

A: Okay, that's great. So, do you mind if we start with some demographics first?

T: Yeah, that's fine.

A: So, can you tell me how do you identify in terms of gender?

T: Male.

A: And your race?

T: I'm white.

A: Okay, white British? Hello?

T: Sorry, the line broke then.

A: Can you still hear me?

T: Yeah.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: Okay, and how many times have you visited the Craft and Design Centre in the past?

T: 50 maybe, a lot, yeah. That's over many, many years, but I would say 50 would probably be an accurate figure.

A: Okay, and what would be your average spending at the Craft and Design Centre?

T: Oh, average I would say maybe £50, I've purchased items that may be £200 and then small, a card which is a couple of pounds, so I'd say the average is £50, or maybe (XXX 3:52) every time I visited.

A: And your average spending on craft and design in general?

T: In craft and design in general? You know, I'd say maybe a little lower than that, maybe £30 to £40, an average spend.

A: Okay, that's all with the demographics, can start with the interview. Can you please tell me a bit about yourself and your relationship with craft?

T: My relationship? Well, I run an art and crafts materials supplier, s [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] so I have always been very interested and grown up around
crafts, making, lots of different materials so I would consider myself maybe an expert in that

field because I've been doing that for quite a number of years, I've got expertise in different craft processes and art processes, so yeah, it covers many different areas of that but that is the industry that I am in.

A: Do you also do craft yourself?

T: Yeah, I would say it's, again, it's a hobby because I would say I don't sell things that I've made so I'm not a professional craftsman, if you like, but I'm practicing in many different disciplines in crafts, especially when I was at university, everything from glass blowing to wood turning, to metalworks sculpture, to ceramics, all of these things I have a good understanding of and I've practiced in all of them.

A: So, what different types of crafting do you do now?

T: Currently it's hard to say, it's more on the design side for me now because I create, almost separate to my work, I design pieces of furniture for people, lighting, objects such as at the minute I'm working on a trophy which I will be making, they'll be laser cut and metal work ingrained, it's just a personal project for a friend but these are, that's the most current one, I don't know how you classify that in terms of craft and design side.

A: Okay, that's very interesting. How did you develop your, this kind of interest in craft and design?

T: Well, I suppose when growing up, as a young child around all of these materials [REDACTED] [REDACTED] so when I was very young I used to get paid in these materials, clay, canvases, paints, all of these things, so from a very young age I had access to all of these wonderful materials, so that's started my interest, I was very interested in that, I worked for [REDACTED] from a very young age, so when I came, I did very well at school in those type of subjects, in art and design, so I went on to college to study 3D design [REDACTED], then had a few years out, working at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In all of these things, I did a course and I also did personal projects as well on top of this, because I just have a huge passion for design and making, so yeah, I've been doing it all my life, really, I kind of had no choice.

A: Right. So, craft and making was typical in your family as well?

T: Oh yeah, my mum was an oil painter, she still is but you know, in her spare time, she worked in [REDACTED], so yeah, it's sort of in the DNA, really, I've been brought up, and going away to study this design to bring that back into the business was hugely beneficial to the business, with everything that I've learned at the university and the practice, and continues to this day, really. It's hard to pin down specific areas of it because I've just done it for the whole of my life.

A: Do you also make craft with your children?

T: Very much so, yeah, then again, because we have access to such wonderful suppliers, we get samples all the time from creative suppliers, so we may get clay, a new type of paint, a new type of sculpture material. Often we test them, I bring these home and I've got, my children are a little bit older now, sort of 11 and 15 nearly, so it's all of their lives as well, we've been making things, painting, sculpting. What's interesting, my wife also works in the company now, she has done for many years and she's not really come from a creative background but now, it's sort of infected her, really, because all of these materials, we're around it all the time, we have to have a very good knowledge working for [REDACTED] because people seek us out for the advice we can give on the materials that we sell, so even if it's in an area that we don't practice in personally, we have to know a lot about that material to be able to advise to the customers.

A: Right, okay. So, what does craft mean to you?

T: I would say craft means, for me it's a form of creative expression, it's a way that you can reflect your personality through a physical thing, it's very, for me it's a personal thing, you're connecting directly with the maker it's not something which is, for me it's kind of, the end result is only a part of the thing itself, the actual craft, the making, the process that you go through, the time spent, the knowledge you need to acquire before you do it, all of these things mix together to make, you know, a very personal experience with the maker and if you're practicing the craft itself, again, for me it's very, you know, a way to disconnect for a second from a very busy work and very busy world.

A: So, it's an escape as well?

T: Yeah, definitely.

A: And you did mention before it's a form of expression, so when you make your own craft or art, or when you buy something, are you looking for particular forms of expression, have you bought or made anything ideological or political?

T: No, I wouldn't say I would suit that particularly, I'm very, you know, I am visually very stimulated by certain shapes, I have a very distinct style that I personally like, I'm very sort of, kind of hawking back to the design I studied, design history, sort of mid-century Danish design and the craft and all around that is pretty much my aesthetic, so when I see something like that, you know, that's what I'm drawn to but not from any sort of political persuasion or anything like that in terms of, yeah, I wouldn't be drawn to something like that in particular anyway.

A: Are you mainly interested in the aesthetic aspects of craft, in a sense, and how it looks, how it feels, different shapes, colours and textures?

T: Exactly, yeah.

A: Okay. How did you first find out about the Craft and Design Centre?

T: I mean it's always been, I can't really remember when it actually first opened now, have you got that date?

A: I'm not sure when it first opened, to be honest.

T: It's always, I mean for me, it's always been there [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], so it's very, it's always been a kind of place where I would shop, I know a lot of the people within there, they all shop in Fred Aldous, we have a strong connection there – we offer them, all of the makers within the Craft Centre, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], so I've always, as long as I can remember it's always been there, it's been a part of the community in the Northern Quarter.

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

T: I think it is in some type of part of the city's old markets, really, the old Smithfield Markets. I'm not too, yeah, from my limited knowledge of it, the whole area where the site is, I'm pretty sure it was Smithfield Markets.

A: And do you remember your first visit, by any chance, or one of your first visits at the Centre?

T: Yeah, I think I probably do actually, I think I remember shopping for presents for maybe Christmas time, it's one of the first visits I can remember, but I couldn't tell you what year it was.

A: Can you tell me a bit more about that visit, or about your other visits at the Centre? Like thinking about the moment you walk in, can you describe the experience in there?

T: Yeah, I think one of the what I can sort of remember walking in, then you see it's a place of, there's lots of colour, lots of activity, it's quite a vibrant space. It's kind of, I think one of

the things that sticks in the mind is really when I was looking into the units, there were people in there, it wasn't a normal shop, you could see people sort of crouched over a work bench, working away at a project, and that kind of made the connection that the things that were laid down in front of you were made by the person working away in the corner. You know, I kind of, sometimes maybe I have some mixed emotions about that, it's a, normally when you're going into a shop you may be greeted by someone, there may be someone behind the counter that was kind of maybe, who do I speak to if I was buying something, some of them would be almost to notice you coming in. On the whole, very creative space.

A: Are you aware of other similar spaces? Can you tell me a bit more about your experiences in other spaces like the Craft and Design Centre?

T: Yeah, I mean I've not been to, the only sort of, I've been to a couple of places, but they haven't been as much where people are making directly in the studio space, I think it's got quite a lot of unique qualities. I've been to places or to fairs, it may be a print fair or an art fair, and you know, you've got similar people selling similar items, but not in the concept of out of their permanent studio, like it is in the Craft Centre. So, it's hard to compare for me, really, I know there obviously are other places which would have studios for people and shopping in the same place, but I've not been in any quite like the Craft Centre.

A: Okay. Going back to the Craft and Design Centre, you did mention before that you know all the makers and all the people who work there. Can you tell me a bit more about your interactions with the makers?

T: Yes, certainly. I mean, like I said, my interactions are mainly, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] t on a personal

level I got to know quite a few of them over the years and it's been very much on a sort of business level there, providing them with different materials and potentially asking for advice, asking to stock the materials that would help them, sometimes them asking if we could sell their work for them, you know, all of these interactions happen and generally because they are local and it's worked out quite well [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The other interactions are going on when I'd gone in to the Craft Centre, again because I kind of know, I don't know everyone in there, but I know a lot of the people and they kind of know the shop, so it's all very friendly, it's all very familiar and we talk a lot about how busy the footfall is and generally in the area, how they're doing sales-wise and things like that, you know, new projects that they are working on.

A: Right, and as a visitor, how do you feel when you walk into a studio, for example, in the Centre?

T: I mean there's definitely things I'd change about the Craft Centre, to be honest, I think from, it's different, (XXX 23:45) I've got a good relationship with a lot of people in there but I think sometimes it could be a little bit when you go into a studio and sometimes it's not as obvious what's for sale and what's going on in there, some of the makers, sometimes you feel like you might be a little bit of an interruption to them making, even though they're trying to make stuff to sell, obviously, so it's, yeah, I sometimes I do have mixed emotions about the Craft Centre in terms of sometimes how welcoming it can be. I don't sort of think of it welcoming to me, but I just think how other visitors may feel when they come in, sometimes the makers in there sell themselves as well as (XXX 24:48).

A: Right, that's great. What about the diversity or lack of diversity at the Centre, how do you feel about that?

T: Yeah, I suppose I think it could be the studios of, I would say are quite expensive, it's not cheap to be in there, the goods that they are producing are of a certain price point which may restrict certain people there, certainly the prices of the studios in there (XXX 25:44) and I think once people are in there, there isn't that much rotation in terms of studio, you know, if a studio, some of the studios have been in there for decades and sometimes you may feel that, like I've seen everything that's in there so it would be, I know they have exhibitions and stuff, but it might be nice to see more rotation, inviting some (XXX 26:23).

A: So, you feel that the product range is quite limited in a way?

T: Yeah, it's quite limited, I would say.

A: Okay. What about the different exhibitions, have you been to any exhibitions in there before?

T: I've not been to any exhibitions personally, I know people that have been to the exhibitions, you know, I think it's a nice space they've got there, nice set up for exhibitions.

A: Alright, and normally, when do you visit and how long are your visits? Do you have any specific days or times that you go there? Hello? (issues with connection) Can you hear me now?

T: Yes, can you hear me?

A: So, normally when do you visit and how long do you stay at the Centre? Are there any specific days or times that you normally visit?

T: I would say my usual visit is about 15 minutes, 15-20 minutes, I'd say I visit more on a Friday or a Saturday.

A: Okay, and do you tend to visit alone or with other people as well?

T: I tend to visit with my business partner, as we often are on break or maybe on lunch at the same time, we may wander in and have a mooch around.

A: Do you also visit with your family? Do you think that the building is family friendly?

T: I think it is family friendly, I would say, I've not visited it with my family personally that many times, maybe a handful, but I would say because it's more when I'm at work that I visit it, as opposed to when I'm on my days off.

A: And have you attended any, apart from the exhibitions, any events, any workshops maybe, over the years?

T: Not workshops as such, the only thing when sometimes they give over some space for the Northern Quarter (XXX 29:31) and I've (XXX), definitely not a workshop.

A: Okay, and do you ever, I suppose because you normally visit with your business partner, you don't take any photos of your visits, or photos of the things that you've bought? I'm sorry, I can't hear you at all, sounds like you're far away. Hello?

T: Hello, can you hear me now? Sorry, it's the signal in the house.

A: Okay. So, I didn't hear what you've said last.

T: Sorry, no, I don't take photographs, no, of anything I've bought.

A: So, are you familiar with the Centre's online presence? Do you follow them, have you used their web shop, or do you follow any of the makers online and their social media accounts?

T: Yeah, I follow them on Instagram, and that's the only really social media platform that I use.

A: And how do you find the social media presence of the Centre? Have you used it?

T: No, I think I've been on their website recently.

[REDACTED]

A: So, I suppose you've bought some stuff from her as well. What is your favourite thing that you've bought from the Centre, one of the things that you remember?

T: I think the thing I remember most, I bought a ring for my wife, it wasn't an engagement ring, it was before we got married, and she, I remember it because she absolutely hated it and that really does stick in my mind because I'd given the maker what I thought was a really good description of a ring she used to have that she broke and lost, so as a birthday present I was trying to get it recreated for her and it was quite expensive to get done, so I've sort of put all my eggs in one basket, really, to get this done, and it turned out not great, to say the least, but I had no back up plan so I had to give her the ring, and it didn't go down well at all, unfortunately, but we still ended up getting married a couple of years later, so it didn't put her off too much, but that's probably the one purchase that sticks in the mind the most, even though it was maybe a bit of a negative experience.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: So, how do you feel about different handmade objects that you own, whether it is a painting or a piece of craft, or anything else?

T: How do I feel about it?

A: Yeah, do you prefer handmade products, compared to mass-produced, for instance?

T: Oh, definitely, yeah, it's definitely my preference. I think handmade has sort of a lasting quality, lasting sustainable materials, things that obviously cost more but are more of an object which is more considered, someone doesn't end up throwing it away or putting it on eBay, you know, it's much more of a considered purchase and one where if you buy it from the maker directly and you can speak to them about the process, it's one where it adds a lot more value.

A: Okay. Just about some different questions, have you used the donation boxes at the Centre, or have you ever donated to any arts or crafts organisations?

T: Not through the donation box at the Craft Centre, no.

A: How about donating to other organisations, donations to arts or craft?

T: Oh yeah, I mean as a business that I own, we probably get back, we don't (XXX 37:31) we support hundreds of different projects, we're donating supplies, we're donating prizes for raffles for all of these small art groups, places for modern arts, all of these we have, you know, I've given as part of my business and also personally as well, in the past, but that if

I'm ever donating to charity or anything because of my connections in that world, that would be where I would make a donation.

A: And some final questions about Covid-19 and the whole Coronavirus situation, how did Covid-19 impact upon your own engagement with arts, with cultural organisations, at the personal level and at the business level as well?

T: I mean it's made a massive impact because within the arts, it's very much you want to touch, you want to see and you can't, it's very hard to purchase these types of products if you only interact with them in a virtual way, so you know, it's, the substitute of doing this online or safely remotely and not in person is a challenge, certainly.

A: Yeah. In terms of the Craft and Design Centre, have you visited the Centre recently, after March, for instance?

T: No.

A: Are you planning to?

T: I'm not planning to at the moment, no, I'm not.

A: Is that because of Covid-19?

T: Yeah, I think so. At the minute, I'm not sure how open it is, I haven't sort of seen that communication thoroughly from them, it would be, I haven't seen many of the makers. Like I say it's, even though I've been many, many times, it's the more, you know, the kind of reminder to go was from speaking to the designers and artists that are in there, from them visiting my neighbouring shop, it sort of prompts me to visit them to carry out a conversation or to look at a piece of work that they are making, or all of these sort of interactions, so as they've not been in to us, it's sort of knocked on at me not going to see them, because I've not seen them. It's not really, Covid-19 wouldn't stop me going at all, because there's a lot of

responsible people in there so I'm sure they're following all the safety protocols etcetera, so I would feel comfortable going in once the situation arises.

A: Okay, that's great. I think that's all, I mean is there anything else that you'd like to add or share in relation to the Craft and Design Centre?

T: I think the only quick in I would add is, you now, over the years there's been the connection with the Craft Centre and us as a local business, it's kind of been not as good as it could have been in terms of perhaps if there's a new marketing person there, there is a connection made, we have a bit of a chat and nothing really comes of it; by the time it sort of comes back again, it may be someone new there and there's nothing really been sorted out, you know, we kind of provide this discount and although we have a very good connection with the makers themselves there, we don't have a much of a relationship with the people who run the Craft Centre, so I think that could certainly be stronger, there's definitely things that I'd, you know, we could work on this together but it's, that's the only thing I'd add, really, because it's just a personal, my interaction with the Craft Centre. Whether that would happen or not, I'm not sure, but it is an interaction and an experience that I've had with the Craft Centre that perhaps is important.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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