

A: So, first of all I wanted to go through some demographics with you, if that's okay?

E: Yeah.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: Okay, and how do you identify in terms of gender?

E: Female.

A: And what is your racial status?

E: White British.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: Okay, that's fine, and in terms of your engagement with the Craft and Design Centre, can you tell me a little bit about the number of visits, number of times you've been to the Centre to date?

E: About 10, since I've lived in Manchester.

A: Alright. And approximately, how much would you say that you spend at the Centre every time you visited in the past?

E: About an hour.

A: No, I mean in terms of, how much did you spend in terms of buying stuff, in terms of money, actually?

E: Oh, I wouldn't say I bought something every time I've been there, I can't think of anything that I've actually bought there.

A: Okay, and average spending in craft and design in general? Have you bought something in the past, in relation to craft and design?

E: Yeah, I suppose, like last week I bought a stone carved thing for the kitchen that was about £25, so maybe about £30 every couple of months.

A: Okay, that's great, so that's all about for the initial demographics that we ask our interviewees. So, just in terms of starting a little bit with the actual interview, can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your relationship with craft?

E: I think I have quite a strong relationship with craft, it's been a high interest for me since I've worked as a technician because I had to work across so many different materials, including ceramics, screen printing, woodwork, metal work, and since I came on to my degree, it's become a subject I've looked into quite deeply, in terms of craft theory and reading a lot of the discourses, such as people like Glen Adamson, and Ed Pye, and people like that, that became a really integral part of my dissertation research, and generally in my own sort of artistic practice, I'm definitely interested in craft's processes and the idea of thinking through craft as the way to reaching new conclusions in my work.

A: So, what was your dissertation about? Was it related to craft?

E: Yeah. I sort of looked at three different makers who, you wouldn't necessarily say that they were craft makers, but I felt that they had a sort of attitude that was aligned with craft in their work, and was looking at how you can sort of use ideas in craft making and craft approach to reach new sustainable outcomes, whether that's new material or new applications of materials.

A: Okay, so do you also, because you did say that you're also working as an artist, so what types of crafting do you do? Do you any types of crafting yourself?

E: Yeah, so I work a lot in jewellery, and at the moment I'm working at chain mail jewellery, and I've also made vessels, so sometimes I use things like leather and jesmonite, sort of casting techniques.

A: That's really interesting, and do you make these items for yourself, are you selling these items?

E: Yeah, I work, I have a few commissions, so I've got a few of the chainmail commissions on the go at the moment, and I'm also scaling up the chainmail production to make a large outdoor sculpture commission at the moment as well.

A: So, would you call yourself a maker or an artist, or both?

E: I tend to like the term maker, because I find it has fewer connotations to a specific audience or specific sort of context, and I find sometimes if you call yourself an artist, it can sound like you're maybe limited to a gallery setting or something like that, or a particular audience, and I think being a maker, you can sort of cross between art, craft and design, and cross between different audiences and different applications of your work.

A: Yeah, so when did you begin to work professionally with craft?

E: All of my work to date has been for my degree, and it's really just since graduating about a month ago that some of the work (XXX 8:23) just through generally Instagram and things like that, and a couple of people contacted me to ask if I can produce similar pieces for them.

A: So, you don't necessarily have an e-shop, it's mainly sold via platforms like Instagram?

E: It has been at the moment, yeah, but I'm hoping to grow it.

A: Okay, that's fine, and have you made any feminist or political art of craft in the past?

E: The chainmail is definitely sort of tied up in gender politics. I see the chainmail on its own as a sort of masculine material, and I tend to try and make sort of lace-like patterns with it, so I try to take a sort of classically, very feminine material and make it in metal, so I'm sort of making a comment about the process is perhaps quite similar, and how we express gender characteristics through material, if it's metal it's masculine, if it's fibre it's feminine, and combining them two to try and make a (XXX 9:57) material.

A: Yeah, so you're very much interested in the symbolic aspects of craft and different materials that you are using, in a sense?

E: Yeah, and I think that, definitely with craft as well, it has been historically, typically masculine crafts and typically feminine crafts, and it's interesting to combine those and ask

where does that divide come in or what does that say about our attitudes towards gender that we sort of assign them to particular groups.

A: Yeah, so what does craft mean to you, as a woman?

E: I think that it's, it's a difficult question, I'll think about that for a second.

A: That's fine.

E: The thing that I've always found interesting about craft is that I feel like it gives you a sort of agency, freedom to, especially in terms of design, you're working to produce something that could be, serve a purpose or solve a problem, or something like that, but without the restrictions or considering maybe like mass consumptions, so you have the ability to create something that's like your solution, it's more, you know, you can put more of your perspective into the object, so I think that obviously, you know, you sort of see that things like the Pussy Riot marches, things like that, the Knit and Resist sort of movements where you can use craft towards sort of disseminating your own message.

A: So, is it a form of resistance, let's say, to status quo? Is it something like that, the way you perceive it, in a sense?

E: Yes. It's definitely a sort of conflicted relationship that I think you can have with it as a woman because it has, in the past it had the sort of very like domestic connotations that sometimes you sort of feel like you need to break away from that, another times you sort of want to celebrate that, that I think specifically from a woman's perspective, it can be slightly sort of conflicted relationship.

A: Okay, and do you mind if I ask what is your favourite thing to make, what are you most proud of what you've made up to this day?

E: I think the chainmail works are something I'm very proud of. They're quite striking and I've found a lot of different applications for that material.

A: And do you associate any smells, any sounds, any textures with making, with different objects that you're making?

E: I'm not sure what you mean, do you mean like the sounds or things that would be produced from me making them, or more like a type of music, or something like that?

A: No, I mean when you're making something and as a part of the process of making it; are there any smells, any sounds, any textures that might inspire you, or that might inform your practice? I mean, that's fine if not.

E: Yeah, sorry, I'm struggling to find an answer for that one.

A: Or, like, a different question. If you want to tell me a bit about the actual process of making, how long do you spend making, how has your process evolved?

E: Okay, so with the chainmail specifically, it was, I visited the Royal Armouries in Leeds, and they had big collections of chainmail armour, and because some of it is very old, it's sort of disintegrated, and I thought it was very interesting that, seeing the strong, you know, protective armour had been sort of weakened and almost dissolved, and I think that was initially what inspired that project because we're living through an age where, you know, more and more we are having to examine things like masculinity and what does it to mean today to be a man, and I think it just sort of chimed with me that there was like a historical image of masculinity and male strength, and aggression that had kind of been dissolved, so that was the initial inspiration, and then it was really when I started to think about looking into the process of making chainmail that it struck that it's not too dissimilar to things like crochet or knit where you have links of material that are hooped together in certain ways, in certain patterns to create certain materials, it was sort of comparing those different processes,

and just the fact that chain was the material but one that would be considered quite feminine, and the other would be considered more masculine, that was the initial inspiration.

A: That's really interesting, thanks so much for that. So, just moving a little bit to Craft and Design Centre, but before that just the final question about craft and making, so was craft and making typical in your family, growing up? How did you develop your initial interest for craft and design?

E: So, I grew up in very rural [REDACTED], so there was always a lot of space to be able to keep, you know, old wood and boxes, and materials and things, so we could store them in the garage and they would stay there for a long time, so I think I've always had a lot of old junk at my disposal to experiment with and play with, and the space to make things which I think was very important. Initially, I remember there was, because there wasn't very much in the towns that surrounded me but there used to be a big warehouse of fabrics and material, like a big haberdashery, and I used to love going there, saving up my pocket money and getting material and things, and learning to use sewing machine, and you know, I wasn't hugely interested in following patterns and things, usually just trying to working things out myself. I think that's probably where it's started, and then in sort of secondary school, it became more about things like photography, that was really interesting to me, but I think that initial sort of access to space and materials that were just sort of going spare was very important.

A: Okay, and was anyone else in your family or any other people in secondary school that have influenced you or nurtured your interest in craft?

E: Not hugely in my family, but specifically when I got into sixth form, my teacher that was there, I studied photography, I looked at studying art but I don't know, for some reason I chose to do photography, one of my teachers then, I can't describe it, he just made me feel

like there wasn't anything else more important for me to do than being creative and pursuing an artistic career or education.

A: Okay, that's great. And how did you first find about the Craft and Design Centre in Manchester?

E: Just through wandering through the Northern Quarter while I was on my foundation, I just sort of stumbled upon it, and then each time I'd go to Manchester, I'd probably make an effort to go and visit there.

A: Do you remember your first visit?

E: I remember it being like a new place to me, but I don't remember specifically my first visit. I remember it was some, because I moved from Dorset to Manchester, so I think it was some of my course mates who were local to Manchester, who introduced it to me, I don't specifically remember my first time there, though.

A: Okay. Were you aware at the time, or are you aware at the moment of the history of the Centre?

E: I feel like somebody has told me that it's got like an industrial history, but I can't remember off the top of my head.

A: Okay, that's fine. And what brought you to the Craft and Design Centre at your last visit?

E: They have an area at the entrance with changing exhibitions which I really enjoy seeing, so I remember, I think it was the last time that I went was (XXX 22:45), the glass artist, so I like seeing that alongside the makers' studios and the shops, and I think I specifically like going and seeing people at work, actually making at the premises, and I think the last time I went, there was also a sort of festival of making of some sort, and they were doing



demonstrations of glass, sort of silk screen printing onto glass, so it's just kind of an active, engaging place with changing exhibitions and working artists, and workshops.

A: So, do you frequently interact with artists, do you participate in any workshops that they are organising there?

E: I haven't done any of the workshops, but I do tend to, like, when we're going to the workshops, you know, if you like a piece of work or if it's somebody who is making at the time and you're interested to have a chat with them and ask them about their work.

A: Okay, so your interactions with the makers, can you tell me a bit more about that?

E: I remember last time I went, or might have been the time before, there was, one of the stalls was, I think it was lots of different works from Manchester Metropolitan and there was a guy there who I think was a mature student who maybe done a Masters or something, so he was able to chat to me about some of the pieces that he had on display, and I think it was a sort of little, it was maybe 5 different people's work in this one place, he was the only one there so I was chatting to him about the pieces that he had on display.

A: Okay, so that was a part of the exhibition, right?

E: I think so, yeah, I think it was a little pop-up or something.

A: What about the makers, the residents in the studios? Did you have any interactions with them in the past?

E: I have done, I think sometimes it's difficult because you know that they are producing work, and if they kind of had to chat to every single person that came in, they probably wouldn't get much done. I remember having a longer conversation with him, but not as long with them if they are actually working.

A: Do you feel a bit intimidated, in a way, that you're going to interrupt them?

E: I think I wouldn't because I'm a maker, but I just have that sympathy that, you know, they don't have the luxury of having all the time to make work out of what is essentially a shop, and then also have time, or somebody covering the shop, that sometimes I feel that I know what it's like for me when I'm sort of buried in a piece of work and it's sort of all engrossing and if every single time I had to spark up a conversation with someone who came in, I'd find it quite difficult to work in that context.

A: It's quite a fine balance to achieve there, between making and producing at the same space, you feel?

E: Yeah, and I think it's nice as a visitor or as a customer to show an interest and to, yeah, tell them what things you like about their work or their processes, but to sort of expect them to engage in a long conversation with you, especially if you're not intending to buy anything, I feel like it's better to let them get on with their work.

A: Okay, so can you tell me a bit more about the different visits to the Centre? Think for instance about the moment when you walk in, and can you recall your overall experience and tell me a bit more about the Centre itself?

E: So, at times when I've been there, perhaps with my friends, sometimes it's quite nice to walk around in a group and use it almost as a space where you're catching up with your friends, and especially if they are also people who studied art or are interested in art and design, it could be a nice place to sort of pop into each studio and spark up a conversation. At other times I'd been there with my partner and his parents, and it's been more to just perhaps have a quick look at the exhibition and sit and have a coffee at the café, and you know, just more about being in the surroundings, I think there's quite nice buzz about the place that it's a bit of a different experience to go and sit in the, because it's such a big open space, quite a light, bright space, it's a little bit of a different experience to, somewhere to take someone to

have a coffee who's not necessarily so familiar with that kind of environment, and yeah, and the other times, I'd been through specifically for things like looking for Christmas gifts. I think it's a really good place for gifts because it's so personal and a craft item is a very nice thing to give to somebody else.

A: So, you don't perceive it necessarily only as a retail space, but as something more?

E: It has a sense of community about it, and I think because the artists are working, you know of Manchester as a creative city, a very vibrant, creative scene there, but it's nice to be able to walk into it and actually see it at work, and I think that's, you know, not all of the stalls are like that and some are more like a shop, but the fact that in some of them, you can walk in and see someone working, or you know there's this kind of programme of events and workshops and things, it just gives it more of a sense that you're going to a place where this stuff happens.

A: Do you think that the building and the layout of the space and everything helps with that?

E: Yeah, it's nice how sort of each of the studios is in like a little compartment and, you know, they're quite small and they can all be so different and have, each of the makers is really taking it over with their individual style, it's nice to be able to pop into each little room, immediately next to each other, it can have such a contrast to what's inside. But yeah, I think obviously with the sort of industrial nature of the building, it's nice to have that sense of the history of Manchester as an industrial city that was built on that, but these are makers who are continuing on almost that legacy, but in a new way, yeah, it's a new way that they contribute to that sort of history.

A: What do you mean by new way?

E: Just because obviously those buildings, they're not in use anymore for their original purpose, a lot of these buildings used to be factory or things like that have been taken over by

artists as studios or workshops and things like that, it's taking the legacy of that building, and rather than knocking it down and turning it into flats or something like that, it's still being used to create something, but it's perhaps for a different audience or, you know, a different type of consumption.

A: So, is it like a building coming alive again but in a different way?

E: Yeah, it's evolving.

A: Okay, and you did mention that, I think you did mention at the beginning about the length of your visits, so how long are your visits normally and which days or times do you normally visit?

E: I'd say, you know, we'd spend at least an hour there, because I don't live in Manchester anymore, and I'm sort of visiting less often, it has changed quite a lot each time I've returned, you can spend up to 20 minutes in the little exhibition space, or you can get a coffee. I would probably go into most of the different studios and things, because it's not somewhere I get to go often, it's quite different each time I go.

A: So, do you, when you say that you go to different studios, is it just, are you going inside the studios?

E: Yeah, I tend to methodically go around and probably pop into each one, unless it's something that you can tell from the outside that you wouldn't be interested in, and they're also different, I do find sort of methodically going around and going to each one in order.

A: Okay. So, you did mention before that you do tend to go there with your partner, with your friends as well; do you also visit alone, or is it always with other people?

E: I have been on my own once or twice, it probably just would tend to be because I don't live in Manchester anymore, the reason why I would go over would to be see people that, I

would happen to be with some people anyway, but I have been, maybe three times, on my own.

A: Okay. Do you find that experience different in any way?

E: Yeah, I think it is different because you can, when you're not with other people you can sort of get more engrossed in the objects that you find. I think perhaps you can sort of spend more time with the things or the stalls that interest you because you don't have to consider the other people that you're with.

A: So, is it more immersive, in a sense?

E: Yeah.

A: Okay. And have you taken anyone to see the Craft and Design Centre who might not be necessarily interested in craft, or might not have been there before?

E: I think when we took my partner's parents, I believe they might have been there before, but they wouldn't be the kind of people who would regularly visit galleries, exhibitions or things like that, so I think that was a little bit of a different experience for them.

A: Different in what sense?

E: Well, I think that my partner's father remembers that area, because he's in his 80s, he remembers that area pre all of this sort of new development and when it was still very industrial, so for him to sort of go into those buildings and see those, the new usage of it and the way it's been developed, he really enjoyed that.

A: Okay, so there was a sense of nostalgia for him there, I suppose

E: Yeah, definitely.

A: How do you, moving to kind of similar questions, are you aware of other similar spaces, maybe in Leeds or anywhere else, that you've been in the past? Can you tell me a bit more about your experiences in other similar spaces?

E: Yeah, there's one near to where I live [REDACTED] that's an old mill, so it's a much older building, a bit more of an agricultural building that had a similar sort of rejuvenation and it's individual artists, or makers, and again, they do sort of demonstrations there and they are selling their work, so that's probably the most similar that I'd been to, and then places in Leeds like East Street Arts, that's not as much of a retail space, it's purely studios but it's again, an old industrial building that's been repurposed towards artists and making, but I've been able to go in and visit there when they've put on tours and things, meet the artists and see the studios and see their work.

A: How would you compare your experiences in these other spaces, compared to the ones you've had in Craft and Design Centre?

E: The one in [REDACTED] is very similar, although it is smaller and an older building, also a stone building. The one in Leeds, it feels like more of a behind the scenes, glimpse, something that you wouldn't normally get to see if they weren't putting on a tour, so I think it's quite different in that Manchester Craft and Design Centre is quite welcoming, you feel that you can walk into the artists' space and that you're welcome to see them at work, whereas the only similarity with the Leeds-based one that I've described is that it's an industrial building that's been repurposed to house artists and makers, but it's much more of a private space.

A: So, with the Manchester Craft and Design Centre, this welcoming sense, this welcoming feeling, is it just about the fact that you can actually go and see artists and craft makers work there?

E: Yeah, I think the fact that it's a retail space and has things like café and an exhibition as soon as you walk in, that makes you feel more at ease because you, in a way you know that the sort of social codes, I don't know, like if there is a shop obviously you can go in, look at the things, perhaps even touch the work, whereas if you weren't somebody who goes to exhibitions, you know, in an art gallery you're obviously not meant to walk in and start touching things, and if you're not somebody who goes that sort of thing regularly, you might not know, you might not even feel like it's for you, but because it's seen as quite a retail space, I think that perhaps opens it to wider audience.

A: So, there's a certain etiquette that exists, in a sense?

E: It's more universally understood, yeah.

A: Yeah, so for people who might not necessarily be familiar with the Centre, then with the norms and practices, and the etiquette there, they may not appreciate it as much?

E: No, I think the opposite, I think because it's like a retail, because it's got that retail element, it's more accessible for people who, they might feel welcome going somewhere like that and they know the etiquette, but they may not feel the same confidence in an art gallery, so I think you have people who go there who are interested in art galleries and things like that, but then you may also have people who don't do that sort of thing, but because it's more of a retail environment, they feel, oh I understand that I am allowed to walk in here, I am allowed to maybe touch the things, pick them up and look closer, and it breaks down those barriers because it's a retail space.

A: So, it's this blend between art and business that, in a sense, makes it more accessible to wider community?

E: Definitely.

A: Okay. How do you feel about the product range there, and the different things that people can buy across different studios and other spaces in the Centre?

E: From memory, there is a good range, I think there is a good price range too, there tends to be, you know, it's not too sort of exclusive and high end, there are lots of more affordable pieces there, and a lot of the artists work on different scales, so they would produce things that you may buy, if you hadn't gone in planning to look for something, or buy something specific, there is a sort of things at a price range where you could buy it having not previously planned to buy something, I think that's good. For me personally, I can remember there being lots of, I don't know how to describe it, sort of Manchester, almost like tourist-type, you know what I mean, sort of Manchester-themed things, yeah, sort of coasters or things like that, things that are, bands that are from Manchester or, you know, things to do with the football club or stuff like that, the sort of themed that I don't tend to find as interesting as things that are just more, they come more personally from the artist.

A: More place-specific art, in a sense, that has a specific feel as well. Okay, so overall, your feeling about the prices is, you did mention that you think there is a broad range of prices there, so how do you feel about the prices overall at the Craft and Design Centre?

E: Yeah, I think it's very good that there is that range where there are some, you know, higher priced items that reflect the complexity of the thing that's been made, or the time that's gone into the thing that's been made, you know, which would obviously, if it's an individual maker, make it a higher price but I think you can tell a lot of the makers there have a concerted effort to have those smaller items, things that under £10 or under £20 would be the kind of thing that you may not have planned to go in there and buy something, but it's cheap enough that you may want to just buy something small, to sort of almost support the



independent makers, or yeah, I think that you can tell that a lot of them in there have made an effort to have some of those kinds of items at cheaper prices.

A: So, how do you feel about handmade products versus mass produced ones?

E: I mean, there are some mass produced things that are obviously brilliant, if you look at something like Ikea, you know, the idea of democratic design and the idea of making a really efficient process, and the fact that you are making something that brings the price down, it makes it more accessible and then a broader range of people can have a good design at a good price, it's brilliant. I think people can me sometimes quick to maybe demonise mass production, and I think obviously with the right considerations for the environment, it's a brilliant thing, but a handmade item has just got a connection with the person, it's got a sort of humanity to it, you can feel that actions, the time has gone into it, the personality, the care, that's just sort of embodied in a way that a mass produced item can't emulate.

A: So, it feels more personal, in a way?

E: Definitely more personal, and I think, yeah, it's that idea of almost sharing, you know, the care and the time that has gone into that item, and when you sort of purchase that, you're taking away that item maybe embodies a lifetime of acquired skill, or acquired movement, technique, that something that's been produced by a machine won't have that.

A: Okay, that's really interesting. I remember that you did say at the beginning of the interview that you didn't buy anything from the Craft and Design Centre; have you, what is your favourite thing that you've bought from a craft and design, not necessarily in the Centre, that comes to you mind, that has a special significance or value for you?

E: When I, we went travelling just before we came to university, and we went to Nepal and in the hostel that we were in, a sort of few doors down, there was a guy who had a jewellery workshop and it was just him and his son, and he had these necklaces that were made from

crystals that he'd gone and collected from up on the mountain, and I remember, it was just a nice kind of connection to that place and they were quite different because, you know, they weren't sort of clean cut and finished, it was quite purposefully almost a bit messy, and a bit sort of definitely handmade aesthetic to it, and I just liked that connection with the place, and the fact that he was in a workshop, you know, because I don't tend to like silver that is very highly polished, I like it a bit more matt, so he was able to very quickly sort of put a different finish on it by just running it through a machine, so he was quickly able to just get that piece to a polish, or a finish that I liked, which I thought was really nice as well, and just the fact that, you know, it was an independent crafts maker, and it was quite a touristy place, so it was nice to support someone who was doing something a bit different.

A: So, there was a do it yourself aesthetic there?

E: Yeah, he definitely had his unique style, and it definitely wasn't to try and make something, you know, like we were talking about the sort of the mass produced things, he definitely wasn't trying to emulate anything near perfection, symmetry, definitely had this kind of wonky handmade aesthetic to it, which I really appreciated.

A: Yeah, that sounds really interesting. I've always wanted to visit Nepal as well, that must have been quite a journey. Right, so do you have a favourite studio in the Craft and Design Centre? Can you tell me a bit more about that? Or probably a studio that every time that you go, you know that you're always going to check that one?

E: I can't, actually, not from memory. Because I go so infrequently, there's nothing that's jumping out at me as a specific one that I would want to go again.

A: That's fine, and do you take any photos during your visits, any photos of things that you like maybe, do you tend to post anything online?

E: No, that's not, I think I would definitely be inclined to take photos of the exhibitions. I don't think I would be, if I liked something enough to be taking photos of it, I don't know, yeah, it's not something that I would be inclined to do, and I think also because we used to live in Manchester and because we used to visit there quite regularly, I wouldn't feel the need to take a picture of the space because I'd feel that, yeah, it's somewhere that I'm going to come again; if I was going to a new city, you know, somewhere I haven't been before, I think I would be inclined to take a picture of the space and things like that, but I wouldn't be the kind of person, I don't tend to share things like that online; it might be more to just sort of send a picture on WhatsApp or something like that to my family, say this is a place that you would have really enjoyed, more privately rather than, to specific people rather than sort of sharing it in general.

A: Okay, and because you did mention that you visit the Centre quite infrequently at the moment, how do you find their online presence, do you follow them, do you use their online profiles or do you follow any of the makers online maybe, on social media?

E: I don't believe I follow any of the makers individually, but I do follow the Craft and Design Centre on Instagram, you know, so I sort of see their stories and see, I might've followed one or two of the makers through seeing the Craft and Design Centre sharing stories of individual pieces, and then if they've shared one of their makers' pieces on their story and I liked the look of the piece, I might've gone on to follow a couple but, you know, when you follow hundreds of different people, I couldn't tell you if I specifically follow any of the makers from there.

A: Okay, and would you be inclined to buy something online, without necessarily being in the Centre?

E: I think I would be more inclined to buy something when I'm there, rather than; I think, in the past, there would have definitely been things that I would have really liked to buy, but as a student or in a sort of lower income job and things like that, not always felt like it's sort of accessible to buy the things that I really appreciate there, so I think it's definitely, I think I would be more inclined to buy something in person there than I would online, or I would like, if I did something that I did specifically liked online, I would probably be inclined to almost send them a message and ask if something like that was available and if I could come and see it; I'd probably rather go in and make a trip over there and make a day of it.

A: Okay, so why do you think is that? Why you wouldn't be inclined to buy something online and you would like to go there?

E: I think because I'm quite close, because it's only an hour away, it would probably be quite nice to, like we've said, craft has a personal touch, it's about a human interaction between people and objects, and so I think it would just be nice to go and get a sense of that by visiting the place where it's made, and just, yeah, it wouldn't be the only reason that I would go, but it might be enough to make me think I'll go and have a day out in Manchester, I go to the galleries and I'm going to see that maker that I'd contacted online about that thing that I saw.

A: So, kind of combine it with the overall experience of visiting the Centre and spending time there?

E: Yeah, that's what I'd be inclined to do, yeah.

A: Okay, that's great. Just a slightly different question, how do you feel about the diversity, or lack of diversity at the Craft and Design Centre, based on your experiences there?

E: I think a lot of the time, it's a problem that craft has in that for a lot of people, having the luxury of having the time to spend, to dedicate to producing, to honing a craft in terms of a

process, having the luxury of time to dedicate to that can sometimes mean that's, you know, it can be quite a middle class pursuit. You know, I can't say, having not visited very often that maybe I can give a true reflection of the diversity, but yeah, I know that it is something that crafts can sort of, that happens in craft.

A: Is it just for the makers, or for the audience as well who are buying craft, this middle class pursuit that you were describing before?

E: I think that can definitely manifest itself in the makers, you know, if perhaps you want to pursue, you have something as a hobby, you have the luxury of time to do it outside of your work, and then if you want to grow it into a business or something like that, having the resources or the time to do that can make it, you know, difficult for people who don't have those kinds of luxuries, but I can't really say that, yeah, I'm not sure, really.

A: What about the visitors, how do you feel about diversity or non-diversity in terms of the visitors there, from the times that you've been there, from your own experience?

E: I think it probably have been predominantly white visitors, I can't, but yeah, it's been a little while, I can't really remember, yeah, from memory I'd say it's predominantly white.

A: Okay, that's fine, thanks a lot for that. And some more questions about donations, actually. Have you used the donation boxes at the Craft and Design Centre in the past at all?

E: No, I can't say that I've, I don't remember them being there.

A: Oh okay, so you haven't seen any at all? But have you ever donated, maybe to other arts or crafts organisations?

E: I think it was some of these tours or things that I've done at sort of makers' spaces, sometimes they are on like a pay-as-you-feel basis, so you contribute something to the tour; definitely when we've done tours of the artist's spaces and things, done things like put out a

bar or just some wine or whatever they've bought from the shop, when you sort of make sure you buy a drink or something to put money back to the evening. Trying to think if there's anything more specifically, like just a flat down donation rather than buying a drink. Nothing sort of spring to mind.

A: Okay. And at the moment, would you be more or less inclined to donate, to give?

E: I mean at the moment, seeing as I don't have any stable income – less inclined and also, I think because it's something that I'm sort of trying to do myself, a lot of the resources that I would like to put into, yeah, more people being able to access it, it's also something that I need to consider for my own practice, and just at the moment, less inclined.

A: Okay. So, it looks like, because you're also making your own practice, can you also tell me a bit more about the North West craft scene, and how do you feel about the North West craft scene, including Manchester and where you live at the moment?

E: I think it's strong. I think we've got things, you know, Northern Contemporary Craft Fair was one that I attended also, up in, it's not Didsbury, it's the other one, and I've attended things like Collect Craft Fair that was at one of the Saatchi, it's at Sunset House now, I've not been last year, and up in there are galleries from different parts of the country. I can't say that I remember there being specifically any galleries from the North West that I remember being there specifically, in London, but things like, I subscribe to the Craft's Council "Craft" publication, and often they've got a list of different events or exhibitions that are going on, and it's sort of listed by region like that, and there's usually something different each week, somewhere like the North West, whereas in other areas tends to be the same things that come up week by week. It's nice having some days with independent spaces where you can see the work being made, I think that's still reasonably rare.

A: Thanks so much for that. I've also got some final questions about Covid-19 and current pandemic situation. So, first of all, from the point of view of you being, making craft as well, how did Covid-19 impact your daily involvement with making, and your work practices as well because you did mention that you try and sell some of your stuff as well?

E: Yeah, so the lockdown coincided with the final part of my degree, so my practical degree show, so that obviously had a huge impact because I am somebody who usually uses the workshops at the university regularly, to then suddenly having to just do it from my flat, the second bedroom has been turned into a makeshift studio, and there's like plastic on the floor to try and save the carpet because it's a rental, and I tried to make my desk space more ergonomic so I can work at it without getting a stiff back and things like this, and just try to create space where there isn't very much space. Yeah, it's definitely put a more of a, because I've been involved in one or two online exhibitions, so it's been a lot about trying to network in a way that those opportunities don't just become an online exhibition, and then it vanishes off after a couple of weeks; you're trying to use things like social media to maintain a connection with people who have organised that opportunity and where normally it would maybe come a little bit more naturally because you might've met them at the opening because it was a physical exhibition, you might've made a little bit more of an impression on them, or they may get more of an idea of what you're about, but you have to try and make those connections and networks, and build on those opportunities through social media and maintain more of a presence.

A: Have you made anything inspired by the pandemic?

E: My final project for my degree did become very inspired by the lockdown, so it was going to originally be about sort of the aesthetics of craft making, and it was going to be this big desk with all those different areas where I had made different objects, basically, so each of

the different areas was going to be very specifically designed towards making the object and then displaying the object, so then when we went into lockdown, that obviously had a very different almost reading, so it became okay, so now I've gone from this big workshop where I've had the luxury that I can make this massive sort of sculptural desk thing, now I'm in this tiny little flat, so it became more of a column, and I got an adjustable stool so I can sit at different levels, and then each of the different levels would be for a different object, and then I put it on wheels so I can sort of take it around my flat and use it in different rooms so that I can get, so it just became like a portable workshop, and the idea was that we are all stuck in our houses, wondering what the world is going to be like when we come out, that we've got the time to question some of these, you know, some things that we consider normal. We were talking about the issues with mass production and waste, you know, that are just so normalised that now we've got the time to just sit and consider them, craft is a great way of working out some of these problems and finding new methods and processes that it kind of became about crafting for the new normal.

A: That's really interesting, so using craft as a medium to question basic assumptions about the social reality around us and the world around us?

E: Yeah, exactly.

A: That's really interesting. And, so you could say that your creativity has been impacted by Covid, but in a, let's say, positive way?

E: I would say so. And I think also, because it's forced, because I'm not surrounded by a lot of other graduates, I am not surrounded by my peers who were maybe applying for graduate schemes and very kind of what you typically do when you do a degree and the process you go through, you know, you're doing your assessment centres and applying for these different opportunities and things, that there was a kind of almost a lifting off of that pressure, and also



because it's just such an unprecedented circumstances and the expectation was lifted as well, although I sort of always knew I wanted to be a maker and wanted to make work, and things like that, I think that having this radical change in circumstances and where I'd expect to be when I finish my degree, it just made me think really anything could happen and I should just pursue this because rather than feeling the pressure to do the thing that I meant to do, if things can really go this badly wrong for so many people, what would be the point of following something that, you know, feels like a more sensible thing to do but really, I should just be pursuing this thing that I really want to do, there's not going to be a better opportunity than now when we've got all the time and it's such a leveller, no one can go to a studio and no one could go to a workshop, didn't matter if you went to a brilliant university or your local college or whatever, a lot of people ended up in just their homes, it was such a leveller for creative people, for some creative people, that it sort of just felt like a good time to really think about pursuing crafts as a career.

A: So, it's something a little bit like a (XXX 70:58) or transcending the norms of capital society and what this all, everything that you've mentioned in terms of the standard route of assessment centres and graduate schemes, and so on, and so forth. Right, okay. So, how did Covid-19 actually impact your engagement with arts and crafts, and cultural organisations so far, apart from your own, personal, professional practice in craft?

E: I really miss physical objects and being able to see a physical thing, because I'm so sick of sort of scrolling past all these amazing projects on Instagram and just the way that you consume those things that you enjoy, you know, I just, even if you really appreciate something, the fact that it's always just like a flat image, I just can't wait to be back in a room with some work that I really appreciate, and spending more time with it.

A: So, you miss the sensory aspect of being in a physical space and enjoying the artwork?

E: Yeah, and I think it's easier if you're in a space with an object to be more mindful and take more time, and think about different ways you appreciate it, and obviously, you're maybe there with people, to talk about that with people or just to move around and, yeah, I think it's just such a different experience and I just really miss that, and I can feel myself becoming almost impatient, and going through things like Instagram, you can just scroll through a hundred amazing projects, but if I had had a day out when I saw one of those projects in the flesh, I'd have thought I had a really great day out, but when I'm just on my phone in the morning, it's just being an average day, so I just really miss seeing it in flesh.

A: So, the excitement that comes with that, in a sense.

E: Yeah, I think you can sort of appreciate something, I don't know, it's just a slower appreciation of those things, rather than going on your phone, expecting to see this amazing work, you know, having spent time with something to see more in it than you get from an initial quick image, it's something that I really miss.

A: More immersive as well. Have you, I suppose that you haven't visited the Craft and Design Centre in Manchester since they have reopened, right?

E: No, I've not.

A: Are you planning to?

E: I don't have any specific plans at the moment to go to Manchester.

A: And how do you feel about visiting arts and cultural organisations again? Have you been visiting any since social distancing measures have been relaxed?

E: I haven't, actually, I've just been obviously quite busy with my own commissions and things that's taken up a lot of my time, but no, I think the thing that sort of, don't know, the social distancing and not standing too long in one place, and a lot of the institutions you have

to sort or pre-book and things like that, it takes away the spontaneity and the, yeah, it's just a bit of a shame, the sort of one-way systems and it's, I just feel like it would impact on how much I would enjoy it. I just think it's made it more difficult to commit to going, and because almost when you go into town, when it's quite busy it can make you a bit anxious, you know, you wouldn't know that you would enjoy it in the same way, so I mean, to be honest, I'm still avoiding going into town and busy places where I can, and that just tends to be where the art is, so I think just a result of avoiding busy places, I just haven't been, but it is something I am hoping to do again soon.

A: And final question, how do you think that, from your perspective, that Covid-19 will impact the Manchester Craft and Design Centre, other crafts organisations in terms of visitors, events in the short term, and in the near future as well?

E: Well, I hope that people will have, I don't know, almost like a renewed appreciation of those places and, you know, that they'll want, now that they've been sort of cooped up indoors for so long that they'll want different experiences, and being able to go to an independent place like that with artists making personal work, that's very different experience to going down the high street or something like that. I hope that the time that they've been able to spend at home, sort of contemplating the experiences they're missing that they may have a sort of renewed appreciation for the experience of visiting a place like that and it may increase numbers, and also the very tangible connection that you have when you visit a place like that, here is the maker and here is their produce, and you buying that is supporting them directly, yeah, you know, people will have this sense of this has been very difficult for everybody, but when I buy this thing in this place, I can directly see who I am supporting, and I hope that it will kind of drive up an appetite for people to support makers in that way.

A: Yeah, that's quite a positive way.

E: I'm hoping that's what it is.

A: Let's hope it goes like that. That's great, I think that's all, thank you so much for such an interesting discussion. Do you have any questions, anything that you would like to ask, or anything that you would like to add in relation to craft, in relation to the Craft and Design Centre?

E: No, nothing off the top of my head. Thank you, that was really interesting.

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