

A: Okay, I have some demographics questions at the beginning, but before I do I just want to say that if there are some things you don't feel comfortable answering, you can say you don't want to answer this question and it's absolutely fine, we're going to move on, and also, I just want to say that everything is going to be anonymised so there's not going to be a way to link anything you say back to you specifically.

K: Okay, fantastic.

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

K: Male.

A: What is your racial identity?

K: White British.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: I mean it's a bit hard to know exactly, but how many times would you say you have visited the Craft and Design Centre?

K: Ever?

A: Yes. More than 10, 20.

K: Yeah, hundreds of times.

A: Okay, I can put more than a hundred of times, that's okay; I've had people who visited a lot as well.

K: Yeah, lots and lots.

A: What would you say is your average spending at the Centre?

K: I mean that's quite difficult, that changes.

A: It can be from £0 to something, if you remember something that you've bought that was expensive, or an average.

K: I think the average is probably easier, I'd do like a price range so it's generally between £15 and £40, if that can kind of be a middle, but there had been times where I'd spent a lot more, like a couple of hundred pounds at once in a single transaction.

A: That's okay, we can average that out between £15 and £40, and we can talk about specific things that you've bought later on, so that's okay. If you think of other spaces that are similar to the Craft and Design Centre, or in general about spending in terms of craft, design and art, what would you say your average spending is?

K: I mean I would say, personal experience have certainly been like now in Edinburgh, there isn't really anything that is similar to the Craft Centre, there isn't really a collective space of, it doesn't have the whole point, like obviously the whole point of the Craft and Design Centre is like-minded individuals being together in one spot, there isn't really anything, there are lots of independent businesses and there are lots of communal areas where you can go and meet other, I mean there were until Coronavirus kind of put a halt to that, but there isn't really something, like there isn't a carbon copy of the Craft Centre in Edinburgh that we have found.

A: I mean I just wanted to say if you think about other spaces, doesn't have to be similar but in general, how much would you spend per visit, I guess, for art and design or other independent spaces and artists; would that be a similar kind of range, less, more?

K: So, it really does depend, some kind of more, some more independent places that we've been to, like a pop-up shop or whatever, they have been more expensive but that's almost prohibitive, in a way, so at the start of the year we went to, this may be a bit too much information for you, but we went to like a Christmas market, and there was like a whole indoor bit of the Christmas market and it was all just prohibitively expensive, so it was like handmade cards, for example, and I think they were something like £15 to £20 each, it was

just like a greetings card, and we kind of couldn't really, I don't want to sound miserly or anything because I understand, it's that independent creator's work and that's their price point, but we ended up not buying anything because the pricing just seemed very disjointed, it seemed a bit disproportionate to what you're actually receiving for the goods, and without being disrespectful but there wasn't anything actually that special about the card itself; does that make sense? It was literally like a piece of a heavy-duty craft card that had a design printed on it, it wasn't special in any way. I don't want to be a snob or anything but I was rattling around in my hand, thinking what you could get for £20 from the Craft Centre from any of the makers, and it would be a lot more.

A: Yeah, that's true especially if it was simply a card.

K: Yeah, I think the last sort of bunch of cards, and I nearly always need to stock up on greeting cards because somebody's birthday creeps up or whatever, and then I can just raid the little cupboard that I keep, it's like an emergency stash of greeting cards, and I think I can spend maybe £30 at the start of the year and that covers me for the entire year, that gives me like 15 to 20 cards, so it's the same numbers but it's the other way around, it's more value for money and you can see that it is a hand-printed design and it's care and consideration, it has been designed to a point, and the example that I'm using of Christmas markets, when we came up to Edinburgh, that was just an inkjet printed design, so it hadn't even been handmade, it was printed out, and then put in a little sticky, sealed, acetate envelope and they were charging £15 for it.

A: Should I put, then, that it's mostly through Craft and Design Centre that you buy things, and not necessarily from other spaces?

K: Yeah, I mean that isn't the sole reason, that is not my go-to. If I need something special or personal, or unique in a lot of cases, and some of the purchases that I have made in the past at

the Craft Centre have been, they cost to made, something that you can't get anywhere else, it's like a bespoke piece, and the price reflects that but I have felt significantly better off spending the money because it's going directly to the maker, it's going directly to that person and they're making a profit and it's a unique item, I could have gone to high street jewellers, for example, and I'm sure they, I know they have like personalisation services and they have the idea of being able to tweak certain elements of jewellery or whatever, but this was made from the very beginning, it was their design that they've never made before, and that's a couple of hundred quid. I think my most expensive purchase from the Craft Centre was two lots of £400 on an individual item, on an individual bespoke piece, but I mean, this is my opinion but that individual design element, I mean you could have walked into [REDACTED], for example, the jewellers, and they could have charged you £800 just for the consultation.

A: What was the occasion when you've bought that piece from the Craft and Design Centre?

K: It was a birthday.

A: Okay, maybe let's start a little bit at the beginning. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your relationship with craft and making?

K: Yeah, of course. So, I come from a very creative family, we have always at a point been involved in, it sounds a bit fancy, but I don't mean to come across this way, we've all been involved in the arts at some point. Both my parents, we're quite a small household so I grew up with my mum and my dad, I have no siblings, and they were both involved in very creative processes, so that was from the ground up designing, creating and having that very, it wasn't necessarily forced but they had to be creative, they had to think outside the box, they were involved in children's TV for a very, very long time and what they've also, so they did other things in that space, they did other things in creative design and the creation of (XXX 14:24) effectively, so art was very prevalent in my growing up, the idea of being able to not

necessarily just be artistic, like I can't draw or paint but my mum and dad can, and they've instilled that idea of not, they weren't, it was very difficult to being send one message at home than it was to being send one message at school, because both my mum and dad were like doesn't matter if you can't draw or if you can't paint, you can do other things and still be artistic, so then I would make collages, or I would paint in other ways, I wasn't necessarily trying to be different but I was trying to just be artistic in a way that made more sense to me, and then I remember having an art teacher and she said to me you can't do art if you can't draw, and then I kind of ended up feeling a bit disheartened with it at all because I was like I don't want to do art, then. So, that kind of set me down the path and it's a far, far cry away from what I'm doing at the moment, but I've been involved in TV myself, I've been involved in theatre productions, I've been involved in the live recording of stage productions, I've made music videos, I've made short films; I've been a part of photographic exhibitions, so there's a whole back catalogue of, like, and it sounds a bit lovey-dovey, but I am a big, big supporter of the arts and of the creative aspects because I feel like the, maybe especially now more than ever, if we didn't have that passion and that creative element within our world, I don't know how we would be; I've had personal experiences where I felt so miserable and so down in the dumps, and be it art of photography, filmmaking, television or cinema, any aspect in museums, be in Craft Centre in its own right, I feel is something of a museum, and I don't mean that it's full of dusty old books, you know, like you go in and you can't touch anything, but there's so much talent within that building, and it's like a hidden gem. I'm sure you might have heard this from other people, but that whole creative hub literally could just be picked up and put in the middle of Piccadilly and it would receive so much thoughtful, it would be heralded like a creative centre, but it's on the outskirts of the Northern Quarter and I know for a fact that some people who lived in Manchester their whole lives, and they've got 30 years on me and never heard of it, never heard of the Craft Centre and don't know what it

is, and they had absolutely no idea that it existed until it came up in a conversation, you know, until I've sort of started waving that flag.

A: You've mentioned that your parents were artistic as well; was it typical to make things with them when you were growing up, crafts and things like that?

K: Yeah, so we always, I mean they were the biggest proponents of, and I suppose it's an explanation and I suppose of my formative years, but it was that whole, and I don't know about your experience and don't want to comment for you but during school and during college, and even kind of treading into, I don't want to call it university because it wasn't, it was film school, it was a very creative aspect but that whole dread of being put in a group or doing group work, or anything like that, my parents instilled in me from a very early age that you don't really need a group, you can do it on your own; look at everything you've made, look at everything you've created on your own, you don't need a group to rely on, you can be creative on your own, and I think that's still something, sometimes it takes longer and sometimes it's harder to do but you aren't reliant on somebody else for their creative aspect, you can be creative, you can make and generate something on your own, off your own back. Was that useful to you or not?

A: It is because I'm really interested to see how people develop this relationship with spaces like the Craft and Design Centre, that's why I'm asking about your family because it's very important and most of the people who have the relationship that you are describing with the Craft and Design Centre have had this element in their families when they were growing up, they were creating with their parents, they were making things, that's why I'm interested about you and your primary (XXX 20:58). You've mentioned that you've made many things and you've been creative in many ways, are you still doing it at the moment, are you still doing anything at the moment that is creative and artistic?

K: Yeah, so we tried, and I think I'm quite lucky because I can quickly sort of fall out of something, I can be very geared up to have the drive, have the kind of creative passion to be able to make something or put my heart and soul into it, and that fire can almost dwindle quite quickly, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] we tried, so at the start of the lockdown I was still working all the way through it, and I only had limited time off, so I saw this idea and I think it would, maybe on Instagram or maybe through Pinterest or something but I've bought huge rolls of heavy-duty wrapping paper, it's the easiest way I can explain it, it's like big, thick, hard, it was almost like card but it came on a roll, so I've bought a lot of that and sort of painted, and I taped up a huge roll of this paper against the wall, so the flat that we are in at the moment has really high ceilings and I've taped it up, so it was at the very top of the high ceiling, and I just put some masking tape along the skirting board, no, picture rail, and I've bought a lot of paint, so whenever we had any free time or anything me and Hannah, me and my partner, we would kind of splash paint on this, we were painting on the walls but we weren't actually painting the walls, we were painting onto, like, canvas, and that was really interesting and it was really exciting because it was, it gave us the ability to sort of be quite free and sort of splash paint around, but without, normally when you paint and normally when you try, when you have that creative freedom, you do need to be quite careful because you don't want to get the paint on, you are quite confined to a canvas or the area that you are painting in, but because when we had the entire wall to sort of play around with, it



gave us a little more excitement and gave us a little more freedom. I had this idea, I'm very sorry this was a really long story but it wouldn't have made sense if I just told you this straightaway, so I had this idea of trying to make like a continuation, so almost like a continuous pattern, a continuous theme that is flowing through each one of these big sheets of paper, so that you could maybe try to put them all together and put them in like an ascending order and you will be able to see that pattern moving through the painting. That's something that I'm kind of still, I think we've done maybe two and we have a third going, but we may've hit something of a creative brick wall because the two look really nice together, so we've almost created like a bit of an ombre, a bit of a colour blend almost accidentally and I have to be honest, what I don't want to do is finish the third one and then put it next to the other two, and it would look absolutely disastrous, but I suppose that's the part and parcel of it, it's literally the joy of being creative, it's like okay, we tried something and that didn't work, let's try it again.

A: Yeah, you don't know how it's going to turn out, yeah. I don't know if you've thought about this in those terms, but what does making mean to you as a man?

K: No, you're right, I haven't thought of that. I think in it being a traditional sense, like building, crafting but as a trade, so like the idea of building a house, or you know, bricks and mortar, building a wall, or wood working, you know, having a garden shed and being able to create something out of wood that has a practical use. I don't want to say, I think that's in traditional sense but that tradition is obviously going away, is like sliding away into the background because it's okay to create something for no other reason than beauty, it doesn't have to be practical, or even just fun, you know, it doesn't have to be beautiful, it can be short-lived, can be for joy, can be for pleasure. I think maybe this is just like a wish of mine but there'd been a few times in my kind of, like, personal and professional life where my craft ability, my ability to just be able to make something has been let down by me not being

able to, I haven't actually had the real chance, it's even difficult for me to say that I am necessarily creative because it comes in so many different shapes and forms, but I would struggle to just definitively say yes, I am a creative; I almost think that it's somebody else's decision, like somebody else would be able to say yes, you are, but I can say definitively that I'm not comfortable at crafting something, like I know that if someone gave me a lot of wood and said make a birdhouse or whatever, I would be able to create something out of that wood and I'm sure the birds would live in it, but I'm not sure I would be able to follow the specifications to design me a traditional birdhouse. Does that make sense?

A: Yeah, it does. Have you ever bought anything that was, in terms of the art that you've bought, that was political or feminist, or more radical?

K: Yeah.

A: Can you tell me a bit more about that?

K: Yeah, so during lockdown, I know that this sounds a bit ignorant of me but I don't mean it in that way, if it comes across that way, there was that big new surge of Black Lives Matter and there was a big focus on, certainly in the circles where I spend some time in and kind of trying to make sure there was elements, at least, of trying to give back or trying to focus on other elements, not just kind of following the norm or either kind of trying to almost focus on a reward aspect, but we started donating, so we donated to the bail fund, and they partnered with, I think at the start of Black Lives Matter they've partnered with the Black Cultural Archives, they are what they sound, they are a focus, basically, on everything Black culture and everything that's been created in all aspects, so not just arts but the heritage of African and Caribbean culture, so by donating to the national bail fund, we ended up receiving like a gift package, and it was like a thank you effectively, I don't remember how much we've donated but they sent us this, and it arrived weeks and weeks afterwards but it was like an

experience, there was like badges and stickers, and cloth prints; there was all sorts, all included in this box as like a thank you. I'm not entirely sure that we necessarily should have received this because I think we only gave them £100 or something, it wasn't a huge amount of money, and we were just trying to do our bit because there was obviously a load of false arrests and false imprisonments that was going, that was taking place throughout the Black Lives Matter protests, and there were people in there who weren't able to obviously buy their own bail or even have any legal support or anything like that, and this, like, there was a thank you note as well, like thank you so much for your kind and generous donation but I'm pretty sure that the value of the box, because there was like art included in there as well, there was all sorts; it was fascinating but like I've said, I'm not sure that the value of our donation even ended up being, I think we've received more as a thank you than what we'd actually sent them.

A: Was this the first time that you've bought something that was more political?

K: No, is the long and short of that. So, I've always, like from a personal background side of things but my parents are very political, politics has been present in my upbringing for ever, for as long as I can remember, and I remember kind of very early on understanding that it isn't a question of right or wrong, it's about a conversation; you can wholeheartedly agree with the policies of somebody but you can not feel comfortable about the way in which they're going about that, and also, you know, the whole idea of not even necessarily agreeing with a political party in general, not agreeing with their policies but still being able to have that conversation, the fundamentals of it are there is a reason that we have more than one political party and that is because there is freedom of choice. We need to have that aspect of choice, especially when it comes to political choice because it generates a competitive nature, it generates the ability of people being in a position to say okay, especially now, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: No, that's okay, I was interested to hear a bit more about how you would choose that type of thing. We talked a little bit at the beginning about how many times you've visited the Craft Centre and you've mentioned that it's been multiple times. Do you remember how you've first heard about the Centre?

K: Yes, so I was a poor student and I had a friend who did leafleting campaigns, this was at college, so I think I was maybe 15, and he worked for a company, it was just like an outsourcing company effectively but they would stand in the middle of town, in hotspot areas, and they would issue leaflets to people passing by, so you didn't have to sign up to

anything, you didn't have to do anything like that, it wasn't a Unicef campaign or anything planted towards that, but I think it was an off branch of the Council, and because the Manchester Craft and Design Centre is a part of that, I think the Centre ended up having leaflets printed, I think they were having an exhibition or it might've been, I think it was an exhibition, it must've been like an opening night for an exhibition, and as I was giving them out, so I basically was, my friend said you come along, it's easy money, you stand in the middle of town for like 6 hours and you just hand out leaflets. If you get through all your leaflets quicker, you can go home early, but I think when you finish your shift, you got paid if you handed out all your leaflets, and it ended up being quite lucrative. You ended up, you needed to be quite chatty, you needed to be like, I effectively needed to be like an actor because I was handing out leaflets to a place that I'd never heard of before, and they were saying what's that, what is it, and I only really knew what was on the back of the leaflet, so I was just kind of saying everything, but I was trying to engage the person that was in front of me, I wanted to get paid, and I ended up sort of learning this leaflet, it was my script, we're talking nearly 15 years ago at this point but I remember, it was an invite-only event but we were handing out leaflets for it; if you had a leaflet it meant that you could get in, and if you pre-registered your interest you had a free glass of wine on your arrival, so it was like a bit of a show evening for whatever this exhibition is. I remember all of that, and as ridiculous as that sound, and I kept one and pre-registered my interest and I arrived on the day, on the evening or whatever, and I remember my first thought, thinking where am I? Because it's up around the corner from Afflecks Palace, so I remember being like I know where Afflecks Palace is, that's fine, it will be on display, and then I remember walking past the NCP garage and up past that corner, like it's next to the Wheatsheaf, it's next to that fairly rough pub, and I remember thinking where am I going? All for a glass of wine at 15, you know, and maybe some more money. Me and my mates were doing the same thing, and I went with other

people because we just wanted a free glass of wine, and then we ended up staying and the makers, a lot of the makers were there, all talking about it, all trying to generate interest in their own craft, and then there was live music so it was like a show, it was like an exhibition, so the stores themselves weren't open but a lot of the makers were there, and they change all the time, I don't think it's the same people 15 years ago that are still there now, I'm sure there are some but they were all talking about their own craft, their own design and what they could do from a creative aspect, and I've found all of that really fascinating, and also the whole idea it's a big communal space that can close, it can shut its doors and then turn into something else in the night time, it can turn into an exhibition space or it can turn into like a live music venue; it was just a really interesting idea, even if geographically it is a bit peculiar, it's so fascinating but it's in the middle of, it doesn't really make much sense for it to be where it is but you can't do anything about that.

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

K: Yeah, it's a listed building and it was a fish market, I want to say?

A: Yeah, that's true.

K: And that's about it. I know that, I think just from conversations that I've had with the makers, but I think they've said, I think I remember some of them saying to me one time even if the lease of the Craft Centre itself ends up being moved or like shifted around by the Council, the building will still stay there because it's a listed building.

A: Yeah. Do you remember why you visited the Centre the last time you were there?

K: Yeah, I needed a bespoke gift, and this was, I want to say November last year, yeah, because we've moved, and I haven't been able to go back since we moved. It was a Christmas presents, so it needed to be bespoke because it was for a special occasion, so we've had a new baby and I went into the Craft Centre to see if I could find anything, because what

we didn't want to do was -sorry, we didn't have a new baby, we had a new baby in the family, and we didn't just want to do sort of traditional welcoming gift of, like, you know, whatever it is, a bunch of flowers or whatever, we wanted to get something for the baby, and I thought instead of just buying bibs or baby grows or something like that, something that was a bit rubbish, a bit predictable, see if we could go to the Craft Centre and find anything interesting and we did, we've found some little knitted baby shoes, and we got to choose the colour and the design of them, and all of that, and I think it was cheap for what it was. Again, like, anything bespoke or custom-made, I end up feeling a bit like I've robbed from them because they're so talented, everyone in there is so talented; like I was saying before about that bespoke jewellery and it's obscene, I don't know how they do it but they make it, they design it and they design it to something you like, to your personal specification, and then they charge you a quarter of what you would get, a price you would pay going to high street jewellers' or whatever.

A: Can you tell me a bit about your visits at the Centre? Do you normally, from the moment that you walk in, do you browse, do you go to specific shops?

K: it varies, to be perfectly honest. There are sometimes where, so I know the makers, I know what I need, and I know what the makers will be most useful to me, like to fulfil what it is that I needed. I know that I've been pushing this kind of bespoke aspect a lot, but it isn't even necessarily the sole reason that I would choose to go there, a lot of it would just be, say I need a piece of jewellery for a gift, or I need a nice sort of housewarming present, there are specific makers, like I could go to John Lewis, for example, or I could go to Debenhams or Primark, or whatever, and I could end up walking around, I could spend 45 minutes walking around that entire place, not finding the thing that I need, I'm sure I would find some nice stuff but I wouldn't be able to find that unique, special present that I'm actually looking for. I can spend the same time, I can spend 45 minutes getting to, being in the middle of town and

getting to the Craft Centre, and then finding, and then already in my head, narrowing it down to 3 makers that I know would just hit the nail on the head, and spending about 10 minutes in the shop, or in the space at least, getting exactly what I need. Other times – yeah, I’m not just necessarily like a guided missile, we can just go, and my partner Hannah does it a lot where even if we haven’t necessarily got anything to look for, it changes all the time, the Craft Centre, so you can go and experience a different thing each time you visit, and it can even be a difference of a week or two weeks, and the stock changes all the time, the people in there change all the time; they all have different ideas and they all have different kind of movements in their head, and it’s a lot more interesting than waiting for a season to change in John Lewis or Primark, you know, you have that very kind of different shift where you almost, you know, there can be new stock in the middle of the week, and I’ll use Primark as an example because their turnover of stock is insane, but they are fixed to season so they almost need to wait for the season to run out before they can get new stock, for example, and it’s the same everywhere, you go to the Primark in Trafford Centre or you go to Primark in town, it’s going to be the same stock, there’s no difference, but you go to the Craft Centre and it’s different, it’s a different experience each time.

A: You’ve mentioned the different makers and different products; how do you feel about the product range at the Centre and also about the diversity in terms of the makers?

K: Yeah, I mean it’s certainly one of, so the product range, I would say, purely based on, and I’ve been saying this a lot in our time, in our chat, but the product range changes all the time. I think I’ve gone, the most that I’ve ever gone was like 6 times in a month, and each time I’ve gone it’s been a different experience, there’s been something different; it’s not just been seeing the same things but there’s been new stock that’s been, like a new development, there’s been new things to see, sometimes within the Centre itself, sometimes with the displays, but a lot of the times because of physical stock that the makers have produced, and I



know for a lot of them it isn't just, they do some making while they're in the building, but they take it home as well, you know, it really is a passion, they are their own shopkeeper so if they don't produce the stock, then they'll have an empty shelf, they won't have anything to sell, so they make when they get home as well so it's a never-ending cycle.

A: And in terms of the diversity or lack of diversity at the Centre?

K: Yeah, so I mean I would certainly say that it could be more diverse, there are a lot of different makers from different cultural backgrounds and the stock that they produce is all noticeably different, but I mean, it may come as a surprise to you but I don't run the building, so I don't know how they go around having that almost element or having that conversation to almost be in a position to say let's almost reach out to different cultural makers, let's reach out to black individuals, black artistic creators, or Asian creative makers, or different cultural subgroups and say we almost feel that you, we are lacking your vision and we want you to come and work in this space with us. I don't know if that's something that could even happen, I don't know if that conversation can even take place.

A: Yeah, that's in terms of the Craft and Design Centre and their processes.

K: Yeah, exactly, but I'd been to cultural events within the space and I've been to exhibitions from different cultural backgrounds and different cultural individuals within the space as well, and like I've said, I know there are different cultural diversities and makers that are a permanent fixture in the building but yeah, like I've said and I think, I don't want to give you a wishy-washy answer but I think the whole world could do with being more culturally diverse, it is very easy. I've touched on this accidentally before but it's that idea of oh, you're not creative because you can't draw, or you're not artistic because you can't paint, and it doesn't work like that; we are too far along in the world, we are too far along in our own kind of cultural environment to allow ourselves to think like that, it's the same conversation that

we need to have about everything, about women, about beauty, about racism, it's like really, none of it matters; that other person is a human being, other aspects of life have been created by another human being, so it doesn't hold any less weight because of who it's been created by or why it's been created, the fact of the matter is it has been created.

A: Exactly. Can you tell me a bit about your interactions with makers, you know, how does it feel when you walk to the studios, do you tend to talk to them, do you like asking them about the making process? Just in general how it feels.

K: Yeah, I would say the majority of all the times I had gone in yes, I nearly always, unless I am in absolute, extreme rush, I nearly always have the time to have a conversation, to almost touch base, have a conversation, you know, and I think that's interesting, it is a unique aspect of the Craft Centre because you don't get that everywhere, that is a normal experience, you don't have that option a lot of the time, and you know, you can exchange pleasantries, you can have something of a human chat with like a cashier or a shop worker or whatever, a retail individual, but the guy in a suit behind the counter in John Lewis, he doesn't know who's made it or the idea behind the design, or the interest of it all, like that isn't, he doesn't care because it's not his, he wants to go home and have his spag boll, you know, he can't wait to get off shift, and you can't have a conversation with him – well, you could, but he wouldn't know and he would just say I don't know, but you can have a conversation and it's unique, that in its own right is unique because the design of it, or the choice of fabric or the choice of a knot, in knitting, the choice of that style of knot that's been used to knit something together, like you can have that conversation and you don't need to be quizzical about it, it just comes up in conversation. You can see something or pick something up and it sparks a conversation because I think a lot of the makers, they're interested that you're interested, like they already know, if you weren't interested, if you weren't bothered, you wouldn't be there but because you are, you already have something in common with them, you already have an interest,

you're interested in their product, or even less than that, you're interested in arts and crafts, so are they and you can meet on common ground.

A: In terms of the building, can you tell me how you feel about the actual building of the Craft and Design Centre? Can you think of anything that draws your attention when you walk in?

K: Yeah, the immediate split level, the immediate idea of it being a uniquely designed building. Again, I can't think, the architecture alone is probably one of the reasons why it's a listed building because there isn't, I can't think of anything else, any other building that looks like that, that has the interior like that because it's like a theatre; there is like a split level design of it, it's like a mini amphitheatre. The space itself, so I would say that kind of big, open, middle ground is only really utilised when they have exhibitions or live shows or anything like that, but the majority, like in the middle of a day, or if you went at the weekend, the sort of mini stage at the middle of the space, I don't think I've ever seen anything specifically there. There have been times I would say, the space itself is utilised and I would say the space is utilised quite well when they do have exhibitions, when an independent maker, a creative or whatever has reached out and said can I use your space for this piece or whatever, and then it sort of threads on its toes for being an exhibition space and being a bit of a museum, and it's free and that's interesting in its own right, even if you're just there to pick something up quickly you end up, that promotes you spending more time in the building, thinking there's something else to see, there's something more unusual to experience. Yeah, I don't want to say unequivocally it's utilised to its best, but again, that isn't really my decision to make, I can't say every weekend there will be a new exhibition because I'm sure that would be an absolute nightmare to try and choreograph, but yeah, in my opinion, in my personal experience, the space itself is so interesting, it's beautiful in its own design but no, it isn't very well utilised.

A: It has a lot of potential, the space, that's true. You've mentioned before that, depending on your visits, you may browse or go to specific places, how long would you say you normally spend at the Centre, and also which days would you normally visit, when you're in Manchester?

K: So, it would normally be the weekend, I would say like Friday, Saturday, Sunday would be my kind of most visited days but I have also spend time, I used to work quite central in Manchester, I used to work just sort of almost on the outskirts of Manchester and I would detour into town if I knew that I needed to pick something up, so if there was a gift or there was a present, and there'd been times as well where I'd bought on behalf of people, so like friends or previous colleagues or whatever, they needed a present and I've kind of almost taken them with me, I've shown them the Craft Centre and almost done that bit of sourcing for them, on their behalf. That would sometimes be in the middle of a week but definitely, the time I would spend the most would be Friday, Saturday and Sunday, over the weekend, and then I would say with regards to your second question about how long I would spend, it could vary. There had been times when I've literally been in and out the building in 2 minutes, I needed to run in, either pick something up or just find something, get hold of it and then kind of leave, and again, I'm very good at knowing that, you can, even if you get recognised or you can have a conversation with somebody for a good half an hour, a good 40 minutes, like again, it's a retail space so they know that sometimes they would get someone running in and being like I need this, okay, thank you, bye! And then they're off again. I would say the minimum time that I have spent in the Craft Centre, I would say the average would be between 30 and 45 minutes.

A: You've mentioned this, and I wanted to ask you if you have taken anyone to see the Craft and Design Centre, and you've said that you have.

K: Yes.

A: Was it only to buy something, or have you taken anyone to see the space as well?

K: Yeah, both. I think the last time I went the café wasn't open, but we'd gone to there as well, so we've been in that part of town and needed just a little refresher, a little pick-me-up or a little snack or whatever, and when the café's been open, you're kind of coming through and can pick something up from there as well, which is another benefit. Yeah, the space is, a couple of years ago I had an architect friend, he was studying architecture and wanted to become an architect, and he was looking for examples of unique architecture, of spaces that don't normally exist, he asked me if I could think of anywhere and it was, like the Craft Centre was the first one on my agenda. There were a couple of other places and a couple of other sort of unusual bits of architecture, but that was the one that stood out the most, and it was the one that stood out the most to him as well because it is, ultimately it is a listed building that has been converted into a creative aspect and an exhibition space, and other uses, and it really intrigued him, the whole kind of history of the building and the whole idea to be able to convert that space, bringing an element of the past forwards and reuse it, it's like upcycling but with history in essence, and he was fascinated, and he was from Spain originally, and he said even in Spain, I can't think of a space that looks like this, and I spoke about the kind of theatre aspect and it almost looks like an indoor amphitheatre, and it kind of opened his eyes a little bit, like yes, of course, there is a theatre near where I grew up that has this sort of multi-layered aspect, where the performance piece happens downstairs and it's all lit up, and all the people, the audience stands and they stand looking down into the theatre, and I think he's doing quite well for himself, I haven't spoken to him in a couple of months at this point, but yes, like there had been times when I've taken people to the building just to look at the building.

A: Do you normally visit alone or with other people, when you need to buy something?

K: Yeah, I mean I am a fairly solitary person anyway, so if there's something I need, like yeah, I would just go, I won't message anybody or say I'm gonna go into town, do you want to come with me? There had been times where I had been out with people or doing a group Christmas shopping trip or whatever, and that kind of aspect and element of where do we go, where do we try and find something that's unique, again, it's on the top of my agenda, it's the first place that I think, if I was in need of a gift and I really wasn't sure what it was that I was looking for, I would just go to the Craft Centre.

A: Have you attended any workshops at the Centre?

K: Yeah, a couple, but not recently, it's certainly a few years, even maybe longer, certainly at least 3 years since I have attended a workshop there.

A: Was it to learn something? Do you remember what was the workshop for, the ones that you've attended?

K: I think it was to try and, it was either learning how to paint with a pallet knife, so to create thick paint shape with a pallet knife, or, and this is a bit ridiculous but it's the complete other end, it was jewellery making, but I remember seeing, I did the pallet knife painting on my own and I think I did the jewellery making with my partner, I think you can tell from my voice that I'm not 100% sure about this, but both of them, I think the reason I ended up even going in the first place was because I knew, I trusted the idea, I trusted that it was the Craft Centre so it was going to be good anyway, but yeah, I enjoyed it both times and I remember thinking at the end of which ever one came last, yes, I'd be doing this again regardless, and then you know, life gets in the way.

A: Do you remember if you've taken any pictures during your visits, or of things that you've bought and if so, would you normally post them online or not necessarily?

K: Some of my pictures that I have taken have ended up online, but that's, so I've taken pictures of the space, and nearly always I will just not take any pictures, and then if I do I'm always very careful to ask the creators, to ask the makers permission first because I think it can be quite intrusive to just sort of get your phone out and just start snapping because they obviously, they don't know where the pictures are going and they don't know what you're doing. There had been times where I've been looking for a gift and needed to take a picture and then send it to someone to say hey, I've found this, what do you think? There had been times when I've been doing that in a maker's shop and they've asked to see the picture, and then they've liked my picture, liked the composition of the picture and asked me to send it to them so they can post it, and that's happened a couple of times where I've not even done anything particularly special but they liked it and wanted to repost it, well, they've wanted to have that picture so that they can post it. I've seen that happen a couple of times where it's been my picture that they've put up on Instagram or whatever, or used in their story, but that doesn't faze me, that's nice, that's just another part of conversation for me.

A: Yeah, that's nice. Do you follow them on social media? How do you find their online presence?

K: Yeah, so I think a lot of it, so on Instagram I follow some individual makers, some of the makers that I really like, and I like everything they produce and everything they make. Those individuals I have kind of gone out of my way to follow, because I've just asked them, while I was being in the branch, I just said do you have Instagram, where can I follow your vision? And others, so I follow the hashtag of Manchester Craft and Design Centre as well, I think it's abbreviated, but yeah, that's ended up, I ended up hearing about you and this, and I had somebody reach out to me as well who said hey, you really like the Manchester Craft and Design Centre and I've said yes, and they've said look at this and then they've linked me to your post that was really easy to find. I ended up looking, so I've searched through my





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A: Do you have a favourite thing that you've bought from them?

K: They each have their own favourite thing, so there's been a couple of experiences, there's been a couple of times where, just those little stories where that badge, it's like that become a

permanent addition to a jacket, it's a part of my wardrobe; even if I did fall out with that badge, you know, if I fell out of love with it, I don't think I will but I can't, without either breaking the jacket or breaking the pin I can't get the badge off, so it's easier to just leave it alone. So, the baby shoes as well, I mean they, I think the baby now at this point is too big for them, but it was the whole expression, it was the whole surprise of the present and they weren't anticipating something that they would love so much, and they've kept them, I think they have gone in and they have spent their own money on other things for the house, not just for the baby, but they've done that because they've loved that product so much. Yeah, little things, like it's the stuff that has stories behind it that really are my favourite things. I think the baby shoes are probably it because that is just a nice story. They loved the present so much that they've gone out of their way to go into the store themselves to see everything for themselves, and then become customers because of a gift, that's the ultimate definition of a word of mouth, really.

A: Exactly. We talked a little bit before about prices and handmade products versus mass-produced, how do you feel about the prices at the Centre specifically?

K: Yeah, I mean I think if anything, they could be higher across the board. I feel like for the quality, for everything that you get, for everything that you see and that whole creative process that goes behind it as well, some of the stuff is just an absolute steal, I don't know how they manage to get away with it with themselves, but it's their prices. There'd been a couple of times when I feel like I've gone in and I've spent, like I said to you before, I've gone in and spent way less than what I felt like I should have done, but they're their prices and they've set them at what they feel it should be, so you can't, I have tried on a couple of occasions to overpay and they've never accepted it, they've never said okay, you pay what you feel you should, they're always very firm, like we set our prices so you pay them, you buying it is plenty.

A: Yeah. We've talked a little bit before about donations; have you ever seen, have you ever noticed the donation boxes at the Centre?

K: Yes.

A: Have you ever donated?

K: A few times, so I think when there's been an exhibition, when I've gone and seen an exhibition or anything like that – yes, but I don't make, makes me sound a bit miserable, really, but I don't make a habit of it. That isn't because I disagree with it, it's because I very rarely actually have change, I very rarely carry money with me; when I do yeah, but it goes wherever it is I can get rid of it, like I'm not rich but I don't need to worry about a lot of things, I don't need to worry about food on the table or anything like that, so you know, if we go to a museum or whatever and it asks for a donation, and I've got change on me then great. A lot of places now, we went to Edinburgh museum, not this weekend but the weekend before, and they had like a reader, so you could donate whatever you wanted on your card, so you just typed in a fiver, a tenner or whatever, and then you could pay it with a card, and that was really useful because I never carry money, I don't have a wallet anymore because it's all on my phone.

A: Would you be more inclined to give at the moment, given the situation with the pandemic and everything that's going on?

K: Yeah, certainly if I was in Manchester and like I know that a lot of the makers, they have tried to kind of do an Instagram shop or tried to list their products in other ways, and like I've made purchases in a different way from my favourite suppliers, and I know that even if the stores themselves aren't set up, you can message the makers and you can almost order, you can make that personal order to them directly and they will make it, you can take their payment details and just send the money that way. That, like, I am more inclined to do it that

way, to keep an individual maker going, than to even I am to try and support the Craft Centre itself, and that may be even a bit of a, like a destructive attitude because I really wouldn't like it if the Craft Centre disappeared, but certainly at the moment, I am more interested in supporting individual makers than I am Craft Centre.

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[REDACTED]

A: Exactly, yeah. You've mentioned that you haven't visited the Craft and Design Centre [REDACTED] but are you planning to visit when they reopen, when you're back in Manchester and they've reopened fully, and also how do you feel about visiting those spaces again?

K: Yes, so when I am back, because this isn't a permanent move, like we don't know how long we're going to be here, to be entirely honest, so we'll either be coming back at the end of the year or we'll be doing another year, so who knows? Not us at the moment, but we'll certainly will soon, I hope; I mean Christ, we're nearly in October, and would I feel nervous?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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

K: Maybe, but then I would rather that, wear a mask than each of the makers be behind like a Perspex screen, like I don't know how else you would try and do it because a lot of the makers' stock is out for display, so you know, unless you put all of that behind a Perspex screen and then, like it wouldn't really work, you have to kind of pick things up and then take things over, say this is lovely and I want this, it doesn't really work if everyone was sat behind a Perspex screen. So, I mean yeah, to answer your question, I think the mask would impact a bit of the engagement factor, but that's better than feeling even more isolated, feeling even more distant than not being able to talk to any of the store or not being able to move freely around a studio, one of the shops.

A: Perfect. Thank you so much, I don't have any more questions. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about your experience at the Centre that we may not have covered during our interview?

K: I don't think so. I think over than I don't think the location is doing itself any favours, but that really isn't anything that we can do.

A: Yeah, that's true.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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