



# PROJECT

This project responds to the systemic social exclusion of adults with Down syndrome by creating an inclusive, multifunctional space that affirms their rights to work, express themselves creatively, and fully participate in community life.

The café-gallery model merges employment with empowerment. It provides a supportive workplace where individuals with Down syndrome work alongside job coaches, and a welcoming community hub that celebrates diversity and human connection.

The interior includes:  
– a sensory-friendly café zone with adapted workspace,  
– an inclusive art gallery,

**The Former Police Station**  
55, Abbeyhill, Edinburgh EH8 8EA



## HISTORY

Built in 1896 by renowned Edinburgh architect Robert Morham, the building reflects Romanesque architecture, with an irregular shape, red sandstone façade, arched windows, corner turrets with fish-scale slate, and decorative gargoyles.

Originally a police station. In the late 20th century, it became an Armenian community centre and housed a restaurant known for its eccentric owner. The restaurant closed around 2008.

Now a Grade B listed building, it remains unused and is on the at-risk register due to its deteriorating condition.

– a ceramics workshop fostering collaborative creativity,  
– a quiet room for rest and emotional well-being,  
– a training space for both future employees with DS and inclusive employers.

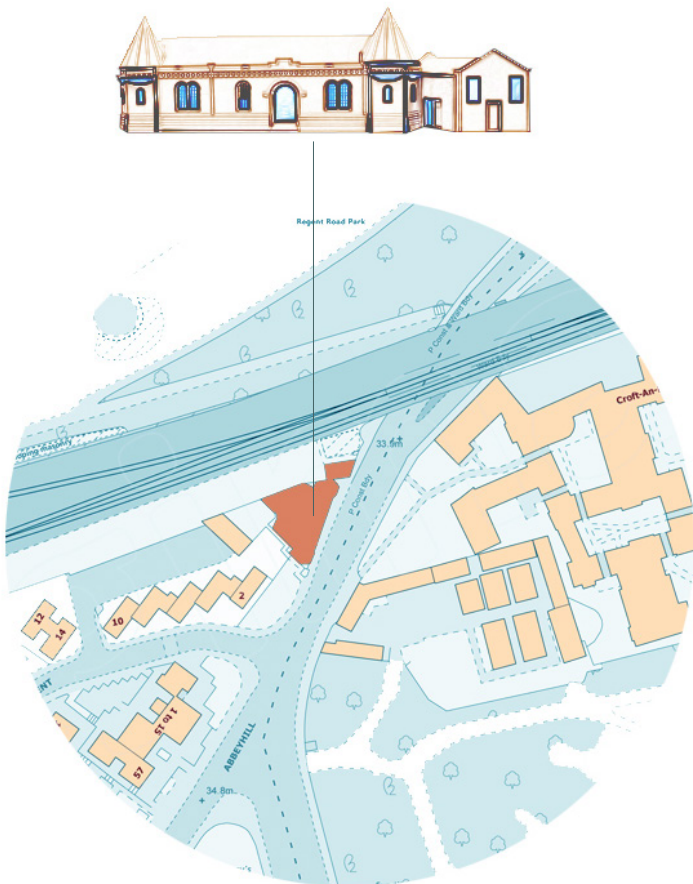
Rooted in the principles of universal design, this concept ensures accessibility, emotional safety, and aesthetic dignity. It's not just a space — it's a tool for social transformation.

This project embodies the belief that inclusive design is a vehicle for justice. It honours the importance, talents, and dignity of people with intellectual disabilities — creating space not only for them, but with them.

## CONTEXT

It is a single storey sandstone building located in the city center within a short distance from: important tourist attractions such as: The Palace of Holyroodhouse, The Scottish Parliament, Holyrood Park and The Royal Mile Street.

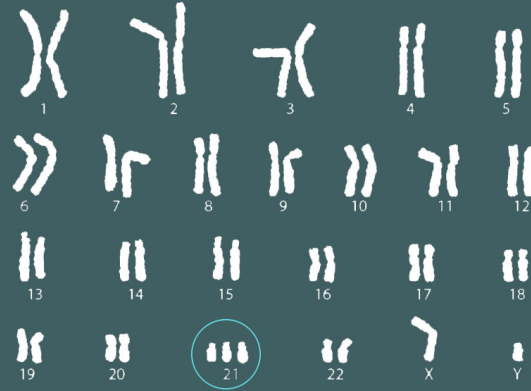
It is located on a fairly busy street and directly connected to a residential building which is currently being sold.



## RESEARCH

### What is Down Syndrome?

This condition is known as trisomy 21, and it results from an error in cell division called nondisjunction. This error leads to the presence of an extra chromosome 21 in the cells of the body, affecting approximately 95% of individuals with Down syndrome. There are also other forms of Down syndrome, such as mosaicism and translocation, which account for about 2% and 3% of cases, respectively.



### Statistics

1 Current global statistics indicate that approximately 1 in every 1,000 live births results in a child with Down syndrome. In the United Kingdom, the incidence is slightly higher, with about 1 in 854 live births affected. This translates to approximately 762 babies born with Down syndrome annually.

2 Approximately 80% of individuals with Down syndrome live to be 60 or older. This extended lifespan has highlighted the importance of providing developmental support for young adults and adults with Down syndrome. Adapting to these positive changes is crucial for developing tailored interventions that promote their inclusion and success in the workforce.

10 years

The average life expectancy of individuals with Down syndrome at the beginning of the 20th century.

25 years

Life expectancy of people with Down syndrome in the 1980's.

60 years

Current average life expectancy of people with Down syndrome.

3 Currently, there are approximately 870,000 adults with intellectual disabilities living in the UK, including around 47,000 people with Down's syndrome. Although many express a desire to work, only about 5% of people with intellectual disabilities are in employment.

### Research Findings

My study highlighted key factors supporting the employment and integration of adults with Down's syndrome.

Successful inclusion depends on:  
– job coaches and activation programmes  
– preparation of employers and co-workers  
– a supportive, adapted work environment

Parents emphasized the importance of personalized support and long-term guidance. Despite good practices, there is still limited access to inclusive employment programmes.

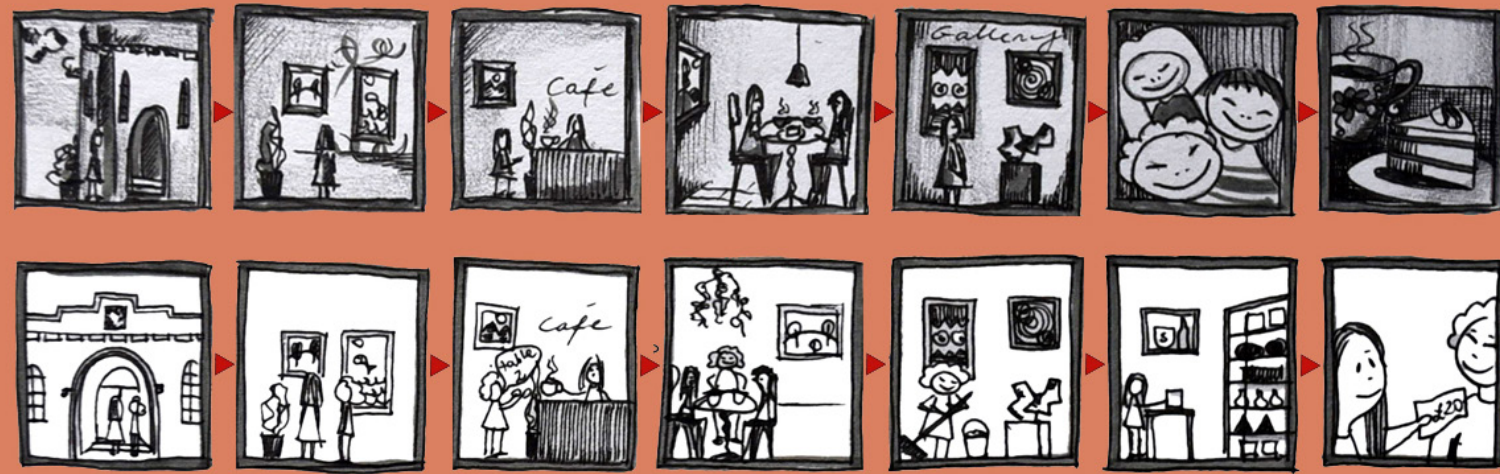
Employment of people with Down's syndrome not only benefits them — by boosting independence, confidence, and social skills — but also positively transforms workplace culture by encouraging empathy and acceptance.

A holistic and individualized approach is essential for real, lasting inclusion.

## CONCEPT



### CLIENT EXPERIENCE



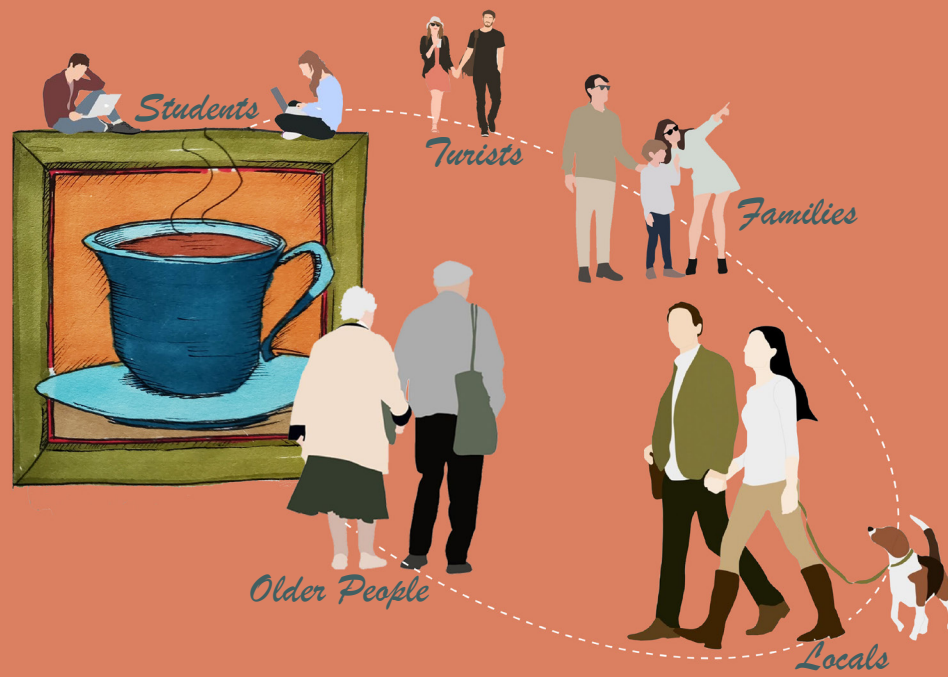
### STAFF EXPERIENCE



### SPACES



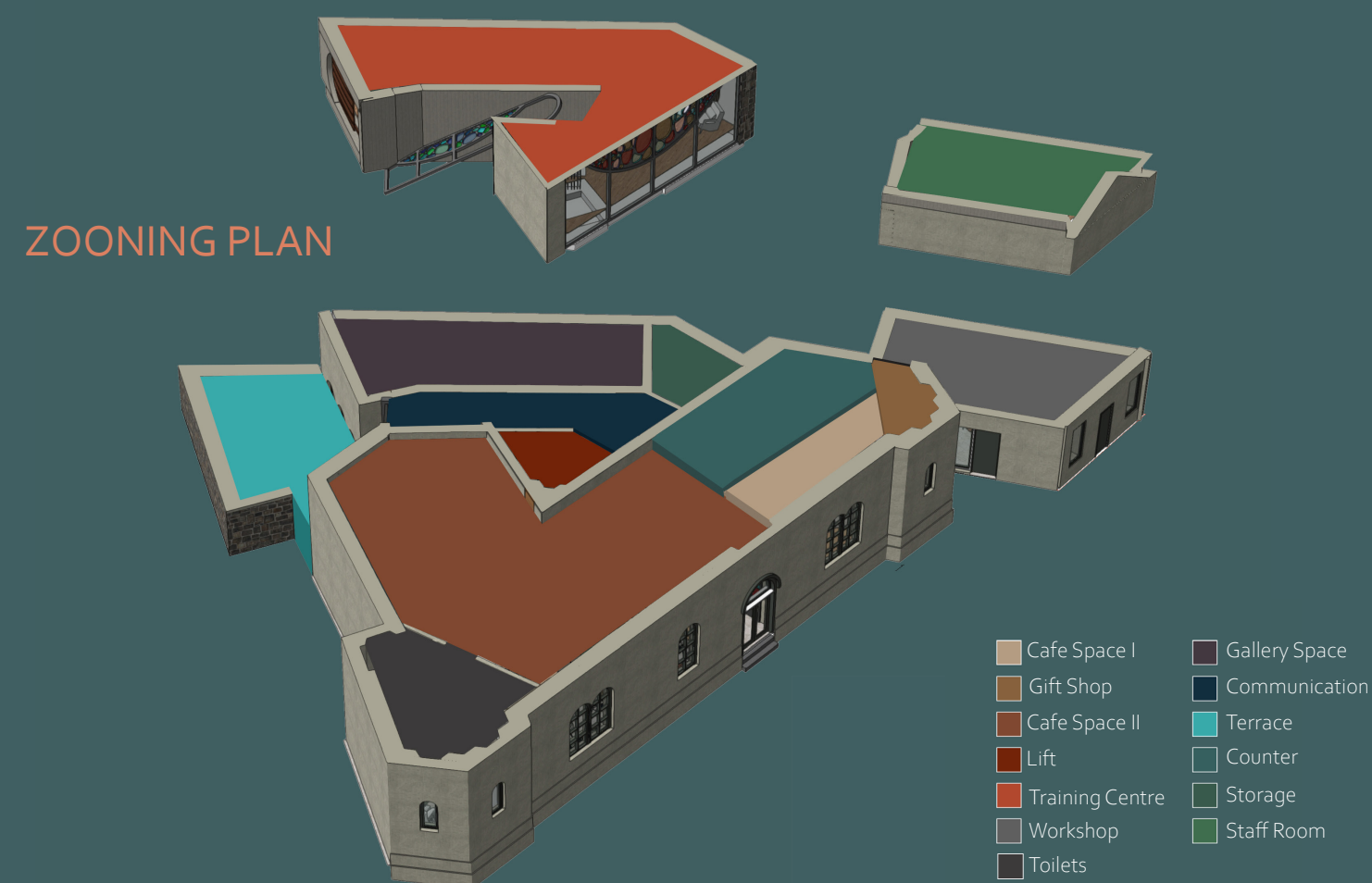
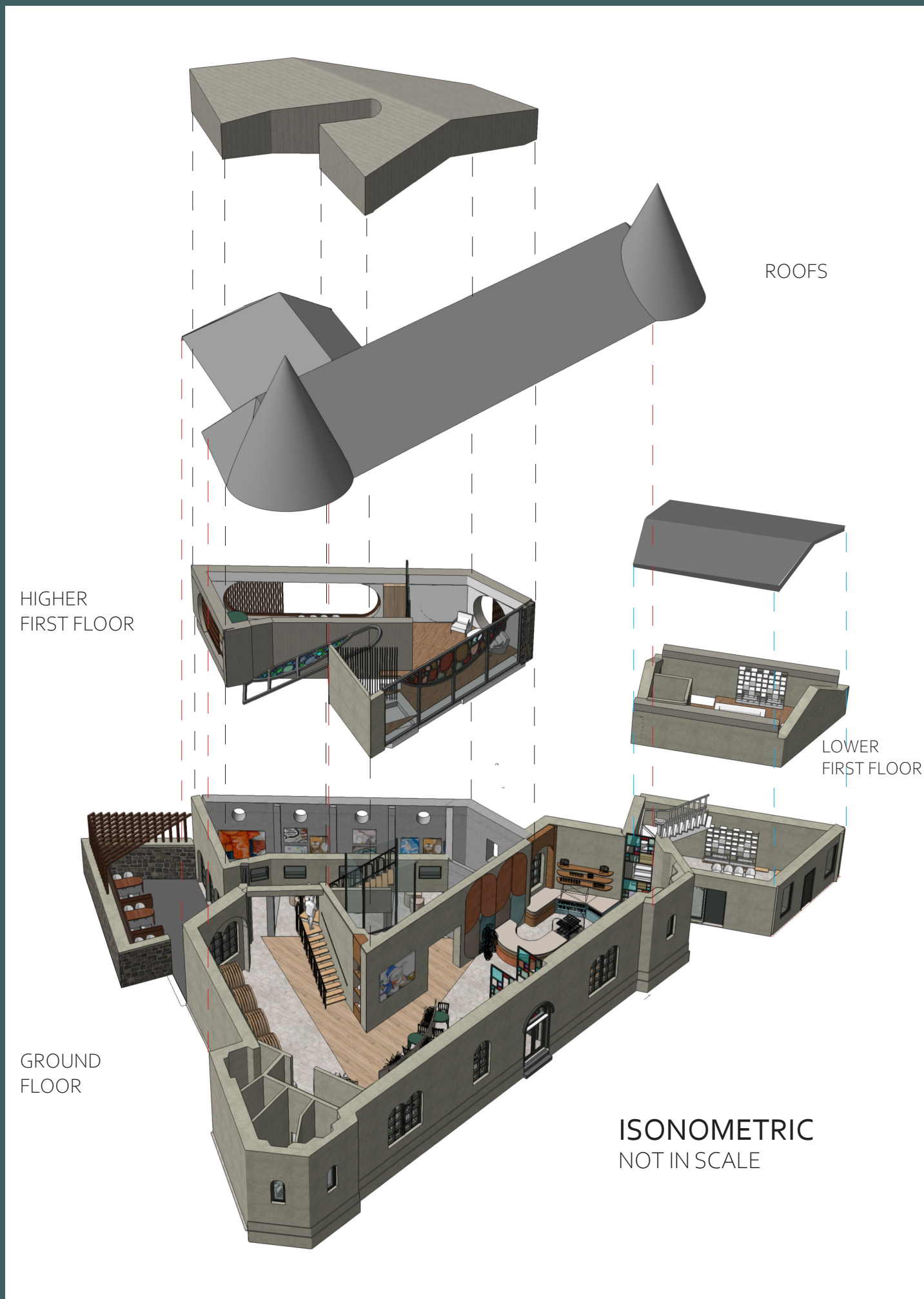
## Clients



## Conceptual Visualizations



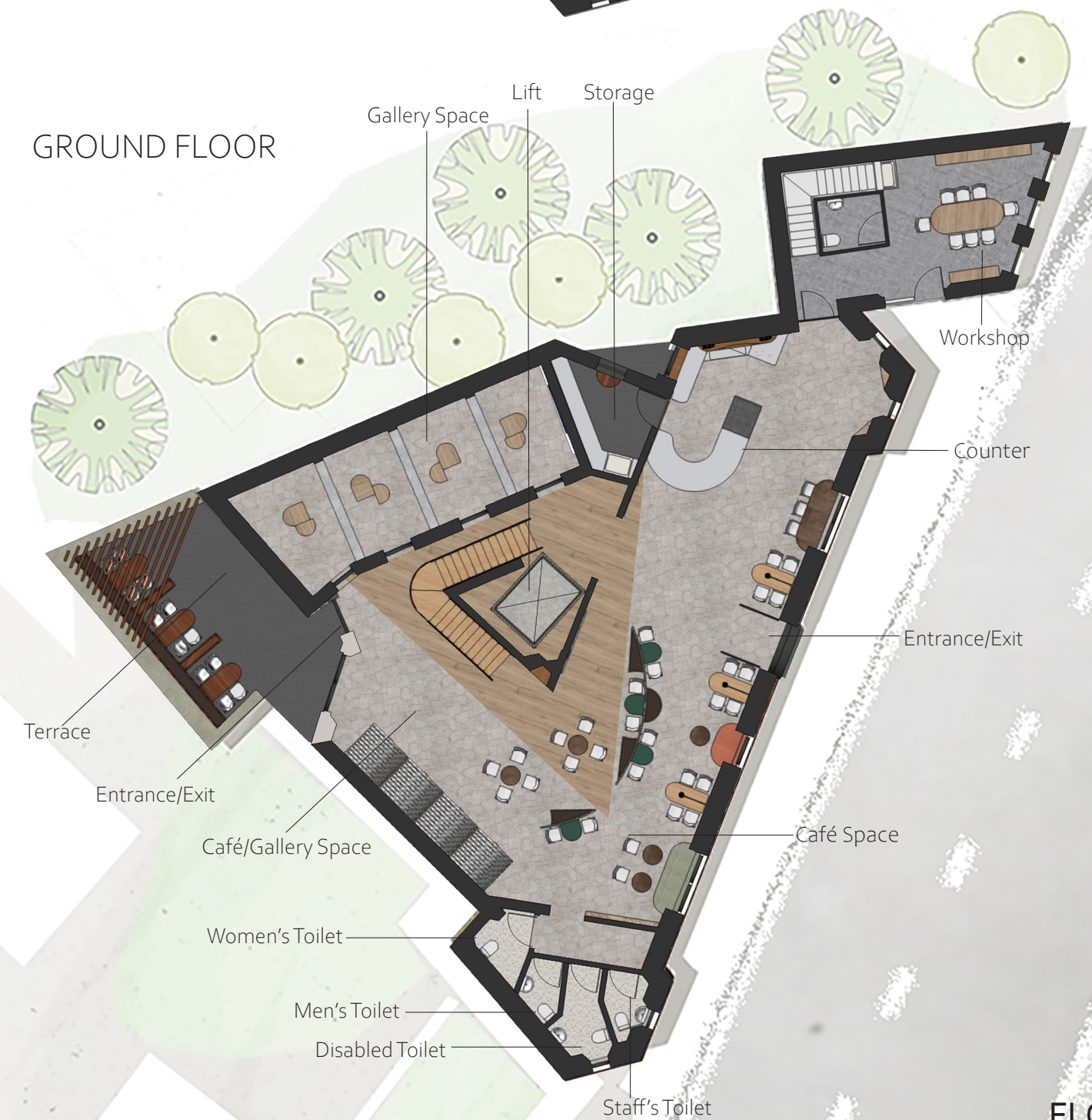
My initial concept for the interior design was to create a joyful, colorful, and warm space, as this is how I perceive people with Down syndrome. I wanted to design an environment that would serve as a positive backdrop for fostering social integration of individuals with Down syndrome.



## FIRST FLOOR



## GROUND FLOOR



FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE 1:150



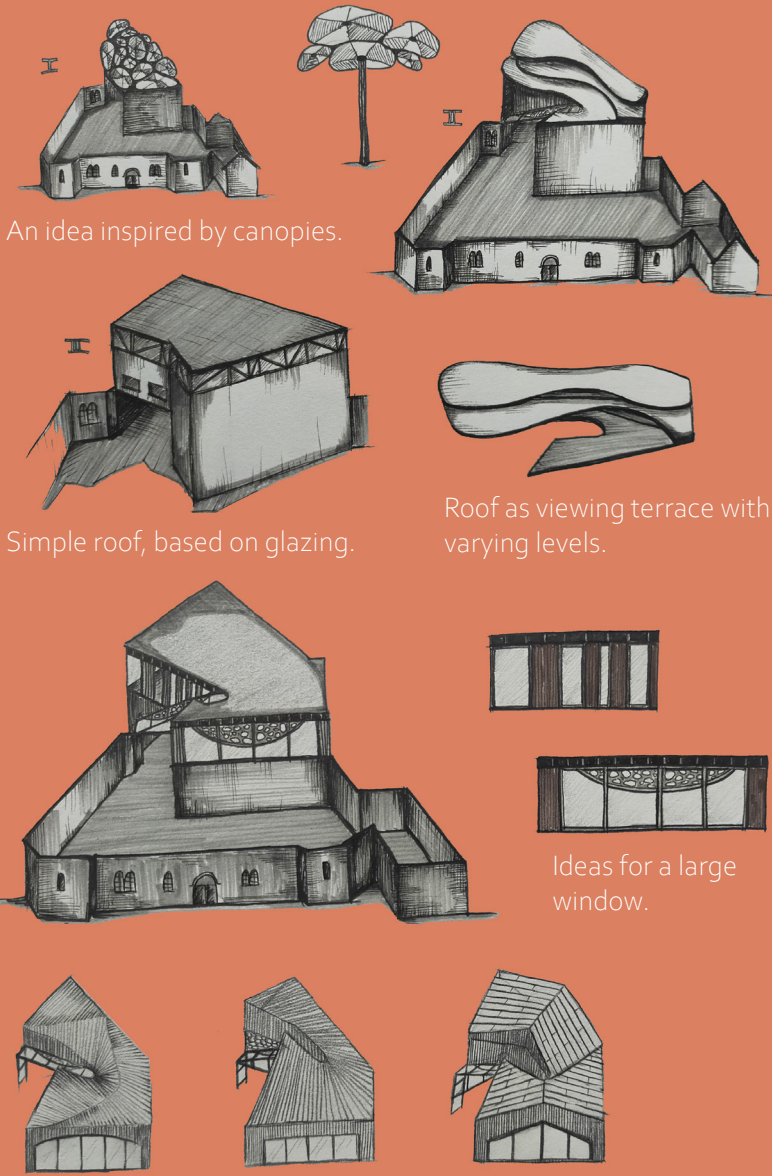
LONG SECTION



SHORT SECTION



EXTENTION DRAWINGS



An idea inspired by canopies.

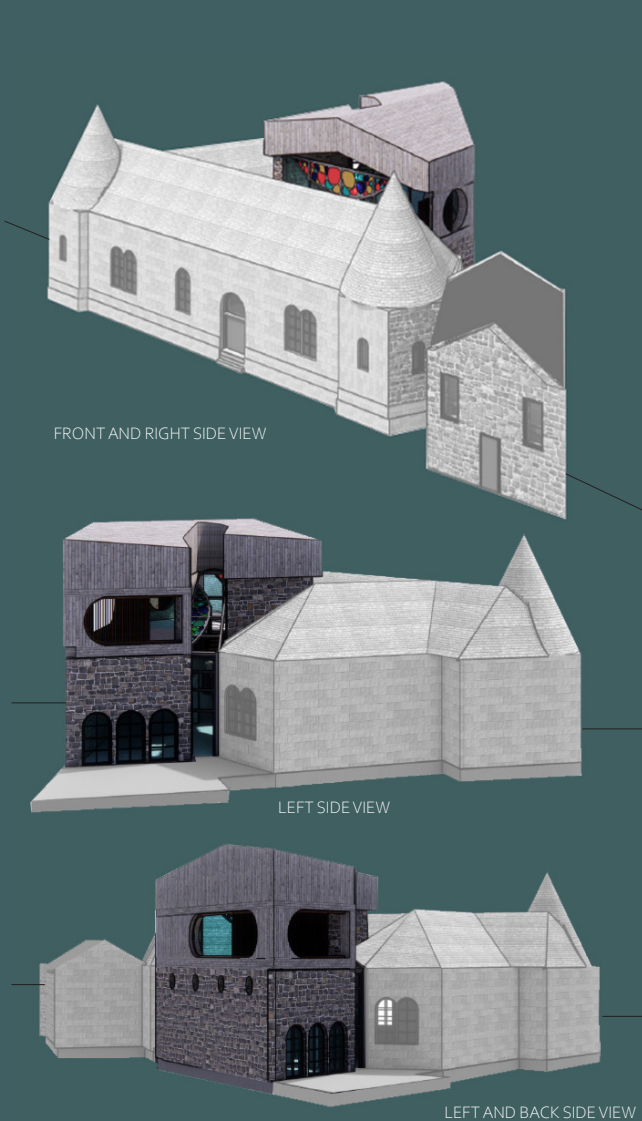
Simple roof, based on glazing.

Roof as viewing terrace with varying levels.

Ideas for a large window.

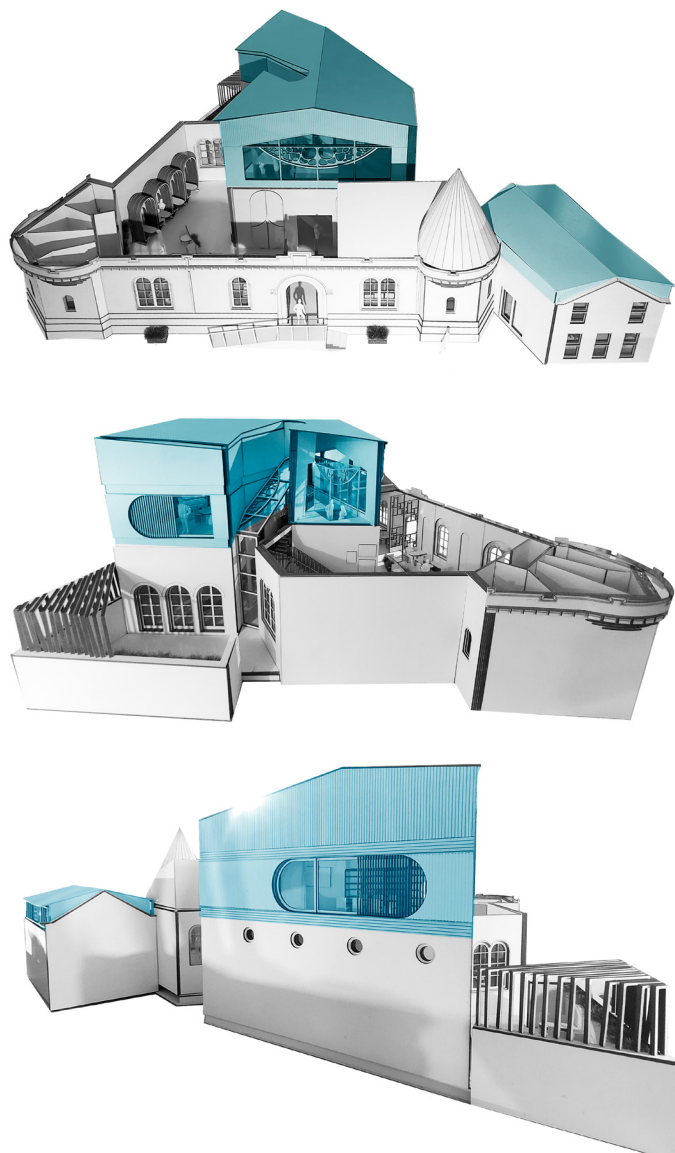
Raising of the rear of the building, with large stained glass windows. Various roof styles. These are the forms I have developed achieving the final version of the building elevation.

EXTENTION VISUALS



The building extension is clad in high-quality spruce wood.

EXTENTION IN 3D MODEL



The need to expand the building results from the need to create additional functional spaces, essential for the implementation of the concept. The expanded parts include: a training room for future employers of people with Down syndrome and for people with DS who want to take up employment and a quiet room for employees.





INTERIOR IN 3D MODEL



A view of the lift and stairs leading to the first floor, where there is a training room for prospective employers of people with Down's syndrome and for people with DS who would like to start working.

A view of the gallery where artists from different backgrounds can exhibit their work. Above is the training room.

A view of the café space, a workplace for people with Down's syndrome. The space is intended to be a place to build social relationships between the people with Down syndrome who work there and the clients. This space gives an opportunity to break down barriers, to develop and become independent for people affected by trisomy and to create together an inclusive environment based on mutual respect and sensitivity.

MATERIALS

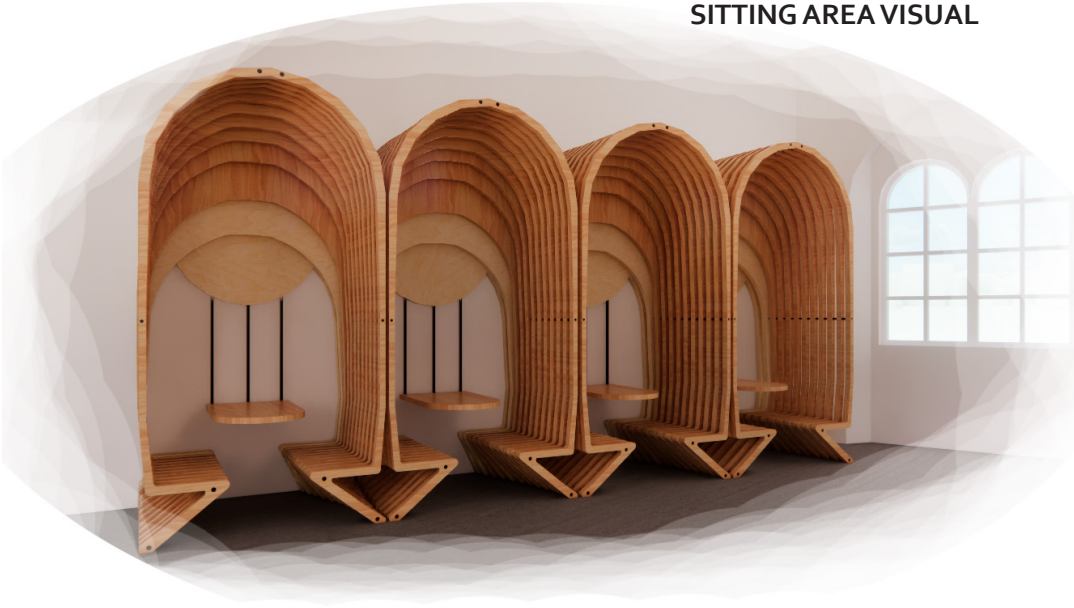
When selecting materials for the project, I focused on choosing materials that are natural, safe for the environment and for people.



- 1. STONE
- 2. SPRUCE WOOD
- 3. MOSAIC OF WOOD PIECES

- 4. WOOD
- 5. COLOURED CONCRETE
- 6. COLOURED GLASS

DETAIL

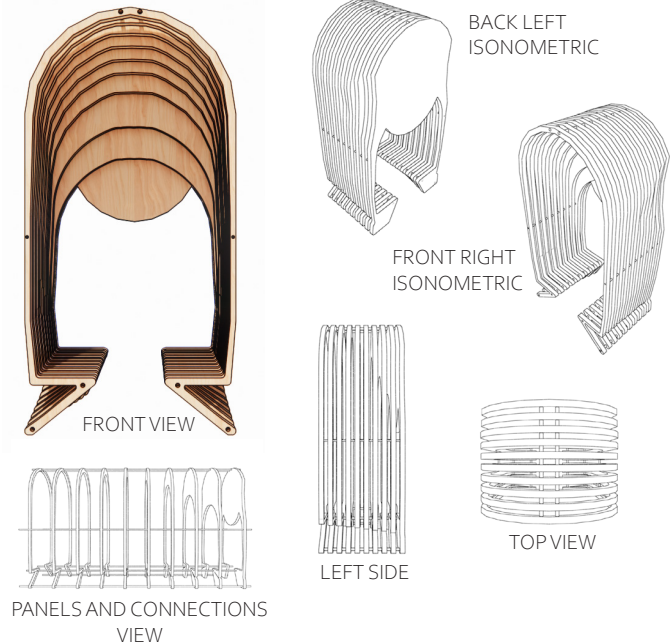


SITTING AREA VISUAL

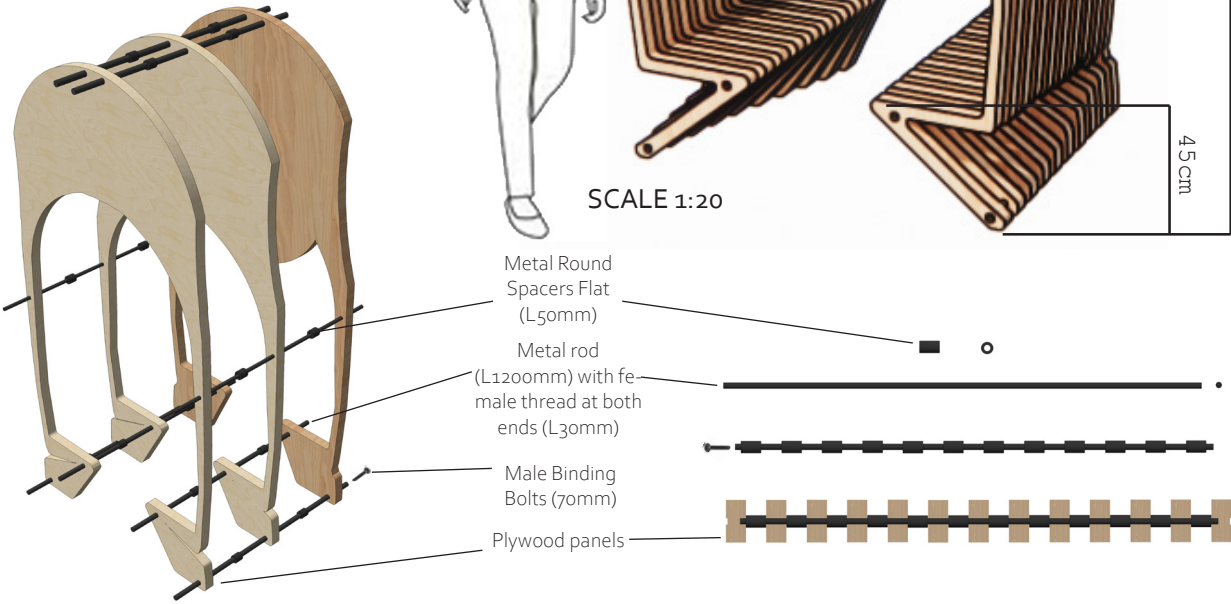
- The structure is made of:
1. 6 cm thick plywood from which irregular shapes have been cut to form the seating area.
  2. Metal rods placed in appropriately drilled holes in the wooden panels.
  3. Metal Round Spacers Flat
  4. Socket Countersunk Barrel Nuts



SCALE 1:20



TECHNICAL DETAILS







CAFÉ COUNTER



CAFÉ ENTRY



GALLERY SPACE



CAFÉ INTEGRATION SPACE



GALLERY SPACE