

A: Great, I have some demographics questions I'd like to ask you at the beginning but I just want to say that if there's something that you don't feel comfortable answering, you can say I don't want to answer this question and that's absolutely fine. Also, everything you say will be anonymised so there won't be a way to link what you say back to you.

V: That's fine, yeah.

A: Okay, so first question in terms of demographics, how do you identify in terms of your gender?

V: Female.

A: And what is your racial identity? Sorry, I don't think I can hear you. Hello? Can you check if you've muted? Hello?

V: No, it's ...

A: I think now you have muted. Hello? I can hear you now, sorry about that. I just asked about your racial identity.

V: British.

A: Perfect. Can you tell me a bit about your family arrangements, are you married, single, do you have any children?

V: Yeah, married, two children.

A: How old are you?

V: 61.

A: And where do you currently live?

[REDACTED]

A: No, that's okay.

V: It's in Lancashire.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: Perfect. And what is your current occupation?

V: Retired.

A: Can you tell me a bit about your education, do you have a degree?

V: No, only as far as A-levels.

A: Can you tell me your current income?

V: We have pensions.

A: And can you tell me how many times you've visited the Craft and Design Centre?

V: Oh, probably between 15 and 20.

A: And how much would you say your average spending is at the Centre?

V: Sometimes, on average? Probably £40 because sometimes I don't buy anything, obviously, when I go, I may just go for a coffee and a look around, and then other times I may just buy a pair of earrings, and other times it can be something that is more expensive.

A: And how much would you say your average spending is in other similar organisations?

V: Probably less because they're more, it's probably more is online, especially the last 6 months obviously, so smaller purchases, so probably £20.

A: Perfect. Okay, we can make a start, I don't have any more demographic questions. So, can you tell me a bit about yourself and your relationship with craft?

V: Yeah, I just like more different, quirky things which individual makers seem to have more than, you know, big companies. For instance, last weekend I bought some coasters and they were made of glass, they were from Etsy, from a maker online there, so I just like things that are slightly different.

A: Do you make any type of crafting or making yourself?

V: I do flower pressing, but that's about it; I'd prefer other people to do it and for me to buy it.

A: How did you develop this interest in handmade products?

V: I think simply because I felt it was better to actually support more local artists, and also because both my children, when they were younger, were interested in art and I've also always liked going to art galleries and things like that, so it's been a long time.

A: You've mentioned that you've realised it's important to support local artists, can you tell me a bit more about that?

V: Yes, I'm just interested in especially younger people who are starting doing things, especially painting and jewellery are the two main things I'm interested in. Yeah, just because I find it really fascinating, and especially in the Craft Centre where you can see them making these things, which is really nice, and also, I think it's more personal, a lot of the things. Even at the Craft Centre when you come to buy the cards, they would write things in them for you which is a lot more personal than just, for instance, buying a card from Smiths or something like that, you know, a birthday card or a Christmas card, it's just a lot more personal.

A: Was making and crafts typical in your family when you were growing up?

V: No, not really, because I was the eldest girl and I had three younger brothers, so our house was very much sports, football and cricket, so no. Although my mum taught me to knit and to crochet, and to do things like that because obviously at that time, my mum was very much into making clothes and knitting, especially for us as children, because we're talking a very long time ago, so yes, those sorts of basic things but not so much painting and things like that. And also, at school we didn't, I think today at school is a lot more diverse what they teach, whereas ours was just simply either needlework or painting, and for boys it was woodwork or painting, so it wasn't as diverse as it is now.

A: Did you enjoy learning from your mum, you know, knitting and crochet, was that something that you liked and picked up?

V: Not particularly, no, because I've never done it since.

A: And you've mentioned that your children had an interest in art. Did you make with them when they were growing up?

V: Did I make? Yes, we always did gluing and things with cardboard and things like that, but also there were a lot more programmes when my children were younger, used to do things like that, even down to things like, I guess you won't remember, Blue Peter and things like this; they were always making things and children always wanted to copy what was on TV, so we did do making, yes.

A: I don't know if you've thought about this in those terms, but what does craft and making mean to you as a woman?

V: I think as I've said, I think that's changed over the years because for my mum it was more, and especially for her mother as well, who was a seamstress, I think when there weren't so

many things to buy so easily, and when people didn't have so much money, disposable income as what they have now, it was much more practical for the likes of my mum and my grandmothers to make things, as in knitting and sewing and things like that, so I think now it's too readily available to buy things, so a lot of people don't actually do it themselves. I know I'm guilty of that because it's easier to go to the Craft Centre and see somebody else doing it than to actually do it yourself, but then everybody is different to how they perceive things, aren't they, you know, people may enjoy doing it more so it's not something that I would particularly find that I would want to do. As I've said, I prefer to look and to see people, and to get something that is different than to actually do it myself.

A: Have you bought any art that was considered feminist or more political?

V: No, definitely not because I'm not particularly politically-minded or feminist-minded, to be honest, no. I don't agree with people being treated badly or for women to not have the same pay, don't get me wrong, and things like that, and I always vote, but it's not a thing that's, when choosing things to buy those two things don't come as an interest.

A: Thank you. Do you remember how you've first found out about the Craft and Design Centre?

V: Yes, just through marketing, I think, through different platforms. My friend and I, when we used to go to Manchester, it's always a nice place to just go and have a coffee, and the friend I go with, she is very into making, so she's very interested in, she's more of a maker, the kind of person she is, she does lots of crocheting and lots of art things, so yeah, we just used to start going together.

A: That's really nice. Do you remember your first visit?

V: Yes, but not probably in detail. I do remember when I first went, I think it's a really lovely building as well, that quite interests me as well because it's quite a unique building.

A: What do you like about the building itself?

V: Just because it is quite unique and very, I like the light roof. I just think it's a very quirky building and those sort of, as I've said before, quirky things tend to interest me because it's like, it's not just like a square concrete building, it's a very interesting building.

A: Are you aware of the history of the Centre?

V: No, does it have an interesting one?

A: It does, it used to be a fish market and then it went through some years of changes before it became what it is now.

V: Oh, interesting.

A: Sometimes they do tours there as well, when they tell you about the history of the Centre.

V: That's really interesting, I'll be looking that up, I didn't know it was a fish market, no.

A: Do you remember what brought you to the Centre in your last visit?

V: Well, the last time I went was Christmas when they had a really nice string quartet, and there was gin that they were doing, you know, just promoting different things, and it was the Christmas one. Obviously since, because of lockdown, nobody's been anywhere, it's been shut anyway since March, wasn't it? That's why it was for Christmas because it was a really nice thing to go to, and they had a string quartet doing singing and playing, that was really nice.

A: That's really nice, actually a lot of people that I've interviewed, the last time they were there was for a Christmas event.

V: Which is sad, but I understand they're going to start opening for two, I've had an email that they'll start opening on two days.

A: Yeah, in August. Can you tell me a bit about your visits to the Centre, you know, from the moment that you walk in; do you go to all the shops, do you have a coffee, how do you move in the space?

V: I do, I go up the stairs and I go around to look in every single one, and then I do the bottom floor, and then I usually have my lunch, so yes, I look at everything.

A: That's nice. Do you recall anything that drew your attention when you walked in during one of your visits?

V: Well, if there's a special thing on, then I guess I do, I notice that, but otherwise no, I just tend to go up the stairs and tend to do mine, my friend and I take it from the top and then go around the other, although I have been to, I went to, was it the Flying Carpet exhibition? So, if there's something like that then obviously, we head for that first before we look into the different studios.

A: You've mentioned before the roof as well; is it something that you tend to look at, that you find interesting?

V: Yes, I do because it's very light, I like the light, so I probably do, and the floor is really interesting, it's nice tiled floor, from what I can remember as well.

A: That's true, and they were doing some work on the floor recently and they were saying that it is the original Victorian tiles that they have.

V: Oh, I can imagine, yes. I do like the building, but I think the whole of the Northern Quarter in Manchester is probably one of the more interesting parts of Manchester anyway, you know, where it's situated.

A: What do you like about the Northern Quarter?

V: Just because it's off the main through-affair of shops in Manchester, just out of the way slightly and they have nice coffee shops, and they have a particularly nice flower shop and plant shop, so yeah, I just find, it's more relaxing than being in the actual, main centre of Manchester with the usual shops, Marks & Spencer's, Next and Primark.

A: Are you aware of any other similar spaces like the Craft and Design Centre?

V: In Manchester?

A: In the UK.

V: Yeah, [REDACTED] they have a Skipton Auction Market where they have a thing called Art in the Pen, like twice a year, which is very interesting, it's just individual makers, so that's very interesting, and I have a friend who lives in York and I go to see her quite often, and there's a place in York, again, which is just an alley with individual makers, but being in York it's slightly more expensive than in Manchester and other places; I guess because they have to pay more expensive rent on the property being in York, but they're the only ones I tend to go to, unless there's a specific craft fair, which lots of places have them now, don't they? Then I would tend to go to that, but no, the one in Manchester is the one that I go to most often.

A: Can you tell me a bit about your interactions with the makers at the Centre?

V: Yeah, I find most of them very pleasant, and they did an online pop-up shop during lockdown, which I went on to and I've bought some earrings, and the young lady who I bought the earrings from, she was very pleasant, sending me messages and if I've received my earrings, and even to let me know that she was posting them that day; yeah, I found them all really nice.



A: Because you tell me a bit more about the online sale, you know, from your interactions at the studio, do you tend to ask them questions, do you tend to browse quietly, can you tell me a bit about, you know, how it feels to walk about the studios?

V: I do tend to just browse, but then if I buy something in particular, I like to know how it's made, so then I would interact more with them then, but quite often, the times that I've been, they've been quite busy so you don't like to take up too much of their time if they have a lot of people in there, but I've always found them all very, very pleasant and willing to help, willing to actually say how they make things if you ask them.

A: How do you find the fact that they have their shop where the studio is as well, you know, seeing them work maybe, how does that feel

V: I like it, it's my sort of thing, I do like that, yes.

A: What do you like about it?

V: I like seeing them work, I like seeing their work up on the walls, to choose from, yeah, I find it more interesting if it's in the same space, and if it means that you have to wait because they're serving somebody else it's fine, you can always walk around and come back, so I would never see it as a problem that their shop is in the same place.

A: How do you feel about the diversity or lack of diversity and the Centre? Is this something that you've considered or paid attention to?

V: Yes, I think there's quite a lot of jewellery and even if someone does something, because I bought a lampshade from one of the ladies, she does jewellery too, so whether it's because they find jewellery easier to sell because perhaps it's lower priced, so they do two things, I just think a lot of them tend to do jewellery. I guess somebody could, it would be quite nice if

there was somebody there who perhaps did handmade clothes, I don't know how feasible that would be?

A: And in terms of people who work there, do you think there's enough diversity or is this something that you haven't really paid attention to?

V: Yeah, I think there is enough diversity. As I say, I think a lot of them tend to do jewellery, not as their main thing but alongside something else, and yes, they could, but I don't know what to suggest that they could diversity into, that they could let a studio to somebody different, or perhaps if there was somebody with handmade pickles, jams or stuff? I don't know, it's difficult to try and tell other people because different people would have different opinions what they would want to buy.

A: Yes, it really depends what you are looking for.

V: Exactly, yes, and everybody is different, aren't they?

A: In terms of yourself, I mean when you go and browse things, do you think there's enough in terms of product range?

V: Yes, for what I like, yes. But as I'm saying, if there was somewhere that was doing handcrafted clothes or food things, then I would pay attention to that as well, so because I would be open to go and browse in all of them. As I've said, I look in all of them, so whatever it was I would look.

A: We talked a little bit before about the exhibition space, have you attended any of the launch events for exhibitions? Do you remember any of them that stood out for you and, in general, how do you find that space within the Centre?

V: No, I haven't been to an actual launch evening, but like I've said, I went to the Magic Carpet one and I went to one last year and can't remember for the life of me what it was now,

but I've always found them interesting and I think the space, being quite near the front door, it grabs, but I think the Magic Carpet one was on the bottom floor in the middle, I think, nearer the front, so it was in quite a good spot, as far as I could tell.

A: How about the shops? How do you find about the shops within the Centre, when you're thinking about the building, you've told me a bit about the building before?

V: Oh what, the studio spaces? Yeah, I think it's quite well set out, yeah, I approve.

A: How long are your visits normally?

V: I would guess probably 2 hours.

A: And which days or times do you normally visit?

V: Oh, it can just vary to when my friends are going, or whether I'm in Manchester, so there would be no set days or any time that I could go, it could be completely random, but it would definitely be, the timewise, it would generally be morning time to then have lunch there and then come home, especially if I was driving, before it would be busy with traffic, so it would be during the day time.

A: You've mentioned before that normally you visit with your friends.

V: Yes, quite often with a girlfriend, yes.

A: Do you also visit by yourself?

V: I do, yes, if I'm in Manchester.

A: Which one do you prefer?

V: Both the same, equally.

A: Have you ever visited with small children?

V: No.

A: Have you taken anyone to see the Craft and Design Centre?

V: Well, I've introduced my friend to it and my mum, when she came, she doesn't live near here but when she's been up staying with me, we went, so yeah, I took her there for a one-off visit.

A: Why do you take them to the Centre, why do you think they would enjoy the visit?

V: Because I just think it's a nice, like I've said before, it's a nice space to wander around without the hustle and bustle of Manchester.

A: Have you attended any workshops at the Centre?

V: No, I haven't, no, but I've seen them advertised online, there's the still life painting ones and different things, but no, I haven't.

A: Have you attended any workshops, any craft workshops in general?

V: No, because as I've said before, it doesn't really interest me.

A: When you visit, do you take any photographs of the space?

V: No, I don't but then again, I'm not into, I'm not a person who takes photographs very often. My husband tends to do that when we're out, it's not something that actually interests me, to take pictures, no.

A: How about of things that you've bought from the Centre?

V: Oh, taking pictures of those? Yeah, I have actually, I have a quirky pot on the wall that has an air plant growing in it, and I took a picture of that because I thought it looked like this pot had hair growing out of it, so I think I took a picture of that and sent it to the little ones, and also to my mum.

A: That's nice. You've mentioned before that you have followed the online pop-up sale that the Centre did; can you tell me a bit more about that?

V: Yes, I think it was on a Friday evening from 6 o'clock, and all the makers went online and were selling their things, and you could browse, so I've bought a pair of earrings, actually. I think it was a good idea, but I think people were just trying to do anything, weren't they, during lockdown to try and sell something, so yeah, I thought it was a really good idea.

A: How do you find their online presence in general, the Craft and Design Centre's, do you follow them?

V: I follow them on Twitter and on Instagram. Yeah, it's quite good, they've had some good things on Instagram this week about reopening and how they were cleaning to make it safe for everybody to go back. It's like, I guess it's the same with all social media because you tend to follow quite a lot of rubbish things, and I'd say it's been more during these last few months when people haven't been able to go out, that I've probably paid more attention to those, you know, to Twitter and Instagram, so yeah, I think they do quite a good job.

A: Do you follow any of the makers?

V: I do, one I've bought something of because you tend to, like, click on things and you just, before you know it, you follow them all, so yes, I do; but it's the same as the actual Craft Centre, whether you're actually paying much attention to anything, which is this thing with all social media, really. Well, especially when you're my age, more than younger people, they might take more interest, sometimes I just flick through it.

A: Do you have a favourite studio at the Centre?

V: What, to buy from or to look in?

A: Both.

V: I like the lampshade lady because I think the lampshades are absolutely gorgeous, so yes, I like looking in there, I only have one lampshade, but I do like looking at hers. I think I like them all, really.

A: Which is your favourite thing that you've bought from the Centre?

V: That's difficult because they're all different, because I've bought jewellery, it's always earrings, I think I have about 5 pairs of earrings from there which are all different, pots, I have a painting and one lampshade; I like them all because they're all different, and I also hope that because I've bought them, that I would like some, because I have a philosophy that I only keep things in my house that are either very useful or I like them.

A: That's a good philosophy, get rid of all the clutter that we gather in our homes. You've mentioned that you have one lampshade, is this from the studio that you've mentioned that you like?

V: Yeah, Jade Lees I think her name is.

A: What do you like about this lampshade?

V: Just, again, because it's different and I'm know that I'm not going to see it in somebody else's house, unless they've bought one from her, obviously, which is highly unlikely that I would go that person's house; nobody else is going to have one.

A: Do you like to have unique, handmade things around?

V: I do, yes.

A: And how do you feel about handmade products versus mass-produced products?

V: I much prefer the handmade products, but on a practical term, sometimes you just have to go for the mass-produced because of the costs.

A: And how do you feel about the handmade products that you own?

V: Yes, I really like them and I will keep them forever, whereas things that you don't, that are mass-produced, you tend to change them, so perhaps in the big scale things, if you've actually paid more money for things you may actually keep them for longer, but I haven't tested that theory yet and probably getting too old to test it now.

A: We've talked a bit about things that you've bought during your visits; have you bought any presents?

V: Yes, I have. I think at Christmas time I've bought quite a few things that were presents, yes, so definitely.

A: So, it's a place that you would go for presents, the Craft and Design Centre?

V: Yes, definitely.

A: Why do you think it's a good place for presents?

V: Again, just because the things are different and, you know, especially like Christmas times and things, people have so many of the same stuff, that is the only way you can just call it, stuff, so if you get somebody something that is slightly different and you would hope, again, that they would keep it and think that there's some actual thought, more thought that had gone into buying that than something that is mass-produced.

A: Does anything else stand out from the things that you've bought from the Centre?

V: No, as I've said I've chosen them all particularly because I liked them and they were different, so again, all I can say I like them all because they're individual, so they all stand out in different ways because of what they are.

A: How do you feel about the prices at the Craft and Design Centre?

V: I think some things are expensive but that goes without saying for a lot of the handmade things because of the time and the effort, and also the materials because they tend to use nicer materials that had gone into it, so I quite understand why they are the price they are, but then, like I've said, I'd probably like to have all the lampshades in every room of my house, but then I wouldn't, or couldn't justify spending so much on a lampshade just to put in every room of my house, however much I would like to. I quite understand why she charges what she does for the lampshade, so it's all swings and roundabouts, and you can buy cheaper things, like a pair of earrings for £25, so you don't have to spend so much, and I think a lot of them, like the artists, the ones that do the paintings and everything, I think they get commissions and things, so I can always understand why the prices are what they are.

A: Have you commissioned any work at the Craft and Design Centre?

V: No.

A: Have you ever noticed the donation boxes at the Centre?

V: No, are there some? I haven't.

A: There is one on the ground floor.

V: Oh no, I haven't.

A: Have you ever donated to arts and crafts organisations?

V: No.

A: How about museums and donations boxes when you visit?

V: Yes, because I've been in the Football Museum and I've donated there, and also in things like the Walker Gallery in Manchester, but I've always seen those, I can honestly say I haven't seen the one in the Craft Centre.



A: Would you be more or less inclined to make a donation at the moment, with the pandemic and everything else that is going on?

V: Probably yes, as I've said that's why I did the pop-up shop and if I wanted something, I try to look on websites like Etsy, you know, where different makers do things on there; yes, I probably would.

A: You've mentioned Etsy and that you've shopped a bit there during this time; would you be more inclined to go and buy something directly from artists, instead of making a donation?

V: I would probably make a donation if I went physically to the Centre and I saw the donation box, that's when I would be more likely to donate, if I was actually there and I saw the donation box.

A: And in terms of the things that you've bought from Etsy, were you looking for something specific or you were looking to support makers?

V: Both, really, but every time I'd gone on was because I was looking for something specific.

A: How has the pandemic impacted your engagement with the arts?

V: I find it quite sad that we've not been able to go anywhere, obviously, and also we had quite a few theatre tickets booked, but instead of getting refunds we've had vouchers, so as soon as the theatres are back and running again, we'll book using the vouchers, so yes, I think it's very sad time for all of them.

A: Are you planning to visit the Craft and Design Centre when they reopen?

V: Yes, I probably will when I feel it's, I mean I live about, it's an hour's drive so probably at the moment, I wouldn't go to Manchester because I don't have any need to go, so it would probably be in a few months' time, when hopefully things have settled down a bit more with the pandemic situation.

A: How do you feel about visiting those spaces when they reopen again? You've mentioned the theatre tickets.

V: Yes, I will visit them all again; as soon as I go to Manchester I will go to the Craft Centre, it's just when, I know they're going to reopen on two days, I think it's Fridays and Saturdays or something, and I now they've worked from just seeing online, I think everywhere, like theatres and that, when they can reopen, doing everything they can to make the space safe, you know, to government guidelines and things, so yeah, I think it will be absolutely fine, it's just hopefully the people who visit those places will bear in mind the situation that is going on, because if everybody behaved appropriately it would be fine, wouldn't it?

A: Do you feel that social distances measures or wearing a mask will have an impact on your visits?

V: Me personally no, I just think it's something we're gonna have to get used to, so if people want to enjoy these sorts of spaces again, then like I've said, just play by the rules and it would be fine.

A: How do you think that the pandemic has impacted the Centre and other similar spaces in terms of visitors and events at the moment and in the future?

V: I personally think it's had a devastating effect on the arts in general, same with theatres and museums, galleries, all these sorts of spaces, and I can't see that it will perhaps get back to anywhere near normal until next year; I just hope that the majority of them can survive, really.

A: It's a difficult period for the arts.

V: Yes, really, really bad. Like I say, even museums and art galleries, and things. I just think they will all have to find their feet, and obviously the bigger ones will be able to sustain it better, but the smaller ones, I'm sure it will be a massive struggle for them.

A: Thank you so much, I don't have any more questions. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your experiences at the Centre?

V: No, I think we've covered everything, it's very interesting and I hope they all survived, so people like me can start going again and hopefully that they haven't suffered too badly, but then it's been the same for lots and lots of businesses, hasn't it, so it's very sad.

A: It is. Thank you so much, this has been lovely. Let me stop the recording now.