

A: Before we begin, I have some demographics questions if that's okay?

L: Yeah, that's perfect.

A: Okay, so first one: can you tell me how you identify in terms of your gender?

L: Female.

A: And what is your racial identity?

L: White British.

A: And can you tell me a bit about your current family situation, are you married, with a partner, single, do you have any children?

L: No children, I'm just living with my partner, but I'm not married.

A: Okay. And how old are you?

L: I'm 27.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: And can you tell me your current income?

L: Yes, it's £29,000, and then I have an opportunity to gain some commission as well.

A: Perfect, thank you. And can you tell me, approximately, doesn't have to be precise, how many times have you visited Manchester Craft and Design Centre?

L: Oh, I would say around 50 times, maybe more.

A: Perfect, more than 50. And what would you say is your spending per visit at the Centre? It can be a range, or it can be an amount?

L: So, sometimes I just go to have a browse and spend my lunchtime looking about, but when I do spend something, I'd say it would generally range between £5 and £30.

A: Perfect. And what would you say your average spending is in craft and design in other spaces, not the Manchester Craft and Design Centre, per visit?

L: Okay, I'd say about £20.

A: Okay, thank you so much. That's all in terms of demographics that I had, we can make a start then. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your relationship with crafts and making?

L: So, I'm quite a crafty person myself, I do a bit of embroidery and knitting, and things like that, but nothing too serious, just when I have spare time. I like enjoying other people's crafts and buying other people's crafts because there's something a bit more personal about giving something like that as a gift to somebody and having something like that in your home

because they're generally one-off creations and they're just a lot more interesting than having something mass produced, and you get a sort of feel of the person that's made them.

A: You've mentioned that you are a crafty person yourself and you do a bit of embroidery and knitting. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

L: Yeah, since I was little, I've always been interested in making things and I've always been making cards and drawing, and maybe about 4 years ago, me and my friend went to an embroidery class, just round the corner from the Manchester Craft and Design Centre actually, in a bar called Common, and a local maker was making a sort of introduction to embroidery and taught us some basics, and then after that, I went away and was watching YouTube videos and things and was teaching myself how to do more intricate designs, and started looking at other people's work on Instagram to copy, and then I started making embroidery presents for people's birthdays after that, but it's not something I do all the time, just as and when I have a bit more of free time, if I see something that I find inspiring and want to copy.

A: And was craft and making typical in your family when you were growing up?

L: No, not really, there's not really anyone in family who is crafty. My brother does a bit of painting now, but our parents aren't crafty, and our grandparents aren't.

A: And were you making anything when you were younger, or did you start later on?

L: I'd say it was more later on, maybe when I was a teenager, and then when I went to university.

A: You've mentioned that you went to this embroidery workshop at Common, is it something that you do often now, or was that a one-off event for you?

L: I go to, like, maybe once or twice a year I'd go to a class or something, so I've done a pottery workshop, and I've had knitting lessons and crochet lessons, and I've been to, like the shops in cafés where you can paint your own pots and cups and things like that, so it's something that I maybe do every 6 months or so, but not as like a very regular thing.

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

L: I think it's just a way of expressing yourself, really, and it's a chance, I suppose it's a bit like self-care because it's a chance to escape sort of everyday life and try something new, and just to give yourself a bit of time to step away from things and focus on something that you can sort of make pretty and, yeah, just kind of enjoy yourself, really.

A: Have you ever bought anything that is feminist or more political? For example, I know there is a community of feminist embroidery, anything like that: have you come across it?

L: Yes, I've bought a few things as presents for people, like embroidery patterns and stuff like "smash the patriarchy" and things like that. I generally buy from female makers and female designers, generally, and there's a lady I follow on Instagram who does very feminist redesigns of plates and things, she finds odd plates and teacups and then writes inspiring quotes that ladies have said and powerful feminist messages on them, so I've bought a couple of those types of things.

A: You've mentioned that you have bought them as a present; can you tell me a bit more about that?

L: Yes, so generally, when I'm looking for someone's birthday presents or anniversary presents, I generally do try and look for things that are craft-related or things that have been made specifically for that person, so a lot of the time with the Craft and Design Centre, because our office isn't too far from the venue, we generally go and buy something for the

people in the office whenever it's their birthday, so everyone in the office had something from the Craft and Design Centre, so we normally get some of the tiles that were made there, or broches or jewellery, as it's a bit more of a personal gift.

A: And you've mentioned that you have bought some of the feminist stuff, like the "smash the patriarchy" embroidery; could tell me a bit more about that, who did you buy it for?

L: Okay, so those would have been bought for friends I've grown up with, went to school with and people that I met at university, so my sort of close group of girl mates, and my mum as well, I've bought stuff for my mum.

A: Why did you think they would like those sorts of presents?

L: Just generally through their personalities and things that I knew they are interested in. One of the girls that I bought stuff like that for, she's a political campaigner and works a lot with women and young people in terms of getting their voices heard, so I thought she'd appreciate something like that, so it's generally focused around those personalities and knowing what they'd like rather than me buying something that's (XXX 11:29) on them or anything like that.

A: And you've mentioned that you're trying to support female makers; can you tell me a little bit why you think that's important?

L: I think because it's, women in business is generally a good thing, and I think that as a woman, I should be supporting people achieve their dreams and help them develop what they are doing and help them spread the word, and by buying stuff off them and sharing it and giving it to friends, hopefully they're gonna get repeat business. Generally, within craft space a lot of the makers are women anyway, so I suppose part of it is default that that's the craft that is available, but also, it's a lot down to me wanting to support women and help them continue.

A: Talking about the Craft and Design Centre, can you tell me a little bit about how you found out about the Craft and Design Centre?

L: Yes, so I first knew about it because, so my mum's always worked in the city centre so she was aware of it, I work in arts marketing so I'm aware of all the different venues in Manchester, so I was aware of it through work and then through just generally pottering about through town, but I didn't really visit the centre up until 4 or 5 years ago, that was my first visit.

A: And do you remember your first visit?

L: Yeah, I remember I think I'd gone for an event, like one of the open exhibitions, or I can't remember what it was for. Oh actually, no, I think it was, they were doing a degree show there, so it was exhibiting some of the degree work, I think it was Manchester Metropolitan University that was being exhibited, and I remember just thinking the space is a lot smaller than I envisioned, and the exhibition space was a lot smaller. I suppose I'm used to going to exhibitions in larger galleries and museums, and I hadn't realised quite how small the exhibition space would be, but it's obviously dominated mostly by the studios. I also remember being really impressed by the building itself and all the signage from the fish stalls and things, thought it was quite quirky.

A: You've mentioned that you are working in arts marketing; were you aware through your work, or maybe by visiting the Centre, you mentioned the fish market, about its history?

L: I think I've first seen it by visiting the Centre and seeing the old signs, and then through work, I went on to research it a bit more when I first saw it to work out what it actually was.

A: And did you, how did you feel about, you know, learning more about the history of the Centre?

L: I think it's just a really nice way to develop the space and use it because so many old buildings get knocked down and redeveloped into new things, but because the Craft and Design Centre has kept some of the history and the bare bones of their structure, it's a nice little nod to the history of the building and makes you feel a bit more connected to the space, and it's a little bit more memorable as well.

A: You've mentioned that you feel more connected to the space; can you elaborate more on that?

L: I think because with, like, the areas surrounding Craft and Design Centre, because there's a lot of shops and you've got Manchester Arndale across the road basically, and we're so used to, as a society, having everything mass produced and all the shops looking the same, and there not being anything sort of specific or unique about a lot of places, being in the Craft and Design Centre and having old market feel to it, and having all of the old signage and nods to the past, it just makes you feel like they've respected the space a lot more and they're trying to tell a story through the space, it makes you, as a visitor, feel that they are bothered about the journey and bothered about remembering the past and making you aware of it, and so I feel more valued and interested in the space than I am in more sort of traditional shopping setting.

A: It's a very unique building and a very interesting space, and like you've said before about the building that you (XXX 17:21) by it, was it, you know, thinking about the history of the space as well, or also, you know, the structure of the building and the way that this space is laid out, you know, with the shops, with the exhibition space, with the café?

L: Sorry, what was the question?

A: I mean how did you find the building itself with, you know, its layout, the shops and the exhibition space, and the actual building itself?

L: Yeah, so the building itself is laid out really nicely with the units around the outside, and then you've got the exhibition space greeting you as you walk in, and you've got the café just behind that, there's quite a community feel to it. I really love the way that it's all open inside, and one of my favourite things to do is go to a little walkway on the first floor and look out over the centre, I think that's a really nice view, and gives you a feel of everything that's on offer there.

A: Can you remember what brought you to the centre in your last visit?

L: Let me think, I think the last visit would most probably have just been a lunchtime visit, having a little bit of a stroll and escape from the office, because it's quite a nice space to escape in from the hectic nature of the city centre, it's quite peaceful, so I think that was probably the last time I was in there, I can't recall going there for a specific purchase last time.

A: You've mentioned before that you frequently go there to buy gifts for your workmates and people in the office. Can you tell me how this thing started, why did you go to the Arts and Crafts Centre to get gifts for people in the office?

L: I think because we're so close to it and then there's the connection of us working in the arts and wanting to support the arts, I think it's started maybe as a leaving present for people, so is a way for them to remember the office and being in the Northern Quarter by having a piece of craft made in that space, and it had already started by the time I joined in the company, it's just a kind of legacy that has sort of developed, really, and then it's become more common for people's birthdays and wedding presents and things like that.

A: And, you know, thinking about your visits to the Centre, can you tell me a bit, you know, how it feels from the moment that you walk in, can you describe the experience of visiting the Centre?

L: I think it's a kind of calming feeling when you walk in, and the, I think walking around, you know, because all of the makers are independent and looking after their own business and studios, you feel more valued as a customer and there's an actual interest in you as a person, as well as a consumer, and I feel more motivated to purchase things from them because I know they have been made with a great deal of care, and they're all to a higher standard.

A: Can you tell me a bit about your interactions with the makers, do you tend to talk to them, how does it feel working in their studios?

L: I feel, when I walk into their studios, I feel a bit like I'm walking to their house, so I always say hello to them whilst I'm browsing, and if I do have any questions or queries I'll ask them, and I always like them knowing if there is a specific thing that I find really beautiful or impressive, but a lot of the time the makers do tend to keep themselves to themselves, so I think they're there as a presence but it's not intimidating in a way where, in some places you'd go in and there are people who are asking if you need any help and are trying to upsell, it's quite a nice space for you to browse without feeling the pressure.

A: Do you ever talk to them about the process of making?

L: Yes, sometimes. So, one of the things I do remember buying, it was a tile for one of my friends and the lady was talking the through, it was like pressed flowers had made a sort of indentation in the tile and she was talking me through all the different plants that she had used, and where she'd found the plants, so it was really nice having a bit more information about the process that had gone into making it, and yeah, I think, I don't always ask them about the process but it's more if I'm making a purchase and then a lot of them volunteer more information about it at that point.

A: You've mentioned before, you know, that one of your favourite spots in the Centre is the walkway and going upstairs and having a look at the Centre from above. Can you recall is that it, or can you recall anything else that drew your attention when you walked in, maybe in first visit or in one of your visits?

L: One of the things I really like in the Centre is that they've got the display cabinets dotted about that exhibit the work of different makers all together, and then show them as collections and how they can link in to each other or work together in a home, and I think that's a really nice way of, say you go in there for something specific, or you've had your favourite studio there, when you see them out on display and they are from studios you wouldn't normally visit, it's a nice way to get people to then sort of stray outside of what they're used to and go and visit the other makers, so I really like that aspect of it, and I really like that the café is just in the middle and it's open, and you can take your stuff to the tables, it's just got like a really nice open plan and welcoming feel to it.

A: Are you aware of any other similar spaces in the UK, and have you visited them or maybe you know them through work? Similar to the Arts and Crafts Centre.

L: Off the top of my head I can't really think. I'm sure there are, but there aren't that I've visited in the same way, like I've been to spaces where there's multiple things being exhibited and there's multiple sort of makers on display, but I haven't seen it in a way that's set out in Craft and Design Centre, because everyone feels equal in Craft and Design Centre, I don't feel like there's a spotlight on any specific maker, like a main draw for the Centre, I think everyone's there within their own rights, and each person celebrates individually, whereas in other places I've been, people have like larger displays, whereas it's not like that in the Craft and Design Centre.

A: And how do you feel about the diversity, or the lack of diversity at the Centre?

L: I think it's quite good at the Centre at the minute because you've got the, like, paper art in there, you've got glass blowing, ceramics and fabrics, and painting and things, all working together, so I think there's quite a nice balance, but I suppose it's limited to space as well because there's only so many studios that you can have there, but I think it's quite nice and there's nothing in there that I feel like I'm missing.

A: And thinking about your visits, you've mentioned that you may visit during lunchtime; how long are they normally, and also which days or times do you normally visit?

L: So, the majority of my visits are all weekdays, I'm not normally in Manchester at the weekends so it's generally Monday to Friday, and my visits would generally be between 12 and 2 o'clock, and I would say I'm normally in there for about 20 minutes at a time, as an average, but we do sometimes have work meetings in there or I meet up with some clients in there, or maybe have a coffee, and then that would generally be an hour.

A: And do you tend to visit alone, or with other people?

L: Mostly alone, but I'd sometimes meet up with my mum at lunchtime there, or go with another colleague, so if we were picking a present for someone in the office, a small group of us would go and peruse things.

A: And which one do you prefer?

L: I like visiting on my own, so that I can take some time to properly appreciate things and have a look around.

A: And, I mean, when you go in, do you tend to go into every little shop, or do you go only to specific ones?

L: Generally, it's just specific ones. I don't go to every one every time, and I mix it up when I visit to focus on different ones, or if I'm going there for a specific thing, then I'll focus just

on a couple of the studios, but there's, because I've got ones that I know that I already really like things that they make in there.

A: Have you taken anyone to see the Manchester Craft and Design Centre, and introduced them to it?

L: Yes, so I've taken some friends there, and I've taken some family members, and also some work colleagues that work in London, I've taken them to visit before, so I think it's a really nice and unique space in the city centre.

A: And, I mean the people that you have taken there, did you expect them that they would like art and craft, or did you want to show them a space that you like?

L: Yeah, I think it's a mixture of both, I knew that they would appreciate the beauty of the craft, but also it's just a really nice building to be in, and I think because it's just tucked back a little bit from the main road, not everyone knows it's there.

A: And have you ever attended any events or workshops at the Craft Centre?

L: Yes, I've attended some of the exhibition events. I haven't attended any workshops there, but I've attended workshops by one of the makers in a different space.

A: Can you tell me a little bit about the launch events that you have attended?

L: Yes, so I can't remember the specific exhibitions that I've been to. One of them was, they were making big sort of tapestry pieces, and they were on display. I think the tapestries have been made by people in India, or it might not have been India but it was somewhere over in Asia, I think, where these tapestries have been made and they were selling them in the Centre and had an exhibition of them. I think that was the most memorable event that I've been in there, I've been to a couple of the other exhibition events but I can't remember specifically what work was being displayed and they're generally just after work, they start around 6

o'clock on a Thursday, or something like that, so some of us from the office would generally come down to say hello and support them.

A: And do you normally take photos during your visits, and if you do, do you post them online?

L: Occasionally, I'd say generally no, though.

A: And how about things that you buy, have you ever taken photos of things you've bought?

L: Yes, I've taken pictures of the things that I've bought but generally to send to friends and family, rather than to post them.

A: How do you find the online presence of the Craft and Design Centre, do you follow them?

L: Yes, so I've got them on Instagram and on Twitter, and I think they've got quite a good presence and it's quite, I think it's got better recently, there's much more updates and I like when they highlight the specific makers in the Centre, and put the spotlight on them and show what they're working on, it makes it a little more personal to have an understanding as to who the makers are in the space.

A: Have you ever bought anything from them online? Through Instagram, they did a pop-up sale recently, or any other online shops from the makers?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: And I suppose if you've visited a couple of times, then you can also keep an eye on the work and what's new.

L: Yeah, definitely. I think that's one of the nicest things about working around the corner is that I can then see things that I like and then make a note and go back, and buy it or if I see something that I think someone else would particularly like, then I can make a note of the things for their birthdays.

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

L: Oh, I think my favourite thing that I've bought, I've bought a glass pendant necklace for my mum's 50th birthday, I just think it's really beautiful.

A: And apart from being beautiful, was there anything else that drew your attention to this specific pendant for your mum?

L: I think, I knew that I wanted to get something from glass because that's my mum's favourite art form, and it was like a grey-silvery colour, which I knew that my mum would like, and it was just quite unique with the shape of it because it wasn't sort of perfectly symmetrical and it was a bit abstract, and you could see the bubbles moving in the glass. And, at the time, it was on a chain that would have just sat around your neck, and I wanted one that was a bit longer, that would maybe lie on the chest area, so I spoke to the designer and she made a new chain for me, that was really helpful and was really attentive.

A: From which studio was this one?

L: I can't remember, but it was the one as you walk into the Centre, upstairs in the sort of, like, left corner, just above the door.

A: And you've mentioned that you've asked for a chain, was this the only time you've commissioned something at the Centre, or have you done this some other time as well?

L: I think that would have been the only time I've asked for something more specific, other than with the cards, I've asked for a lot of the cards to have specific messages written on them for wedding anniversaries or birthdays.

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

L: I think mostly, the prices are really good for the quality that you're getting. I can't think of any studio where I notably think that this is too expensive.

A: I mean, before you've mentioned a little bit about the distinction between mass produced products and handmade products; can you tell me a little bit more about how you feel about handmade versus mass produced products?

L: I think it's just, there's so much more care taken into it and it's something that has a lot of personality attached to it, especially in the current climate where we are sort of using up so

many resources, and we just have so many clothes and things constantly being created, it's nice to be purchasing something that's unique and that has been through more of a journey to be created, rather than something that anyone else can own, and it's created without all of the attention and love going into it, so I think when I'm spending my money, I would much rather spend it on something that I know is unique and it's a one-off creation, rather than going into a general shop and purchasing it that way.

A: It definitely is a quite more unique and personal when you buy something that is handmade versus mass produced, and you've also mentioned before when you were talking about the building and how different it is than the high street, so it also makes sense.

Something else I wanted to ask you: have you ever noticed the donation boxes at the Centre and, if yes, have you ever used them?

L: No, I don't think I have noticed the donation boxes, and I haven't used them, no.

A: Have you ever donated to any arts or crafts organisations?

L: I had placed money in donation tubs in some of the larger galleries, maybe, but I can't specifically think of any smaller places that I have. I generally try and make a point of buying something small, rather than putting money in a donation bucket or things like that.

A: So, you would be more inclined to buy something from a maker and support them in that way?

L: Yeah.

A: Would you be more or less inclined at the moment to donate to arts and crafts organisations with everything that's going on with the virus?

L: Yeah, definitely. I think because crafts is such an important medium that we do need to support, and obviously the whole arts industry is in jeopardy at the moment, I definitely feel

more compelled to support, also because as well as enjoying it and liking it for what it is, because my career is tied up within the arts industry, I feel much more compelled to be supporting it because of the wider implications that it has, and all of the other industries and careers that are attached to it.

A: How do you think the pandemic has impacted your engagement with arts and cultural organisations?

L: It's definitely massively impacted upon it because we've not been able to go and see things, and experiencing things online isn't really the same, so I've been purchasing more from independent businesses and makers online during this time than I would normally, because I haven't been able to go and see things, but I think in terms of just the general enjoyment aspect of it like going to view stuff, has massively been impacted because it's just really not the same, and I'm not as interested to look at stuff digitally, because I think it removes the part of the experiences of the arts.

A: How do you feel about visiting those spaces again when they reopen?

L: I feel quite comfortable with it because I think a lot of the arts venues are, because they've delayed opening rather than opening in July when they could have done initially, a lot of them have taken it a bit slower, and I think because they are generally quite larger open spaces, there will be opportunities for social distancing, and I feel quite comfortable in terms of their cleaning of the spaces, and with places like Craft and Design Centre, because they'll only be opening on Fridays and Saturdays I think, and it's going to be much more limited, then there is that opportunity for them to make sure there are deep cleans going on during the week before visitors arrive, and I feel much more comfortable in a space like that which generally tends to be less busy and generally you're socially distanced anyway because of the nature of the building and the nature of the visitors, I feel much more comfortable in that

space than just going to a supermarket or a pub, or something larger and more sort of commercial.

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

L: Yes, I will do.

A: How, I mean this is, you work in the sector as well, how do you think that the pandemic will impact the Centre and other organisations similar to it in terms of visitors and events in short term, and also in future?

L: I think it's quite a hard one to call because I suppose the impact, a lot of it will hit after the furlough schemes are finished, and things are forced back to normality, and what income people can generate over the next few months in order to secure their business, pass that point and over the winter, and how people are willing to engage with it over the next few months and beyond because with a lot of the social distancing, because that is then limiting capacity, I think it will go, it will either be like really busy and people will be desperately trying to get slots to visit museums, theatres and things like that, or people will be too worried to be in those enclosed indoor spaces. I think some venues will thrive and some won't be able to make it through, but it's just really difficult to know what those spaces will be. I think probably theatres will be hit hardest because the actors are still going to have to socially distance and the capacity will be so much more limited, and potentially things like crafts and arts will have more of a chance because you are not in that space for a long period of time, you can browse and move on, and it's not a seated activity.

A: Thank you so much, I don't have any more questions, but if there's anything else that you would like to share with me about your experiences at the Centre that we haven't covered so far in the interview?

L: I don't think so, I think it's quite nice that recently they have put together like a baby corner, so I think that's quite nice because it's given the Centre more of a family feel, and it's encouraging people more to go and use the café that maybe aren't using the rest of the Centre, making it a little bit more inclusive in that way so I think that's been quite a nice addition recently. Other than that, no, I don't think there's anything else.

A: Perfect. Let me stop the recording.