



Interwoven Histories, Shared Futures

A Permanent Home for Caribbean Storytelling in Northern England

Gyaff reclaims Stonefield Mill, a former site of Caribbean labour and migration, as a permanent home for Caribbean storytelling, culture and community in Huddersfield.

Responding to community-identified needs for representation, cultural preservation and intergenerational connection, the project creates an inclusive third space where histories are shared, identities are celebrated and futures are shaped. Through creative learning, archives, food, hair culture and everyday social exchange, Gyaff transforms lived experience into a living cultural resource. By connecting people, place and memory, the project demonstrates how socially responsive interior design can preserve heritage while supporting belonging, wellbeing and cultural agency.

Experience Gyaff in Motion >>>



Scan to explore the project and follow the journey from gathering and creative expression to memory, archive and legacy.

https://www.canva.com/design/DAHJc46x72I/BEZJcGAlzTDf_ccbPIAGCA/watch



Rooted in Community, Place and Memory

A Community That Helped Shape Huddersfield



Timeline:
 1948 → 1950s–1970s → Today
 Arrival of Windrush generation → Employment in Huddersfield industries → Multi-generational Caribbean communities
 Caribbean communities have contributed to Huddersfield's social, cultural and economic life for generations, yet the town lacks a permanent space dedicated to preserving and sharing this heritage.

Why Stonefield Mill Matters



Stonefield Mill is not simply a vacant building selected for redevelopment. Historically, the mill employed members of the Caribbean community whose labour helped shape Huddersfield's industrial identity. Reclaiming the building as Gyaff transforms a former site of work into a permanent space for memory, storytelling and cultural continuity. The project reconnects community heritage to the place where many of those stories began.

From Migration to Legacy



Clifford
Windrush generation



Jenny
Second generation parent



Angel
Future generation

Gyaff supports the transmission of cultural knowledge between generations, ensuring stories, traditions and lived experiences remain visible and accessible for the future.

From migration and labour to storytelling and legacy, Gyaff reconnects community, culture and place.

DESIGNING FOR

Belonging, Identity & Community

A RESPONSE ROOTED IN PLACE AND PEOPLE

Situated within a former Huddersfield textile mill, Gyaff responds to the cultural legacy of Caribbean Windrush migration, labour and storytelling in Northern England.

Through gathering, creating and reflection, the project transforms community research and lived experiences into inclusive spaces that nurture cultural continuity, wellbeing and intergenerational connection and belonging for the today's Caribbean community and beyond.

COMMUNITY VOICES



Clifford
Windrush Memory & Intergenerational Exchange | 86
"Dominoes isn't just a game — it's how we talk."

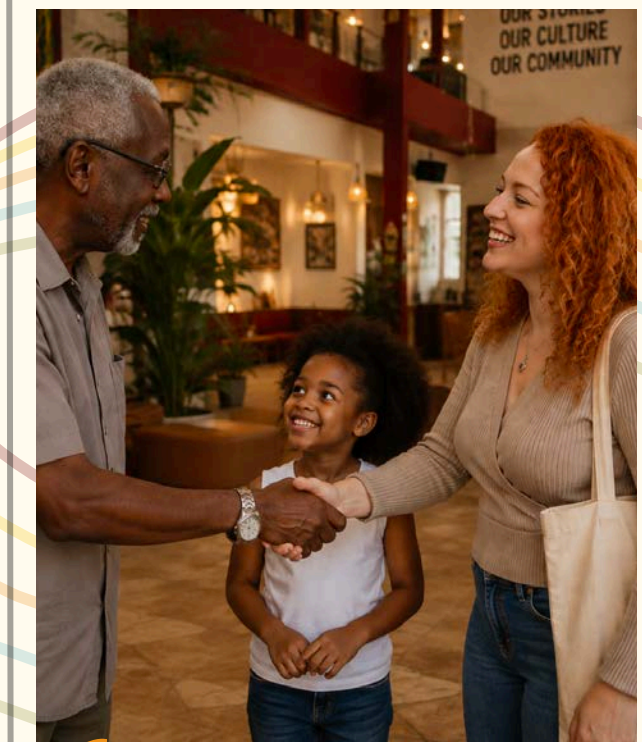
Clifford is from the Caribbean and has lived in the UK for over 60 years as part of the Windrush generation. He used to spend hours playing dominoes with friends, sharing stories and keeping community traditions alive. As many of his friends have passed away, Clifford often feels isolated and misses those opportunities for connection. He would love the chance to teach younger generations how to play dominoes, share memories of the past and inspire new community traditions for the future.



Angel & Jenny
Mixed-Heritage Parenting & Embodied Identity | 37 & 8
"I want to make sure she understands where she comes from."

Jenny is a white British single mother raising her mixed-race daughter, Angel. As the first person in Jenny's family to have Caribbean heritage, Angel's experience has encouraged Jenny to learn more about a culture she did not grow up with herself. Jenny struggles with caring for Angel's afro-textured hair and wishes there were spaces where she could learn from others, access cultural knowledge and help Angel develop a strong sense of identity and belonging.

INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNITY



"A permanent home for Caribbean storytelling, belonging and cultural continuity."

COMMUNITY RESEARCH IDENTIFIED FIVE KEY THEMES

100%

of participants agreed it is important to educate the next generation on Caribbean culture and heritage.

Design decisions were informed by quantitative community research identifying five key cultural priorities.

STORYTELLING

Oral histories, ancestral knowledge and lived experiences need spaces to be shared and preserved.

FOOD & HERITAGE

Food is a powerful connector of culture, memory and community.

MUSIC & CELEBRATION

Music and dance are essential expressions of identity, joy, resistance and celebration.

HAIR & IDENTITY

Hair is heritage, creativity and self-expression passed down through generations.

CULTURAL EDUCATION

Learning spaces are needed that reflect Caribbean histories, literature, languages and arts. To pass to future generations.

These themes directly informed the spatial programme and experiences of Gyaff.

FROM COMMUNITY NEEDS TO SPATIAL RESPONSES

COMMUNITY NEEDS	DESIGN RESPONSE
Lack of permanent Caribbean cultural spaces in the North	Community Kitchen & Cafe A place for nourishment, conversation and cultural exchange.
Cultural knowledge and oral histories at risk of being lost.	Reading Archive & Storytelling Spaces Preserving oral histories and making them accessible for future generations.
Limited opportunities for intergenerational exchange.	Creative Studio & Learning Spaces Hands-on creative and educational spaces for all ages.
Social isolation and the need for safe, welcoming spaces.	A Third Space for All Welcoming, inclusive and flexible spaces that foster belonging, wellbeing and connection.
Need for community-led infrastructure that supports local identity and enterprise.	Community Enterprise & Marketplace Supporting local makers, cultural tourism and economic empowerment.

A SPATIAL JOURNEY

GATHER

CREATE

REFLECT

REFLECT
Third Floor

A quiet retreat for learning, reflection and legacy.

CREATE
Second Floor

Spaces for creativity, collaboration and expression.

GATHER
Ground Floor

The heart of the hub — welcoming, social and intergenerational.



SOCIAL & CULTURAL AGENCY AWARD

WHERE CULTURE LIVES

Food • Storytelling • Celebration • Community

The Heart of Gyaff

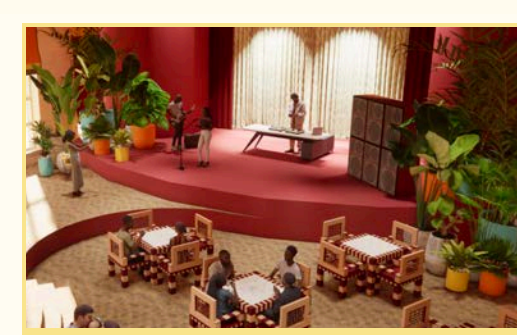
The ground floor is the social heart of Gyaff. Inspired by Caribbean traditions of gathering, hospitality and storytelling, it provides spaces where culture is actively lived rather than simply displayed. Through food, music, enterprise, play and conversation, the ground floor creates opportunities for everyday cultural exchange and intergenerational connection.



Community Kitchen & Cafe
The community kitchen celebrates the diversity of Caribbean culture through food. Dishes are prepared by cooks from across the Huddersfield Caribbean diaspora, each bringing recipes, traditions and stories from their own island. More than a place to eat, the kitchen becomes a space for cultural exchange where knowledge is shared through cooking, conversation and hospitality. By placing food at the heart of Gyaff, everyday acts of gathering become opportunities to celebrate identity, memory and belonging.



Community Marketplace
The marketplace supports local Caribbean entrepreneurs while improving access to culturally relevant products that are often difficult to find within mainstream retail environments. From specialist ingredients and traditional drinks to books, gifts and haircare products, the marketplace celebrates Caribbean enterprise while providing resources that support everyday cultural practice and identity.



Event & Performance Space
Music, spoken word and celebration provide opportunities for cultural expression, storytelling and collective memory.



Children's Play Space
Positioned within the social heart of the building, children remain connected to everyday cultural activity, encouraging intergenerational exchange through observation and participation.



Community Enterprise
The ground floor supports event hire, food provision and marketplace activity, creating opportunities for local enterprise while contributing to the long-term sustainability of Gyaff.



The Gyaff Set
Designed specifically for Gyaff, the table and chairs supports multiple forms of gathering, from shared meals and informal conversation to dominoes tournaments and community events. Inspired by the social nature of Caribbean gathering, the design encourages people to sit together, interact and participate. The table becomes more than furniture; it acts as a platform for storytelling, connection and intergenerational exchange.

Flexible Community Use
Recognising the diverse needs of the community, the ground floor can transition between everyday gathering and larger cultural events. Open social spaces support daily use, while adaptable layouts allow for celebrations, performances, workshops, private events and community-led activities throughout the year.

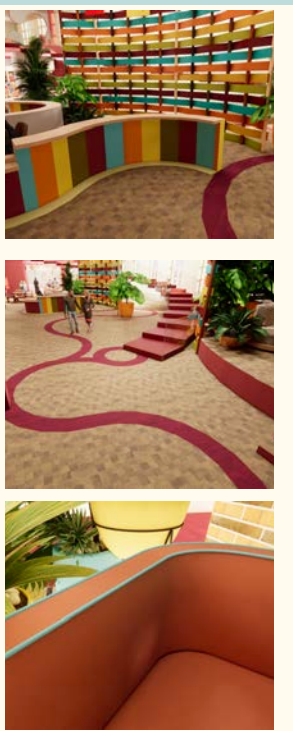
The Storytelling of Design

Curved forms
Inspired by the informal nature of Caribbean conversation and social interaction.

Woven elements
Drawing from Huddersfield's textile heritage and the interweaving of stories.

Open sightlines
Ensuring food, performance and social activity remain visible and shared.

Cricket ball red symbolises **Caribbean resilience, pride and collective identity** — introducing warmth, energy and cultural presence within the industrial fabric of the textile mill. The wider palette draws from **Caribbean fruits, tropical vegetation, sea tones and carnival vibrancy, translating cultural memory into colour and atmosphere.**



"Every island has a story. Food is how we share ours."



Why Gathering Matters?
Within Caribbean culture, gathering extends beyond social interaction. Shared meals, music, storytelling and celebration create opportunities to strengthen relationships, pass on knowledge and reinforce cultural identity. Positioned on the ground floor, the most public and accessible level of Gyaff, these everyday cultural practices become an open invitation into Caribbean culture. By placing food, enterprise, play and celebration at the building's entrance, Gyaff prioritises participation over observation, ensuring cultural knowledge remains visible, accessible and shared. The ground floor becomes more than a place to meet; it provides a permanent home for connection, belonging and intergenerational cultural exchange.

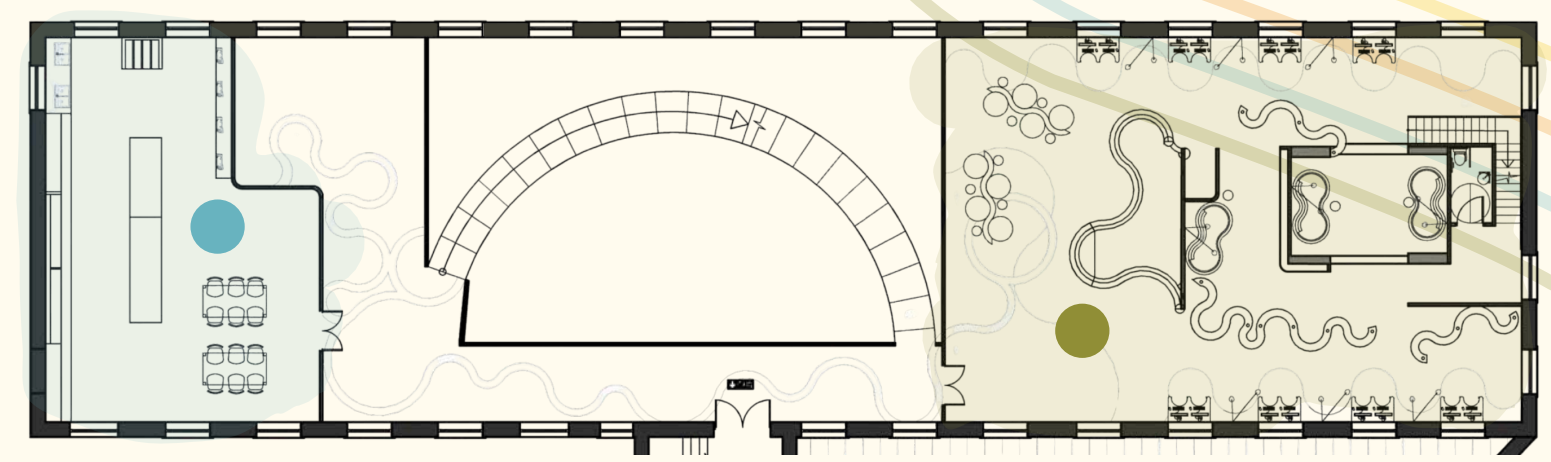
CARRYING STORIES FORWARD

Learning • Identity • Memory • Legacy



From making and learning to remembering and sharing, Gyaff transforms cultural knowledge into a living archive for future generations.

The upper floors move beyond cultural celebration to cultural transmission. Through making, learning, reflection and preservation, visitors become active participants in Caribbean culture. As the journey ascends, spaces become increasingly personal, creating opportunities to understand identity, contribute knowledge and carry stories forward for future generations.



Second Floor ● Creative Studio ● Reading Room

Creative Studio | Cultural Exchange



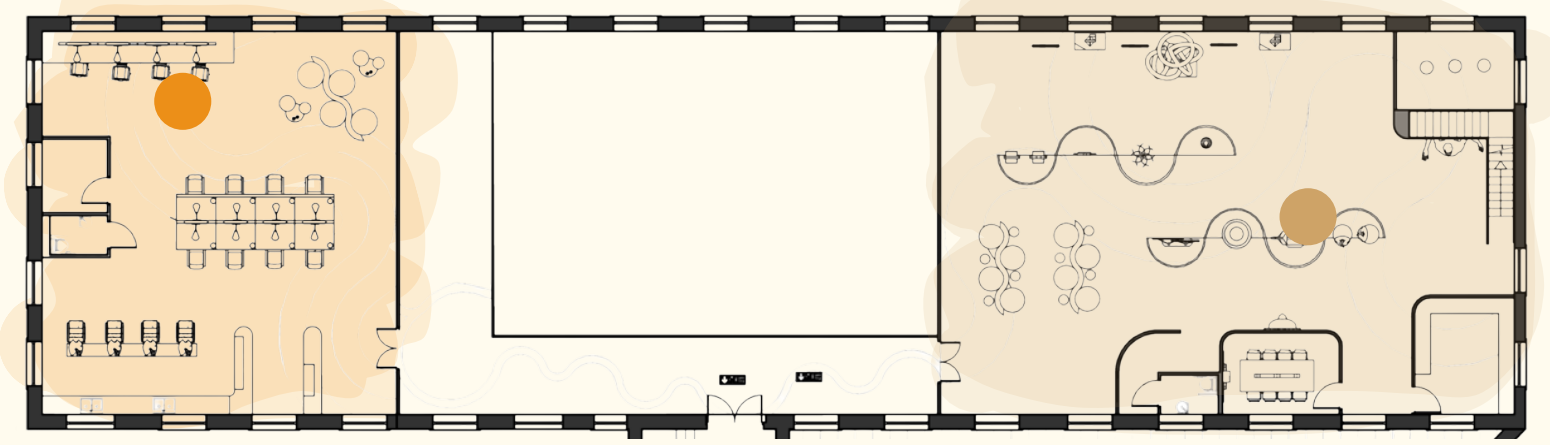
The creative studio transforms storytelling into making. Through carnival costume design, textiles and workshops, cultural knowledge is shared through hands-on learning and intergenerational exchange. Community creatives are encouraged to mentor emerging artists and young people, ensuring Caribbean traditions remain visible, relevant and continually reinterpreted. By supporting creativity, collaboration and skill-sharing, the studio enables culture to be experienced, created and carried forward by future generations.



Scan to hear Donald's story <https://www.canva.com/design/DAHFTNAoZl/kgkkWagSANVYbPEURPaDg/watch>

A Story Worth Telling

A community-authored publication enabling families to document their own histories, memories and cultural traditions. Participants create a personal record of their family's journey, receiving a copy while contributing another to Gyaff's reading room. Over time, the collection becomes a growing community archive that preserves lived experience through multiple generations.



Third Floor ● Hair Salon ● Exhibiton/Archive

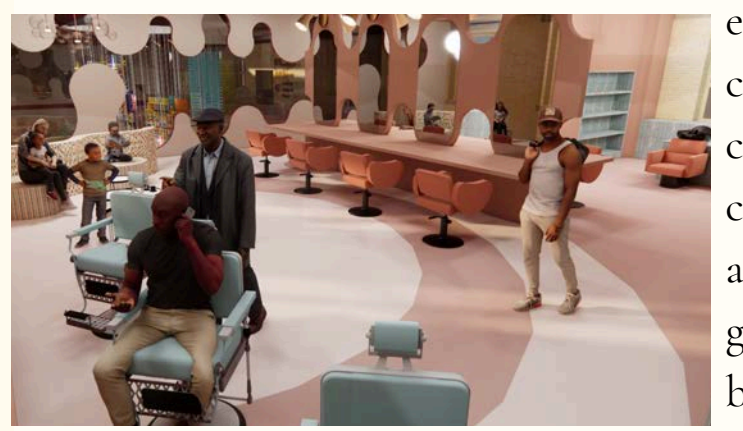
Exhibition Space & Reflection Room



The exhibition space is designed as a journey through memory, identity and belonging. Curved glass partitions create a winding path that encourages visitors to engage with stories of migration, heritage and community through movement, exploration and personal discovery.

Beyond preserving cultural history, the exhibition creates opportunities for reflection. A dedicated reflection room, accessed through a curved archway, invites visitors to consider their own experiences alongside the stories they have encountered. In doing so, the space connects personal memory with collective heritage, reinforcing Gyaff's role as a living archive of Caribbean identity and cultural continuity.

Hair Salon & Barber Space



Within Caribbean communities, hair spaces often extend beyond personal grooming to become places of care, conversation and cultural exchange. The salon celebrates textured hair as an expression of identity, creating opportunities to share knowledge, learn skills and reconnect with traditions passed between generations. What was once rooted in necessity becomes a celebration of cultural pride and self-expression.

Alongside the salon, the barber space provides a welcoming environment where Black men can gather, talk openly and feel seen, heard and valued. Together, these spaces support wellbeing, representation and belonging through shared cultural experience.

Reading Room & Living Archive



The reading room transforms storytelling into cultural preservation. Combining Caribbean literature, oral histories and community-authored publications, it creates a space where knowledge can be shared and passed between generations. Through A Story Worth Telling, visitors document their family's journey, contributing to a growing archive of lived experiences that might otherwise be lost.

Inspired by the winding nature of memory and narrative, curved shelving guides visitors through stories of migration, identity and belonging, ensuring Caribbean voices remain visible, valued and accessible for future generations.

CULTURAL CONTINUITY

Located within a former textile mill, Gyaff reconnects Caribbean heritage to the industries that shaped many Windrush families' experiences in Huddersfield, transforming a site of labour into a place of cultural visibility, celebration and legacy. Gyaff moves beyond cultural preservation by creating opportunities for people to actively shape, share and carry culture forward. Agency is created through participation, ownership and storytelling rather than passive observation.



In Guyanese culture "Gyaff" means to **storytell, converse and gather socially**. Paired with the English slang "gaff", meaning home, the project becomes a **cultural third space** where **stories, identity and belonging** can continue across generations.

- Visibility**
Caribbean stories are made visible.
- Belonging**
Community is supported through everyday participation.
- Agency**
The community creates and controls its own narrative.
- Legacy**
Knowledge is carried forward through future generations.

Gyaff is not simply a cultural centre; it is cultural infrastructure. Huddersfield is home to a rich history of Caribbean contribution, identity and community life. While heritage trails, Windrush projects, community groups and cultural celebrations demonstrate a strong commitment to preserving this legacy, many remain fragmented, temporary or dependent on short-term funding. There is no permanent space where these stories, traditions and community networks can come together. Gyaff responds by providing a lasting home for celebration, learning, enterprise, heritage and community support. Rather than relying on occasional events, it enables cultural practice to take place every day, ensuring knowledge, creativity and connection remain accessible year-round. Building upon the legacy of institutions such as the Antilles Credit Union, Gyaff acts as a contemporary community anchor where

identity, education, enterprise and cultural knowledge are sustained through active participation. Culture is not observed from a distance but shared, created and carried forward. Recognising Caribbean identity as dynamic rather than fixed, Gyaff operates as a cultural third space where heritage, contemporary life and future generations intersect. Through gathering, making, storytelling and reflection, visitors contribute to a collective narrative while exploring their own place within it. Ultimately, Gyaff demonstrates how socially and culturally responsive design can strengthen belonging, visibility and agency within underrepresented communities. By transforming cultural memory into everyday experience, it creates cultural continuity—preserving the past, supporting the present and empowering future generations to carry their stories forward.

A Living Legacies

- Community Sharing**
Clifford shares stories and dominoes, bringing people together at Gyaff.
- Storytelling**
His experiences are recorded and passed on through future generations.
- Mentorship**
The young people he teaches continue the traditions he values.
- Legacy**
His story lives on, becoming part of Huddersfield's shared memory.
- Visibility**
Angel grows up surrounded by her mum Jenny's love, culture and stories.
- Belonging**
Angel and Jenny arrive at Gyaff and are welcomed by Clifford, whose stories and warmth make them feel at home.
- Agency**
Angel sits in the salon chair for the first time at Gyaff seeing her beauty reflected and her culture celebrated.
- Legacy**
Now a mum herself, Angel continues the journey, passing down confidence, identity and love at Gyaff.

- Community Enterprise & Sustainability**
- Café & Community kitchen**
Daily revenue stream.
 - Event hire & performances**
Celebrations, performances and private functions.
 - Hair salon & self-employment**
Independent enterprise and employment.
 - Workshops & summer programmes**
Creative learning and skills development.
 - Retail & maker markets**
Supporting local makers and entrepreneurs.
 - Exhibition partnerships**
Artist residencies and cultural collaborations.
 - Youth engagement initiatives**
Supporting young people in exploring Caribbean identity, storytelling and creative expression.
 - Creative commissions**
Providing opportunities for artists, makers and performers to create new work.

Gyaff combines cultural preservation with community enterprise, creating a financially resilient model that supports both people and place.

Future-Proofing Our Community

- Adaptable spaces for changing needs
- Intergenerational programming
- Cultural preservation through storytelling
- A sustainable, community-led model

Legacy is not created by preserving stories in silence, but by continuing to live them together.