *shapes*, including squares, curvy spirals, triangles, and staircases, implies the cafe's embrace of diversity.

Specifically, multiple squares and triangles are layered on top of one another.

These visual elements represent more than just a surface level of place where customers grab a drink and leave.

It rather embodies a multidimensional space where community is created, and each unique individuality is freely and safely expressed.

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VISUAL SYMBOL

The *staircase* shapes imply that through participation and consumption in this space,

we contribute to local business support and environmentally conscious practices, ultimately achieving balance and elevation altogether.

The *glasses* that the black dog is wearing also imply a quality opportunity for customers to gain broader perspectives through exposure to a diverse community and individuals visiting the cafe.

The use of a *vivid pink color* for the popsicle and the placement of the *teacup* also indirectly provide the information that the cafe serves popsicles and beverages.



SUSTAINABIZ

LOCAL BUSINESS

ENVIRONMENT

COMMUNITY

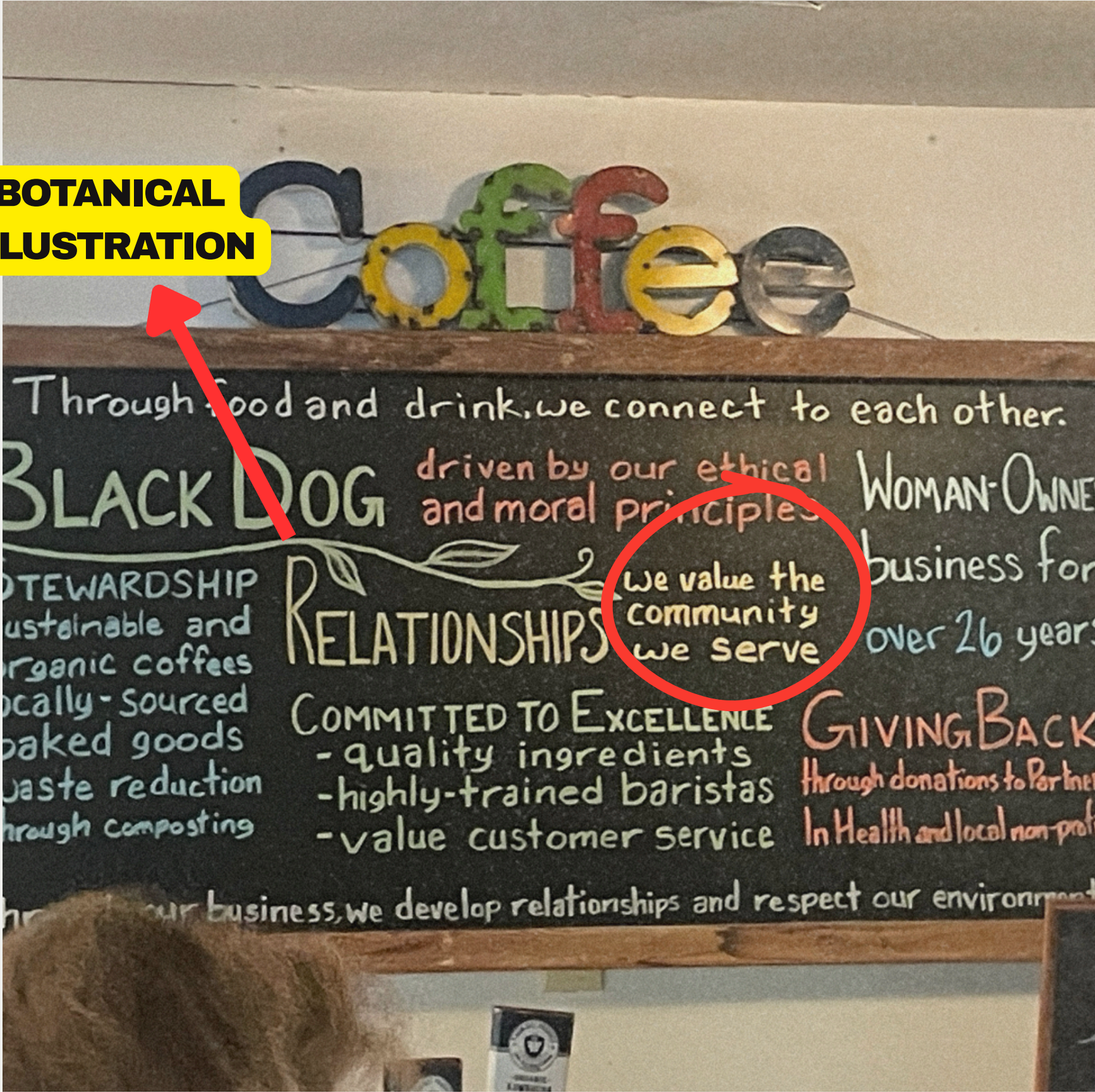
The *logo* of Sustainabiz is the badge for Leon County's sustainable business recognition program.

The *literal linguistic messages*/ indication that the cafe was selected as a sustainable local business from 2024 to 2027, along with the 'gold recognition,' increases its credibility.

It also intrigues *communities* that deeply care about

1) ethical local sourcing (stewardship for locally roasted coffee and local honey) and

2) eco-friendly practices (promoting conscious use of energy, water, and waste and raising bees).



BLACK BOARD

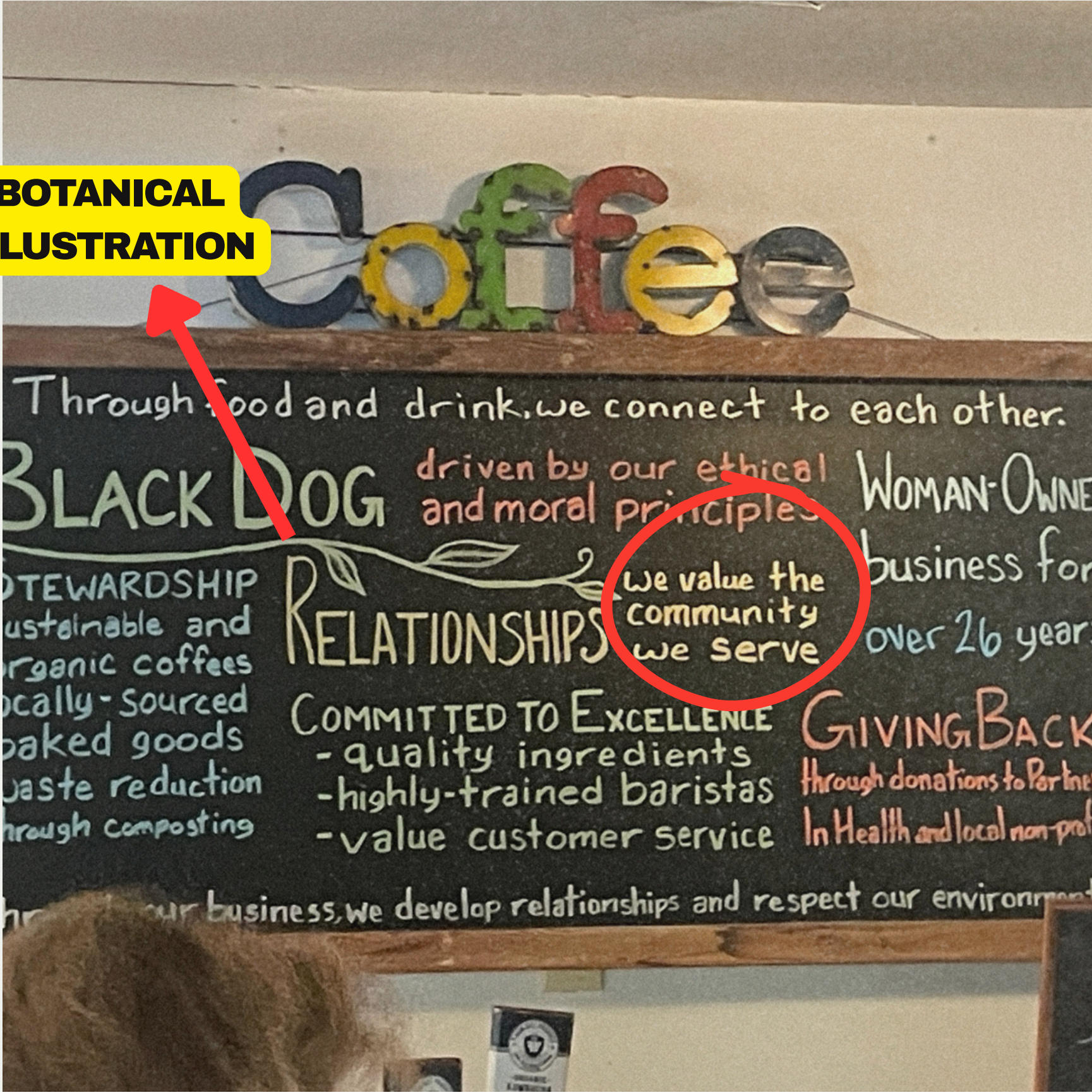
- WOMAN-OWNED
- RELATIONSHIPS
- COMMUNITY

The *linguistic messages* on the blackboard show the customers that this cafe has been a women-owned business for 26 years.

Such a *linguistic element* is significant because, considering the historical and societal structure, which is full of sex-based biases and limits regarding the network and business opportunities,

it implies not just an individual woman's achievement but a feminist achievement and progress.

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BLACK BOARD

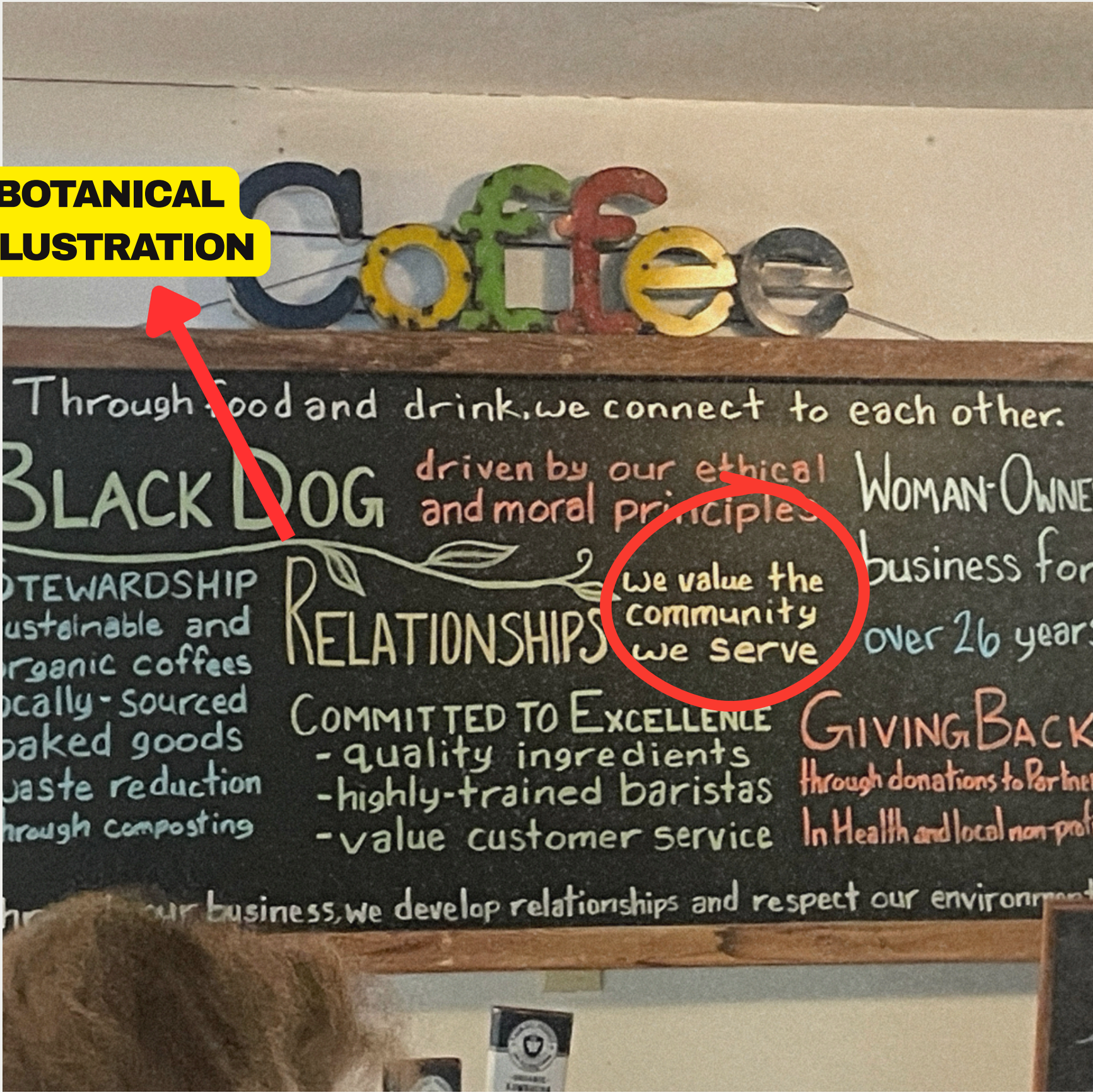
- WOMAN-OWNED
- RELATIONSHIPS
- COMMUNITY

Moreover, the phrases "we value the community we serve" and "relationship"

positively influence the *customers' perception* of the cafe as a more empathetic and inclusive space for diverse communities, including

- 1) women,
- 2) minorities, and
- 3) marginalized groups.

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BLACK BOARD

WOMAN-OWNED

RELATIONSHIPS

COMMUNITY

The use of various *fonts*, *sizes*, and *colors*, along with hand-drawn botanical *illustrations*, visually reflects the café's identity and aspirations.

The organic and nonstandardized sentiment of the design formation conveys the café's beliefs, such as

- 1) environmental and ethical growth,
- 2) healing, and
- 3) inclusivity.



DISPLAY

RESPECT

HISTORY

COMMUNITY

The *intentional placement* of the display shelf right next to the checkout counter reflects and conveys

a local business-friendly ideology and belief, once again *reframing* the act of payment not as a profit-driven transaction but as an influential moment that contributes to the local community.



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DISPLAY

RESPECT

HISTORY

COMMUNITY

Specifically, the repetitive use of the *text* 'local' and honey with straightforward and intuitively labeled prices gives

a more raw, unpolished, even niche *aesthetic*

as if the honey products were freshly harvested from a nearby beehive, offered only in small amounts.



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DISPLAY

RESPECT

HISTORY

COMMUNITY

It is getting two things done at once:

customers would feel they are

- 1) getting a great deal,
- 2) fulfilling their desire for quality products, and also
- 3) easing the burden of guilt for the environment as human beings by doing 'something.'

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DISPLAY

RESPECT

HISTORY

COMMUNITY

Moreover, by displaying its in-house merchandise, the cafe conveys

- 1) its sturdy, long-standing presence and
- 2) the respect and love it has received from the community over time.

The cafe, using these *customized visual elements*, proudly reminds the customers that it has become a significant *platform* for the *local community*.



BULLETIN BOARD

- PLATFORM
- COMMUNICATION
- INFORMATION

Inside the cafe, they also use a big bulletin board for the customers, local business owners, community members, and seekers.

The bulletin board in the cafe resembles that of a college space, where every week we can find new and diverse flyers, starting from

- 1) the announcements of community gatherings for all kinds of individuals, minority and marginalized groups, to
- 2) local business advertisements,
- 3) calls for research participants, and even with
- 4) eye-opening political viewpoints.

CONTINUED...



BULLETIN BOARD

- PLATFORM
- COMMUNICATION
- INFORMATION

The constant shift and change in the bulletin board display serve as an *open discourse platform* for

- 1) various information and
 - 2) communication,
- reflecting the cafe's fresh, creative, and inclusive energy with conscious social awareness.





LOCAL PEOPLE

DIVERSITY

COMMUNICATION

COMMUNITY

Before I delve into the various visual elements influencing a diverse range of local customers, let's take some time to introduce what kind of community members we can meet in the Black Dog Cafe!

Students bringing laptops to do their assignments, writers seeking inspiration, casual visitors for food and drinks, alternative people expressing through their choice of fashion, elders sharing wisdom, artists seeking for stage, audience, and support from community, parents who need a moment to breathe, and the smallest patrons, children receiving new sensory experiences every second.





ART GALLERY

- LOCAL ARTISTS
- CULTURAL CAPITAL
- ART GALLERY

The cafe exhibits artworks by local Tallahassee artists, which is intentional and purposeful, subtle yet significant.

Holding an exhibition is almost like a claim and manifestation of the *space's extension* into a *cultural and social space* that extends beyond the site of consumption.

For the *cafe* itself, serving as an art gallery is not only a business expansion but also the formation of another art platform, offering a multisensory and multidimensional experience.

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ART GALLERY

LOCAL ARTISTS CULTURAL CAPITAL ART GALLERY

For the *artists*, it is an essential opportunity to present their work to the public and gain connections to other artist communities for more information, inspiration, and communication.

For *local customers*, it becomes their cultural capital, affording them greater access and familiarity with the artworks and broadening their perspective and artistic taste.

The activity of going to a local cafe becomes a stimulating artistic activity.





STUDENT FRIENDLY



STUDENTS

WELCOME

CONSIDERATION

In this cafe, students studying and participating in creative activities, such as writing and drawing, are easily observable.

This is not a coincidence, but rather a result of the visual elements that form a student-friendly environment and community.

LIGHT STAND

SUBTEXT

VISUAL RHETORIC

STUDENTS

The secret to this comfortable and suitable environment for students studying can be uncovered by looking at the black *light stand* placed on every table in the cafe.

When we look closer at every light, we find *power outlets* that allow customers and local community members to plug in their own

1) chargers,

2) USB and USB-C type ports

that enable easy charging of devices using their own cables.

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LIGHT STAND

SUBTEXT

VISUAL RHETORIC

STUDENTS

The power outlets and ports play a significant visual role here, beyond the convenient and practical function of the light stand.

Such provided furniture conveys the subtext that

- 1) this space welcomes student customers or any customers intending to stay for a while and spend their time reading or writing and
- 2) that they are even supported by offering light for better vision and electricity for charging.

It is such a considerate design of the space for quality time spending-local community members.



**SPACE FOR
SMALLEST
PATRONS**

This play area is
for the happiness
of our smallest patrons.
Please Clean Up
after yourself
Thank

SMALLEST PATRONS

CHILDREN

MULTI SENSORY

PARENTS

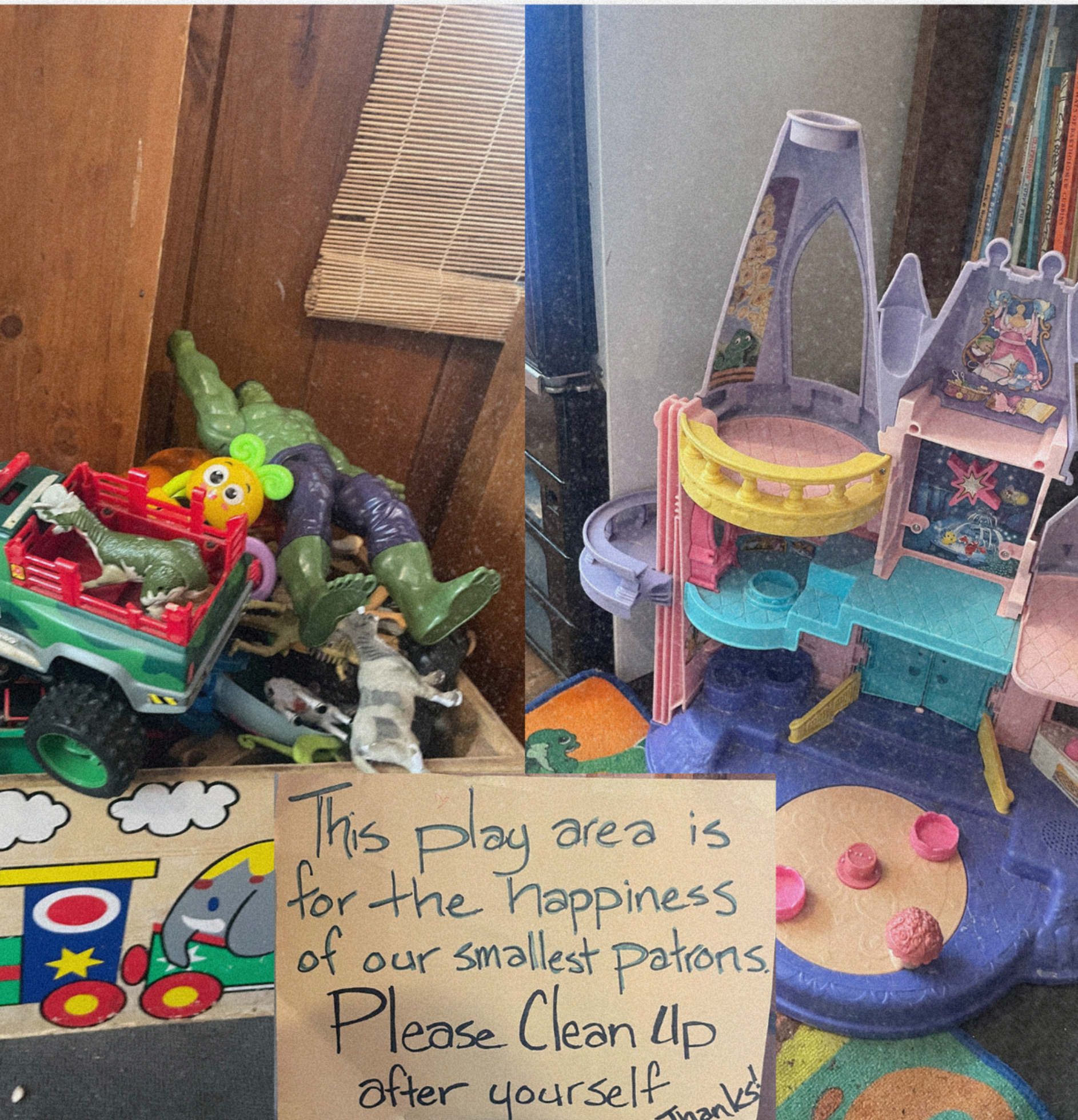
Lastly, Blackdog Cafe has dedicated one side of the cafe to its 'smallest patrons,' the children.

This space is intentionally and mindfully designed for children who visit the cafe with their parents, allowing them to engage in a

- 1) multi-sensory,
- 2) stimulating, and
- 3) creative activity through play.

It includes a dollhouse, figurines, stuffed animals, Scrabble, toy cars, and a train set.

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SMALLEST PATRONS

CHILDREN

MULTI SENSORY

PARENTS

The color schemes of the toys include pink, violet, dark purple, blue, green, red, orange, yellow, grey, black, and cream.

These toys are made from a diverse range of materials, including plastic, cotton, rubber, wood, metal, and even paper.

The wide range of options for the children regarding colors and materials creates a tactile and visually stimulating environment, once again reflecting the cafe's inclusive and family-friendly policy.

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SMALLEST PATRONS

CHILDREN

MULTI SENSORY

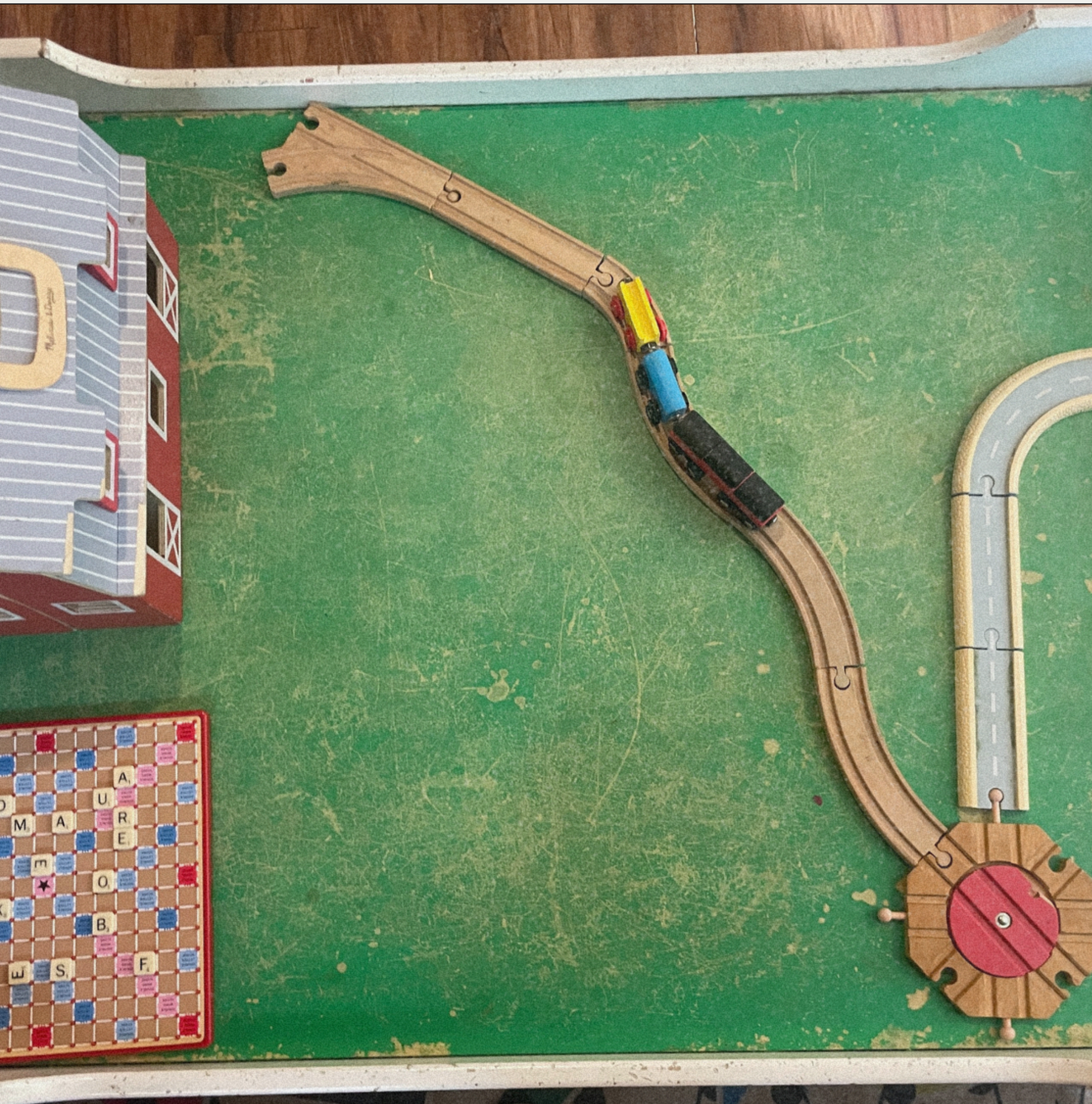
PARENTS

The color schemes of the toys include pink, violet, dark purple, blue, green, red, orange, yellow, grey, black, and cream.

These toys are made from a diverse range of materials, including plastic, cotton, rubber, wood, metal, and even paper.

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SMALLEST PATRONS

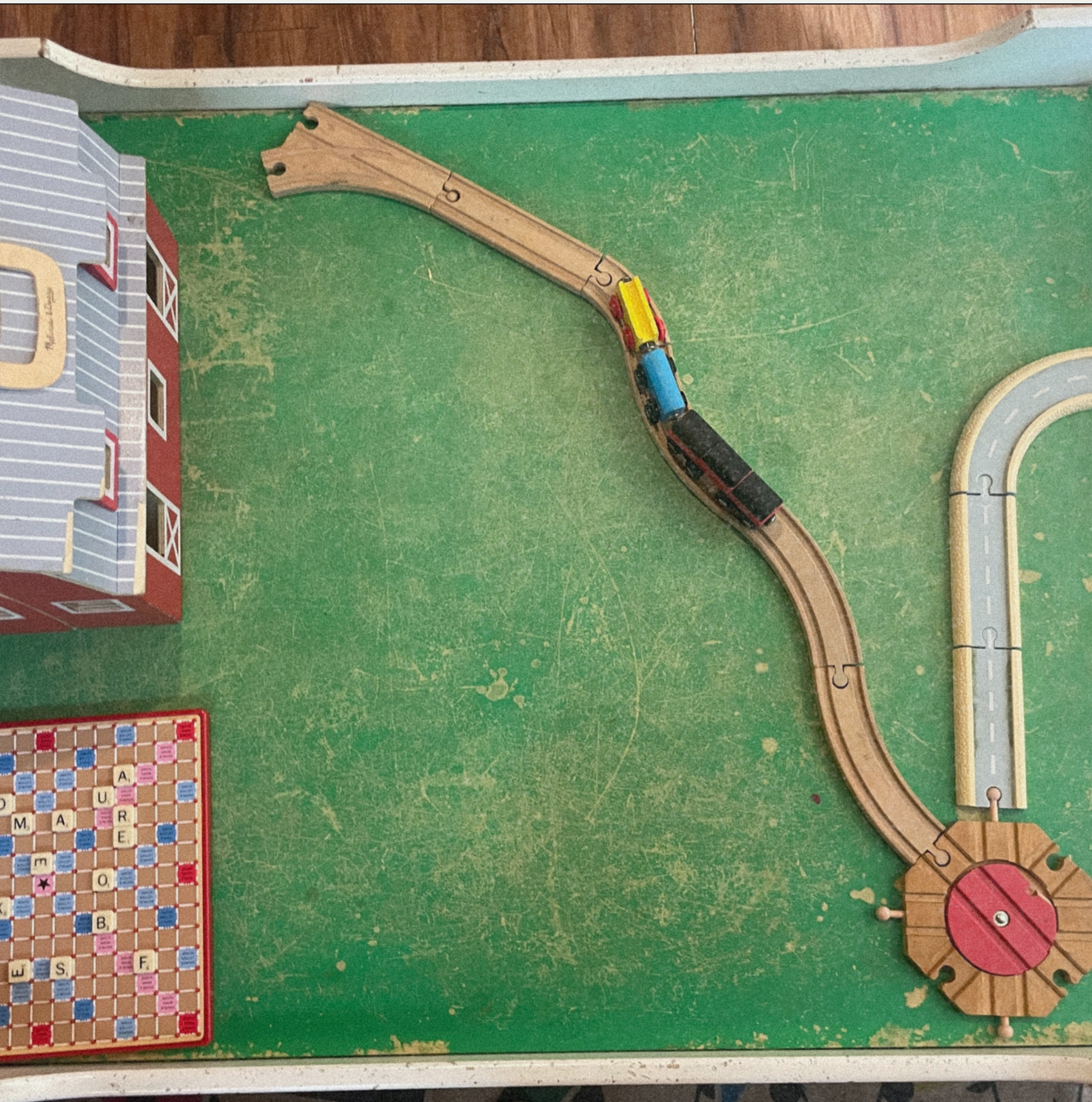
It was specifically the cafe's intentional inclusion of space, particularly for children, that led me to view Blackdog Cafe as a significant site for *constructing* a local community and *representing* its identity.

First, the warm *subtext* from the visual rhetoric suggests that every single child deserves

- 1) access to toys,
- 2) fun activities, and
- 3) experiences,

making them *feel valued* as the smallest patrons, which allows the children to form a positive impression of the local business and the importance of the community social and cultural platform, throughout their childhood.

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SMALLEST PATRONS

Second, such a welcoming statement, conveyed through visual elements, *alleviates* the parents' self-consciousness about concerns that their children might disturb other customers in a public space.

Third, the main customers are mostly

1) students, 2) local people, 3) family, and 4) artists

and 4) the community has an embracing spirit for children.

It allows parents, who have been taking care of their child and are exhausted, to **feel safe** with their kids in the *environment/community*, and have a moment to breathe and enjoy a cup of coffee or tea.



BLACK DOG CAFE

The significance of the Blackdog Cafe as a space representing, reflecting, and constructing the core beliefs, values, and ideology of the community lies in its

existence,

which remains firmly rooted, with its welcoming messages, conveyed through visual rhetoric, to people who need a sense of community.

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BLACK DOG CAFE

In a broader sense, these representations, through visual rhetoric choices, reveal the presence of a more inclusive local community and its role as a *platform* supporting both local culture, artists, and businesses.

However, since it serves as a local community platform, in other words, a space for the community, it inevitably has *obscurities*.

It embraces diverse perspectives, political opinions, artistic activities, and communications, but does *not* commit to a single, specified identity.

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BLACK DOG CAFE

Furthermore, we may read and interpret the choice of visual elements as a

- 1) general commitment,
- 2) support and contribution to diversity and local support.

However, the specific rationale and explanation behind specific design or visual choices *cannot* be explicitly *articulated*.

And that is where the multiple perspectives on how the space represents the community arise.

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BLACK DOG CAFE

For example, regarding the selection of the arts exhibited in the cafe, the views of the cafe owner, customers, and local artists may differ.

Some might feel that the artworks don't represent the community's identity or even find them unpleasant.

In contrast, others might see the exhibition as an act of advocacy for local artists and an opportunity for cultural discourse.

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BLACK DOG CAFE

Similarly, in terms of the cafe's child-friendly policy, some customers may consider it inclusive and necessary for parents,

while others might feel uncomfortable and even opposed to it, based on their personal values.

The combination of *obscurity* due to the cafe's role as a platform for community and the diverse experiences and perceptions of its users creates multiple perspectives.