

A: Before we begin, I have a couple of demographics questions that I'd like to ask you if that's okay? So, can you tell me how you identify, in terms of your gender?

M: Female.

A: And race?

M: White British.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: Perfect. And how old are you?

M: I'm 27.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: And approximately, how many times have you visited the Manchester Craft and Design Centre?

M: Over a hundred times, I can't even count.

A: Amazing.

M: A lot.

A: And what is your average spending usually at the Craft Centre?

M: For me personally, it's about £20-£25.

A: And when we talk about other craft and design centres, or other similar organisations, what would you say would be your average spending per visit there?

M: Maybe a little bit less actually, maybe £15.

A: Perfect, thank you so much, that's all the demographics, so now we can start with the proper conversation. So, can you begin by telling me a little bit about yourself?

M: Yeah, of course. So, I [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] My background is art and design-based, I've studied art, crafts, textiles, making of them in school, college and university, my degree is in textile design, but I'm specifically a knitted surface design specialist, and I've been visiting the centre for years and years, I'd say since about the early 2000s, I'm not 100% sure exactly when it opened, I think it was during the 80s, but I've been visiting there as long as I've been visiting

Manchester because it's somewhere nice to go, it was very different, free to look, there was usually a café and a gallery there, so yeah.

A: Perfect. Before we start talking specifically about Manchester Craft and Design Centre, can you tell me a little bit about your relationship with crafts specifically, so you've mentioned that you've studied art and design, and you have a speciality; are you also, do you consider yourself to be a maker as well, do you mainly teach or do you make stuff as well?

M: Yes, I do, so making and crafting little things, whether it would be jewellery or bags, or collage cards and sending them for Christmas, I'm always sort of making things myself. It's like a personal connection there, I guess, because first of all, it was what I was always interested in and when I was very young, we didn't sort of have a lot of money, so the money that we could spend, rather than buying sort of toys when I was younger, the money would go to craft items, so I would buy beads, or cheap bits and felt, and create and craft, so I've been doing that for years, really, and it's sort of continued right up into my actual career, which I didn't think it was going to do, actually, so there is a sort of personal connection. It sort of reminds me of being younger and, you know, not having a lot of things but being able to create something quite interesting, you know, with very little money and, you know, a lot of time.

A: Was that something that you've shared with other people in your family?

M: Yes, so my late father, he was quite a creative, he was a joiner and a carpenter, but he was a sort of, like, (XXX 5:42) craft, painting, anything really, so he had taught me a lot. Like I've said, he died in 2002, I think it was, 2001 or 2002, which is when I started going to the Centre. My mum as well is quite creative, she's never really been one to sort of make things, but she's always encouraged me, if she sees me wanting to craft or create something, she'll encourage that or she'd be able to provide materials for me, and she was obviously the one to

accompany me to the galleries or the other design centres, or places where things are handmade and crafted, so they've been quite a big sort of influence in that sort of area of my life.

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A: In terms of the meaning of crafts and design for you as a woman, can you tell me a bit about that? What does it mean for you, as a woman?

M: I've never really kind of thought about it in that way until I got to, you know, identified my craft and making in my gender identity. When I got to university, obviously pretty much the whole cohort apart from one was all female, and it feels like crafting and making is very female-lead sort of practice. I think there's big notions with craft being sort of associated with women's work, so if you think about embroidery or sewing, or knitting, usually you think of women doing these sorts of things. I kind of came to the opinion in university that craft is seen as female but true art and painting and all that is seen as male, but really, that's not actually true.

A: And how did you feel about those conversations then when you started realising this idea of craft being more of a women's work, and then high arts being more male-dominated?

M: I think obviously, it's just, you don't give any values to things, if you think in that, in those terms, you don't really give any value to things that are craft and handmade, which is just absolutely no true. You know, these handmade things, products or gifts have so much validity within the art world, design world because somebody's had to, they're not just pumped out, mass produced, they were being thought about, designed, you know, made properly, they have more longevity, they may have, a lot of people would have personal connections because I know a lot of people would commission, want things commissioned

for themselves and handmade, so I think when you associate women with craft, it's just from historical sort of point of view, but I feel I see so many more, there's so many more sort of male crafters and makers on the rise that I've seen. There's like travelling markets around the North West, there's one in Manchester and I think it travels to Liverpool, travels through Stockport as well and there's so many men who are making and crafting things as well.

A: You've mentioned a little bit about craft being more female-lead community as well.

What has been your experience with Manchester, North West scene?

M: So I, I guess it would be sort of similar, I know from visiting the Centre that there are a lot more female makers and crafters. I'm not too sure actually, I don't think I could speak on that because I'm not specifically a crafter and maker, so I haven't really experienced any sort of, like, I don't really know.

A: That's okay, I'm just asking because of your involvement in general with the scene, and if you've had any specific experiences so far, or at uni. That's okay. In terms of talking more specifically about the Manchester Craft and Design Centre, you've mentioned that you were quite young when you first visited; do you remember how you've found out about the MCDC and what inspired you to visit?

M: Yes, so like I've said, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] would go around Manchester and go to the Northern Quarter, which is where the Centre is obviously located, because around there is obviously so different, and there's graffiti and there's things that you can walk around and you don't really have to pay for anything to sort of be immersed within that area of Manchester. I think, I can't remember if we have stumbled upon it, it was always an interesting looking building, sort of quite out of place because it's really beautiful sort of ornate, market-looking building from the outside, so I think we just, we must have just gone in one day and realised what it was. I think there was

probably signage outside but I don't think there was anything in particular that we sort of read and then went, we just kind of stumbled across it, it's like a little gem, hidden away, you know, this beautiful building hidden away in all this sort of brickwork and graffiti, and yeah, I think that's just how we've found it, really.

A: And you've mentioned that it was quite different. Was it different to what you've seen at the time, or different in terms of the architecture from the buildings around it?

M: I think it's quite a different place in general, you know, around 2002 I would have been around 9, so you know, as a young child, going back to sort of exposing students and children to the craft and design world, I know we only really see like shops and high street shops, so to go in and see things being, beautiful things being handmade, and to actually see the crafters and designers working and making, and being able to speak to them about, you know, the practice and what they're doing, it was such a different experience than just going down to the shops. Say, for example, we wanted Christmas cards, we'd always go to the Centre because, you know, you can get cards anywhere really, but it's not that, somebody's put passion and thought, and you know, designed those cards and I just think it's so much more different than walking to, like, Tesco for example, and picking up something quick.

A: And are you aware of the Manchester Craft and Design Centre's history?

M: A little bit, yeah. So, I believe it used to be a fish, I think it was like a fish market, but apart from that, I'm not fully aware, I think, not the whole ins and outs, but I believe it used to be an old market that got taken over by the Crafts Council, or they got funded by the Crafts Council and then they were able to open, I think it was in the 80s or slightly later, I'm not sure.

A: Do you think that this whole history of Manchester Craft and Design Centre, and being something else before and this whole idea about changing from a fish market to then this very interesting layout, did that intrigue your interest in any way?

M: Probably, obviously not at the time when I was first visiting when I was very young, but you think about it sort of now, I guess the, you know, what went on in there before was people would work with their hands, they would obviously gut fish and present them and prep them, so I guess that in a way is sort of a craft in itself, so moving from one type of craft, you know, to sort of produce food, to another type of craft when it's more, you know, a leisure thing, I think it's quite interesting, really.

A: It is. I think the Manchester Craft and Design Centre has a fascinating history, yeah. Well, you've mentioned that you've visited many, many times; what brought you there in your last visit?

M: So, my last visit, I believe it was Christmas shopping, so you know, buying cards and sort of, when I, you know, when it's a holiday or it's somebody's birthday, I'd much rather go and buy handmade and hand produced, and crafted and designed items rather than going down and buying something mass produced, because I think it's sort of more of a, I don't know, more of a care, really, and picking something out that somebody had made with their own hands, but I believe it was Christmas card shopping, or buying stocking fillers and all those little gifts for people.

A: So, when you talk about care, you mean it shows care from you to the person who receives the gift, or also care in terms of how it was made?

M: I think both, really, yeah, definitely both. The way that it's made, it's got to be very sort of considered, and then you pick, because a lot of things in the Centre are quite unique and there's only maybe a few of each one, you know, created so you pick that out for somebody

and that's their unique kind of item, nobody really has the same thing, so I think it's care on both the making process and also the buying, the selecting and giving process to somebody as well.

A: I feel the same way as you, but could you tell me a little bit more about why it's different to buy something that is made there instead of mass produced?

M: Well, I guess there's sort of a, this idea that it's got more longevity, like either because it's been handmade, and it's probably been made properly as well, but also like emotional longevity as well.

A: In what sense? When you say emotional longevity, in what sense?

M: Sort of like a personal connection to the item, I guess.

A: In terms of the artists and what it means to the artists to sell their creations instead of buying them mass produced, is it something that you think about as well?

M: In terms of the what, sorry?

A: In terms of the makers, for themselves selling what they're making, and then going into Tesco and buying cards, for example? Is this something that you consider?

M: Yeah, I think so. Do you mean in terms of that would be the same thing they would sort of do, or how does it mean for them selling?

A: No, I mean in terms of supporting independent artists and makers instead of going into a supermarket to buy cards.

M: Oh yeah, it's always something I try and support, even if, you know, I try and get down to sort of markets, with pandemic it must've been really tricky for them but buying online but

from independent artists and makers, it's something that I did consider a lot, I think it's really important as well.

A: Can you tell me a bit about your visits to the centre, so can you describe how it feels, the atmosphere, how it works from the moment that you enter?

M: Ah right, okay. So, I think there's always been a very sort of calm and industrious sort of atmosphere in the centre. Like I've said before, you can do to actual studios, so not only look at the products but talk to the makers and see them working, have this sort of view of, you know, their actual practice and making process which I think is very interesting, but it's always been a very sort of, felt very creative and very industrious and hard-working in there, really. When I go in, I usually like to look in every single shop, but for some reason I've always got a set way that I sort of go in, so I start on the bottom floor on one side then go upstairs, do all of upstairs and come down and do the other side, I'm not sure why I do that, it's just a sort of little routine that I have. It feels very different, very calm, it's, you know, in textile design if something is handmade, you can call like long textiles, it feels sort of in a way like that, really, sort of crafting and calm, industrious.

A: You've mentioned that you go in, look at one side and then go upstairs and look at the other side; do you also go inside every little studio, or window shop mostly?

M: I go in every single studio, yeah. Usually because I've been going there for years, sometimes I may just have a chat with one of the makers that I, you know, sort of recognise and they may recognise me from time to time, but every single shop I do like to go in and have a look what's inside, and have a look at the makers working away as well, yeah.

A: Do you spend any time in the café or the exhibition space?

M: Yes, so the café, have done in the past, not always but have done. I believe the last time I was in there that it was a whole vegan café with amazing cake, absolutely amazing, and the

gallery space which is just next door, it's quite a small, sort of little area but I'd always have a look in there as well, there's always something sort of interesting or inspiring as well, talking about my own practice or, you know, teaching as well, there's always something there that would spark an idea like oh, I could do this for work or I can promote this sort of technique to the students because there is this amazing thing on display there. I don't really believe it's always somebody who works in the Centre, they get a lot of new designers, I think, and they work with the Manchester Metropolitan University and get, exhibit the work from their students or, you know, designers from there, but yeah, I always try to visit the gallery, definitely.

A: Does anything catch your eye when you walk in?

M: I'm just trying to picture it in my head now, so I think the layout is very interesting, the fact that there's this big open space through the middle, and I always really like the sort of the area where the gallery space is because it's very open and, you know, there's lots of room but also the, if you look up on the ceiling, I think I've taken lots and lots of pictures of this before, just standing in that open space and looking at the ceiling, and seeing all the iron cast work and the glass on the roof, it's really quite an interesting thing to look at, especially if you ever, you know, sort of more creative type, it sort of just sparks ideas and inspires.

A: It's beautiful, it's a really beautiful space. Do you normally take pictures when you are at the Centre, and do you tend to post them as well?

M: I have done in the past, yeah, I have done. Obviously not recently because we haven't been able to really visit but I have taken a lot of pictures, posted them on platforms like Instagram or Facebook. I do tend to sort of tag the Centre but, like I've said, I've not taken something for a while, but it's always something I've done anyway, taking pictures. I think you can take pictures of the makers' work, but you have to ask, really, as well. It's just

respectful, isn't it, it's just if you are a designer, you don't want somebody nicking your ideas.

A: Definitely. And have you associated any type of smells or sounds with the Craft Centre?

M: Definitely, sort of filing noises and drilling noises for jewellery, and little hammers sort of hammering away as well, you can always hear that. I think the majority of the downstairs area is actually jewellery design, so you can always hear the drills and the files going and polishing. Obviously, because the café is there, you can always smell the cake, they make their own bread as well, so it's that kind of thing, sort of like a, quite a homely smelling I think, as well.

A: Normally, do you visit alone or with someone else?

M: It depends, really. In the past maybe 4 or 5 years, it would be by myself because I may be in Manchester for other things. I used to work in Manchester as well, so I might pop there on a lunch break to pick up some food, or I might already be in town but it's usually alone, but you know, years ago it used to always be with my mum, but yeah, more so on my own now, I think.

A: Which one do you prefer?

M: What do you mean, visiting alone or with somebody else?

A: Yeah.

M: I think I can probably take more time by myself, get a bit, sometimes I get a bit too immersed in it and can be there for a couple of hours without even realising, but I think visiting on my own, just because I can have a chat, really, really look at everything that's been produced.

A: There's something that I haven't asked you yet, how long are your visits normally?

M: Ah, I'd say about an hour, I reckon, about an hour just depending.

A: And have you taken anyone there to show them the Centre?

M: Yeah, so my partner, I've taken him a few times; he's not very arty or he's not super-creative in the same way that I am, he's more like a, he's a bit of an English boy, but I've brought him before and also my grandma, she really loves the Centre. She's towards her 80s now, so she'll get into town and she'll decide to go there and, you know, have lunch and she's quite happy to potter around, have a look at all the beautiful things; she's always been a big shopper but I think she really loves the Centre because of how different it is compared to, you know, the rest of Manchester, really.

A: That's lovely. And okay, so your mum, your partner, your grandma; have you visited with friends as well?

M: I think I might've done in the past, not recently but maybe when, you know, you first sort of get let loose as a teenager in your local town, or you go shopping on your own. I think I might have brought friends in there before, but not recently. They do visit, but just not together.

A: Have you attended any of the events they organised or the workshops?

M: Yeah, I have attended a few. I've actually volunteered at quite a few of them, networking events I've done before where they have resident makers sort of talking about the work that they're doing, or you know, they've got somebody in who's exhibiting at the gallery space. They do a lot of work with, they have this sort of Science in the City, which is associated with the Industrial Museum in Manchester. I've worked at some of their workshops, you know the family workshops, before; I've done little bits just here and there for the makers, display cabinets, that kind of thing really, but I've not really attended so much myself but I have been in there during the events, helping the set up.

A: How did you decide to volunteer?

M: I don't really know, I think I just, the jewellery in there, towards the end of college, my interest in design and making has peaked a lot more, so it just sort of seemed natural to see if they had any work experience going, and one of the ladies, I'm not sure if she works there anymore, but she mentioned that you could volunteer and there's different sorts of levels of volunteering, whether that's by providing workshops or assisting, or doing little odds and ends for the Centre. I believe I just got in contact one day and just asked if they needed any help, really.

A: And did you enjoy being a part of those workshops?

M: Yeah, I loved it, especially because, like, they were quite creative workshops and my sort of idea of teaching and presenting workshops and design skills to other people was sort of creeping in. I think that's probably one of the factors that lead me to becoming an art teacher and taking a PGCE in Manchester as well, but yeah, it was really interesting to do it, I loved it, really loved it.

A: Do you follow the Centre on social media or they newsletter to find out about things that are happening there?

M: Yes, so I don't really use a lot of social media anymore apart from Instagram, so I follow the Centre on Instagram; I believe I've got, I'm subscribed to their mailing list.

A: In terms of your interactions with the makers, you've mentioned a few things, but can you tell me a bit more about your experience with makers specifically. You've mentioned that you may now a few of them or may chat with a couple of them.

M: Yeah, so obviously, I don't know them on a super personal level, but there's one particular maker that has a stall and made, upstairs, she does a lot of the knitted things.

Looking at her work before obviously deciding that I want to become a knitted fabric specialist, looking at her work, I did speak to her a lot about, you know, the process of knitting and designing and how she'd got into it, and she used to, I remember, always had somebody from the University volunteering with her, and it was something that I really, really wanted to do but obviously, I decided to go to university in a different city, so we were chatting, I can't quite remember her name but she was in the studio upstairs.

A: I think it's Andrea?

M: There's a stall in there called Nell as well, a lady that creates prints. I'd have a chat with her quite a lot about how she creates her, designs her prints and how she does them, like wondering how she get them to stay on fabric because mine never do, and just talking to her about the process, really, and getting knowledge and inspiration from those people. These are the two makers that sort of stick out in my head and I can remember.

A: And can you recall, I know you've visited several times, but can you think about how it feels when you enter the studio?

M: I think it feels very, don't know really, sort of quite humbling and to see people crafting and making, and these beautiful products being out, you kind of think oh, why wouldn't you want to sort of buy handmade and locally crafted items?

A: And do you normally browse, or do you try to talk to them and browse as well? I mean, how does it feel when you are in the studio?

M: So, I'd talk to the makers and browse, it just depends what their doing, because obviously, if they're really into their sort of designing and working, I don't want to interrupt them if they're, because I know how it feels to be a in a flow of work but yeah, I'd chat if they're free for a chat, and it feels very sort of, I don't know, it's quite a friendly atmosphere, really; very

friendly, very creative, you know, the makers that I've spoken to experience, always got time to explain their outlook on the work, or how they make things.

A: And normally, how much time do you spend in the studios?

M: I think it depends on the studio because some things do interest me a bit more, just sort of on an aesthetic and preference level. I'd probably say about 5 to 10 minutes, but sometimes it would be one thing, or a new collection that's come out of, like, jewellery or knitted items, and I would spend a good 20 minutes and chatting to the maker as well.

A: Is there anything else from your visits that stands out, that we haven't discussed?

M: Trying to think. I guess really, for me it's just how different it is, really. I've never been to a studio where, you know, the kind of design and layout is like the Design Centre. Like I've said, it's very friendly and so much more different, it's a different experience and you come out feeling a bit more different, I guess, than if you were just going to a shop on high street.

A: How does it feel when you come out?

M: Sort of like, if I said like a breath of fresh air, do you kind of understand what I mean? So obviously, people are so used to buying mass produced products and they would just throw them away, and they're not sort of well-considered or made, or there's no connection there, but you really feel like you've, I don't know, selected something that is personal and precious to you, if you come out with something for someone, or more likely for myself.

A: I mean, you have a little bit of an independent scene in Stockport at the moment, but have you seen any other spaces that are similar to the Craft and Design Centre?

M: In terms of the scale of it – no. We have a little shop in Stockport that I've visited called The Warren, which is collections of different independent artists' work and makers' work, located in the old market, so we have sort of like, I guess it kind of reminds me of the Design

Centre, actually. It's an old glass market, beautifully painted, all the same shaped, the same triangle panels and the swirly kind of iron cast work at the top, that area is quite reminiscent of the Design Centre, but The Warren is located right next to our market, and that's fairly similar. I think there's fewer places, I can't quite remember the name but there's sort of like a little studio opposite the market as well, that works with the Manchester Metropolitan University so they also have designers and makers coming in, there's workshops there occasionally but obviously because of, you know, the virus it's not really been open for a while. They also work with local schools as well which I think is amazing; again, going back to exposing young people to, you know, this world of making and craft which I think is fantastic.

A: Are you aware of any other similar spaces in other cities in the UK, have you visited anything else?

M: Not really, I'm not really sure. I don't think so, I guess it's something I've always just associated with Manchester, unless I'm not looking for them but no, I've not really experienced anything on the same calibre, really.

A: Overall, in terms of the building, how do you find the building of the Manchester Craft and Design Centre?

M: The building? Like I've said before, it's sort of this beautiful old building that's tucked away, you know, right in the centre of somewhere that it's quite urban-looking, it's lost of bricks and concrete structures, graffiti everywhere, so it's a real contrast to the surrounding architecture within the Northern Quarter area.

A: We talked a little bit about the shops, but do you have a favourite shop, is it the end one, or another one?

M: Definitely. I think it's just because it's quite textile and fibre and fabric based there. One of my favourite things I've ever bought was from that shop, it was, I've got it here actually, don't know if you'd like me to show it to you or not, but it's a knitting bag which has been created, and on the back of it there's this really cool, old-fashioned label [REDACTED] [REDACTED] which I thought was quite cool, but yeah, Handmade is definitely my favourite shop there, absolutely.

A: And you've bought that for yourself?

M: I got it as an 18th birthday present of my mum but I selected the colours, and it was handmade for me, so it's a sort of commission.

A: Oh, that's lovely. We also talked a little bit about the exhibition space, can you, do you have a favourite exhibition that you remember, or something that you saw that really stayed with you, at the exhibition space?

M: There's been a couple, actually. So, for the life of me I won't be able to remember the artists' names because that's going back quite a few years now, but there was one lady who was inspired by fungus and the type of fungus that, the spores went through the air and then the insects would take them in, and these spores would grow into mushrooms but out of the insect, so she was really interested in this idea of, you know, being able to grow jewellery on the body rather than just picking it up and putting it on, you would leave it there to grow and become beautiful and that, and as you wore it, it would become more, I don't know, opulent which I thought was really interesting and that inspired a project at university surrounded around microorganisms and mushrooms, to that was quite cool. And there was also another one of an artist who would hammer nails into a board and wrap yarn and string around them and create images or text of that, and I actually used that as an inspiration for a lot of my photography-based work in college, because I liked taking pictures but I wanted to move

even past photographs and I started to recreate photographs with nails and string, so those are two that stick out in my mind.

A: They sound super interesting. The first one as well, I will look it up to find the artist.

M: Oh yeah, I'm sorry that I don't know them off the top of my head.

A: That's okay.

M: But the mushroom one, and there was an exhibition with nails and threads and that was really cool, really inspiring.

A: And do you remember if you visited during the launch events, or during normally, just in your visits?

M: No, I don't think any launch events, just normal, yeah.

A: Have you ever used the donation boxes at the centre?

M: Have I used them, did you say?

A: Yes, have you noticed them, and have you ever used them?

M: Yes, obviously not all of the time, being a poor skint student but yes, we have donated to the Centre before when we can, and I believe they've just sort of, towards the middle of the, or they were at that point, at the middle of the Centre.

A: What actually, how did you decide to donate and how much did you donate, if you remember?

M: I think it was just a few pounds here and there. I remember giving a fiver once, but the reason why is because, you know, there is, I think craft is on the rise but we still sort of have got a long way to sort of, you know, to go and the Centre needs a lot of support really, because understandably, a lot of people won't shop there, maybe they won't know that it's

there or maybe it's out of their price range, I'm not entirely sure, but it definitely needs support, maybe as well for the upkeep of the building to make sure that everything is advertised properly, but yeah, I think it was me and my mum that donated, we just wanted to support the Centre.

A: And have you ever donated to other arts or crafts organisations?

M: I don't believe, not in the same way as that, trying to think where it would be. Maybe to Whitworth Gallery or you know, like, art galleries, I'd probably give a little bit of money but not really, no.

A: So, it's a bit different with the Craft Centre and other organisations, then?

M: I think so. I think it's just because it's, you know, it's in the Manchester area and obviously has this sort of connection with Manchester, I don't ever want to see it sort of dwindle, so that would most likely be why because it's more of a personal connection. I've been going there for years and it reminds me of being young and inspired, it's an inspiring place so I think that's probably why I give more there.

A: You've mentioned before about this idea of feeling like you're younger again and a sort of nostalgia, maybe? How does that make you feel when you think about that?

M: It's just nostalgic thing, it reminds of being, like, this new exciting world that I was just discovering where, you know, craft was not something I'd ever thought that, you know, you can make money off, really, so to see these artists, designers and makers, making a living and producing these amazing things was, you know, really inspiring and it's a nostalgic feeling to go in there and be like oh, what's changed, what's not changed, oh that's still the same, oh they're still designing similar things like that, oh actually, this is new and just kind of looking at the design processes and journey that the artists or the design centre had sort of made.

A: I have a few more questions because with the pandemic and everything that's happening, we just wanted to think a little more about the impact of lockdown and the pandemic in terms of how has it impacted your engagement with arts and crafts organisations?

M: Oh right. I think unfortunately, it impacted it quite negatively, you know, with it not being open, you can't just kind of nip down on your lunch break or go and visit and have that whole experience of looking around and having lunch, and looking at what the gallery has on offer and on show. A lot of artists as well would have to, you know, put things online which I think is really easy to do, but it's not the same experience as going down to the centre and hearing the drills, and smelling the freshly baked cake and being able to pick things up and touch things, and chat with the artists and the makers. For me, as well as being super busy and having to adjust to lockdown teaching from home, and finishing, you know, a university course at home, it has impacted it quite negatively I think, unfortunately.

A: Have you visited the Craft Centre since they've reopened?

M: I haven't, no. I've found myself not really, still not really going out too much at the moment. That's not through sort of like fear or anything, I think I just got into a routine where I'm not venturing out as much anymore, and again, the weekend, I got to sort of prep for my classes and think of things for the students to do, so I use a lot of my time there and then to see family that I don't really get to see in the week anymore, so I'm finding that I'm not venturing out as much recently. I should go down there, really, there's no excuse if it's open and the buses are running.

A: Have you thought about visiting the Centre or any other organisations and, if yes, how do you feel about visiting those space again?

M: Yeah, I definitely want to get down there and get back to it and see what people have been making. I personally don't feel sort of, I think some people feel a bit fearful to do so. I myself

don't, I think that's just being younger and, you know, but I think a lot of people it may put off, especially in the middle of pandemic, we're not over it yet so I think a lot of people may still be staying in.

A: You've mentioned a little bit about online, so buying I guess craft or other items online instead of visiting those spaces, and you've mentioned how it doesn't feel the same. Can you tell me a bit more about that, and also if you've had any, if you've browsed any websites during lockdown and how it felt, and if you've bought anything as well?

M: So, I've found personally, my spending has gone obviously right down after being in lockdown. I guess the good thing about, you know, the Internet, social media is now a platform for all of these independent makers, designers and artists to be able to display their work, you know, links with the website, you can also link yourself to similar or different artists and makers through their Instagram for example, but it's just, you may obviously buy something online but I don't think it's the same experience, really. I guess it's, I don't know, I think it probably links to the fact that some things have been made, there's been a process that's going into making it, there's been labour that's going into making it, and I've not taken the labour to go down and chat, and visit the Centre in sort of the same way, so even though you are supporting the artists and makers online, it just doesn't feel, I guess because I've done it that way for all these years, so it just doesn't feel sort of the same.

A: So, there's no labour from your end, I guess, in terms of investing the time.

M: Yeah, exactly.

A: And the energy, I guess, to go there and get immersed in the space, and then look at the art and look at everything.

M: Yeah, exactly. It's not as much an experience when I'm just sat at home with a cup of tea; you know, I do that pretty much every day, but yeah, not taking the time to go down and

engage with people, and immerse yourself in the whole experience of the Centre, it's not the same.

A: Are you a member of any online communities that are dedicated to arts and crafts?

M: A fair few. I'm a part of like the teaching union for art and design teachers, lots of different sort of people that I follow on Instagram. Like I've said, I don't really use Facebook anymore. [REDACTED]

A: And in terms of the Craft Centre and their presence online, do you have any comments about their social media or their newsletter?

M: I really like the way that they post artist's work and they tag them in it, so you can go and look at that maker's personal sort of Instagram as well. Obviously, there's links to having a look at people's pictures online as well, maybe reposting the pictures that people have taken of the Design Centre may be quite a nice idea as well because, you know, that person has taken a time to photograph what they've found inspiring about the centre and post it, so I think it would be quite a nice idea to do something like that.

A: And have you ever used their online shop?

M: No, not really. Just because obviously, when I used to work in Manchester, if I wanted something from there, or it was somebody's birthday coming up, I would just pop in myself, so I never really felt the necessity to use the online shop, but I have browsed the website, if I can't quite remember the names of the maker or the shop, I'd go on there and have a look, but no, usually I just visit the Centre personally.

A: In terms of the prices, how do you find the prices at the Manchester Craft and Design Centre?

M: I think for me as a creative person, I understand the, you know, the labour that's gone into making these things and the materials and, you know, they put their heart and soul into it, so in terms of the pricing, what they display doesn't bother me. I think some people may think that things are too expensive, but that also may be because you're used to buying things cheaply which are mass produced, mass made, but for me personally, the prices are as they should be, really.

A: And are they more or less consistent throughout the Craft and Design Centre, or have you noticed that some things are more expensive or cheaper than others?

M: I think obviously, it depends what you're buying, I think it's quite consistent. I think a lot of the makers have been there for years, they might have put some prices up occasionally but, you know, that's sort of to be expected but yeah, I think it's pretty consistent throughout, I wouldn't say oh, I'd go to that shop because one is cheaper than the other, usually it's just because of the aesthetic preference that I prefer.

A: And you've mentioned that you do a lot of your card shopping there, for example for Christmas and on your last visit, or you may buy birthday gifts from there; any other occasions in terms of visiting for buying something specific?

M: I guess not specifically. I'm not a homeowner currently, but hopefully will be by the end of this year or next year, so I reckon once I have my own place I would like to go down and sort of choose some, you know, decorative work to sort of decorate my house with, but for the time being, it's just been birthdays, Christmas, Easter; I'd go in there and if I find something that I just quite like, I just buy it for myself anyway.

A: Of course. Talking a little bit about the impact of the pandemic, and also donations, would you be more inclined at the moment to make a small donation to the Craft Centre because of the pandemic, or would it be the same as in your other visits that you've mentioned?

M: I guess I would actually be more inclined to make a donation. I can only assume that it had massive impact on the Centre and the makers because obviously, the Centre is not open and, you know, not as many people may realise that you can buy things online, so I definitely would be more inclined to give a donation after the pandemic because we need to support small businesses and, you know, independent makers because they're more at risk, really, of sort of depleting, I guess.

[REDACTED]

A: Well, thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me.

ML Oh, you're welcome. Thank you for listening to me!