

A: Perfect. So, I'd like to begin by telling you that everything you say will be anonymised, so there's not going to be a way to trace back what you said to you, basically, and also, if there's something that you don't feel comfortable answering, that's absolutely fine so please feel free to say I don't feel comfortable answering that question. I have some demographics questions to begin with, first of all, how do you identify in terms of your gender?

P: Female.

A: And what is your racial identity?

P: I am White British.

A: Are you, what is your current family situation, are you married, single, do you have children?

P: Living with a partner.

A: And how old are you?

P: I am 42.

A: Where do you currently live?

P: I am in North Manchester.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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

P: Oh, maybe about 40 to 50, quite a lot.

A: Perfect. And what would you say your average spending is per visit?

P: Most of the time I don't buy anything, and then I've also been and spent few hundred pounds on a painting or something.

A: It can be 0 to something.

P: Yeah, probably 0 to £50.

A: Perfect. And what would you say your average spending is in other, similar spaces, or other craft and design organisations?

P: Probably similar, 0 to £50 again.

A: Perfect, thanks a lot, that's all the demographics questions I had. Can we begin with, you know, tell me a little bit about yourself, and also your relationship with craft and making?

P: So, yeah, civil service kind of office job, which doesn't allow much time for creativity, really, but I enjoy making things myself, just to a very amateur standard but very textile-type thing, so knitting, sewing, crochet, that kind of thing. I like to visit places like the Craft and Design Centre because I like to sort of support individuals and have something that is more of a one of a kind piece that, you know, more about, rather than just buying a piece of jewellery from high street or something like that, so both (XXX 4:53) sort of there, the financial perspective of supporting independent makers, particularly at the moment, and yeah, also because it's something that feels just more personal, either for yourself or as a gift.

A: You've mentioned that you do a bit of making yourself. Can you tell me a little bit about the things that you make?

P: So, mainly sort of things for the house, really, so knitting and crochet, sort of blankets, cushions, yeah, mainly for myself or gifts for close family.

A: And was this something that was typical in your family when you were growing up?

P: Yes, yeah, so my mum sewed a lot, she made a lot of our clothes when we were children, and she taught me to knit and sewn, crochet and embroidery from sort of being a child, and again, it was something that was within her family in previous generations, so might have seen some lace that a great-auntie had crochet, something that was really sort of fine and detailed, so yeah, it was something that has been passed down through the family, so I did it when I was young, and then probably as a teenager stopped doing it for quite a while because it wasn't what everybody else was doing at the time, and then probably started again in my mid-20s.

A: And what made you pick it up again?

P: I think it's just having that, a bit of a creative outlet, like my job isn't particularly creative, but also, I think, I don't like to just sit and watch TV, something in the evening, I may sit and watch TV or listen to the radio, or audiobook or something, but I like to be doing something at the same time, and so those kinds of crafts lined themselves to that, and a bit of kind of, yeah, something to take your mind away from what you've been doing at work during the day that requires a bit of focus, but yeah, something different for your mind to do.

A: And you've mentioned knitting and crochet before, is this something that you've been taught within your family, or have you attended any workshops or events to learn the techniques?

P: So, knitting was just taught by my mum, crochet I did learn a little bit when I was young but then went to a workshop through Ministry of Craft a few years ago, just to kind of get myself back up to speed again and get some tips.

A: I don't know if you've thought about this in those terms, but what would you say the craft means to you as a woman?

P: I don't know, I haven't really thought about it in those terms. It's something I couldn't imagine not being a part of my life now.

A: Have you ever bought anything, any art or any other handmade items that could be considered feminist or political?

P: No, but there is somebody I'm following on Instagram whom I've been tempted to buy a few things by, it's a feminist embroider.

A: Yeah, that's a big thing at the moment. And do you like the work, what made you think about buying that sort of thing?

P: I think partly because I agree with some of the messages, I don't think there is that kind of, there is a tendency to see that kind of textile crafts to be sort of floral and girly, and so I like seeing it being used in a different way.

A: Can you tell me a bit now, you know, about your experiences at the Manchester Craft and Design Centre? Do you remember how you've first found out about the Centre?

P: I think, it was quite a long time ago now, I think I came across it when I was looking for bars in the Northern Quarter, and saw the sign outside and thought I had to come back in the daytime when it's open and have a look around, it was just by chance.

A: And do you remember your first visit there?

P: No, it's too long ago to remember.

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

P: Yeah, I know it was formerly a part of the market around there.

A: Is it something that intrigued you in any way, you know, learning the history of the place?

P: Yes, definitely, I think it's a really interesting space. Part of the reason to go is just to look at the building itself, I think, it's good that it's a bit quirky and interesting location.

A: How do you find the actual building?

P: I really like it, I like the fact that there's the central space that is open and you can see what's around, walk around the balcony and kind of see what's going on, and in that way, in kind of feels a bit more social and cosy than just walking down the high street.

A: And is this something that you enjoy, I mean this feeling of being more homely and cosy?

P: Yes, yeah.

A: Do you remember what brought you to the Centre on your last visit?

P: The last time would have been around Christmas, so looking at Christmas presents, I've bought quite a few of my Christmas cards there, so yeah, that would have been the main reason, for Christmas presents and cards.

A: Do you often go to the Centre for presents?

P: Yes.

A: Can you tell me a bit more about the presents that you've bought for Christmas?

P: What did I buy, got a picture from [REDACTED], that was for my sister, got some earrings for my mum, I'm sure I've bought something else, but I can't remember what.

A: That's okay. Can you describe your visits to the Centre, what happens as you walk in, do you go to every studio, do you go to specific ones? Just walk me through your visits.

P: So, I'll usually walk around downstairs first of all, so I don't go into every shop necessarily, but I look into windows of all of them, there are probably 3 or 4 where I go pretty much every time, which is a couple of the jewellery ones and Ink Ink at the moment, and then depending on what I'm there for, if I see something in the window of another shop, then I'll go in and have a look around inside.

A: Can you remember of anything that drew your attention when you walked in during one of your visits, or during your last visit maybe?

P: Trying to think, I think last time I went in, or maybe the time before, they had a workshop carrying out in the open area, in one of the studios, sometimes they put a couple of jewellery workshops there, but they were doing a calligraphy workshop, just kind of out on the tables and benches, and it was quite nice to have that out in the open so you can see what was going on there.

A: You've mentioned that you've been to some of the workshops at the Centre?

P: Yeah.

A: What kind of workshops have you attended there, and how have you found them?

P: So, they were both jewellery making with the Manchester School of Jewellery, the first one was as part of a friend's hen weekend and so she'd organised as a part of the weekend and we learned to make pendants. The second time I went with my sister, and we did a bangle making workshop, which was kind of, we did that as a Christmas present to each other, so we've kind of paid to spend some time together and do something nice, rather than sort of spending lots of money on presents, but I really enjoyed both of them and I think it's really good to have a space like that where you've got people who know what they're doing, and you can sort of see the things that they've made and get the inspiration from them, and learn the skills from them, and ask questions, so yeah, I've really enjoyed that and will definitely do either jewellery or other activities.

A: And you've mentioned that you did one of the workshops with your sister, rather than exchanging gifts. Did you enjoy that experience of doing something more experiential, I guess?

P: Yeah, definitely. I've been trying to do it a bit more, rather than just buying things that are just going to be thrown away or used up, you know, like toiletries or something like that, so I think it's nice to create a memory, and with those kind of jewellery workshops, to have something that you take away that you've made yourself, has that memory associated with it. I think it's nicer than just going to Next or something and buying a necklace.

A: Are you aware of any other similar spaces like the Craft and Design Centre?

P: No, there's no other kind of permanent spaces that I can think of. I go to other pop up craft markets and that kind of thing, but I don't know of any others that are permanent.

A: Can you tell me a little bit about your interactions with the makers?

P: Usually it's just a kind of to say hello if they're in the studio at the time, sitting, doing some making or whatever, so not much in a way of chatting and things, and for me, that suits me because sometimes it can get too awkward if you're just walking around, looking at their stuff and walking out, not buying anything, because obviously, there's that sort of personal element to it, compared to someone who is just working in a shop, but yeah, occasionally if I'm interested in something, I'll ask questions about how they've made it or what is it made from, and generally have found them very knowledgeable and helpful when I have done.

A: Are you interested to learn more about the process of making or materials, for example, or techniques when you're buying something at the Centre?

P: Yeah, I think there's a balance, like I'm sure it would be different for some other people, but I'm happy to kind of not have this thrust upon me when I get there, but if you're having a chat with somebody, or interested in a particular piece to know more and understand a bit more about it, I think it's helpful. And I think sometimes, the kind of understanding a bit more about what's gone in to making something can help justify price, because obviously, if something is handmade and you've got the years of skills and training that have gone into it, if you're just looking at it as a pair of earrings, or a picture, the price can seem a bit steep, but actually, once you know what goes into making it, you can understand why.

A: I actually wanted to ask you how do you feel about the prices at the Craft and Design Centre?

P: I think mostly for what you're getting, the skills and that kind of personal, one-of-a-kind piece, I think they're quite reasonable.

A: And how do you feel in general about handmade products versus mass produced products?



P: Yeah, definitely like them, particularly for sort of jewellery, sort of things for the home, less devoted to sort of clothes and things, but yeah, jewellery and home products, I like to get something different.

A: Talking about, you know, interactions with makers and you've mentioned a bit about questions and also this idea of going in there and having a chat, I also wanted to ask how does it feel if you walk into studio, if the maker is working how does that make you feel? If they're working in the studio, not if they are with another customer.

P: Now, I quite like to sort of see them sitting, getting on with whatever their craft is, it's quite interesting, and yeah, you don't sort of feel like you're their focus necessarily unless you need to be, so you know, I quite like it if somebody is working away and they look up and say hello, have a walk around the studio and see what they've made.

A: How do you feel about the diversity or lack of diversity in the Craft and Design Centre?

P: Thinking about the people that I can think of generally seeing there, it is generally sort of younger white females, not particularly diverse. I did buy a painting there quite a few years ago now from quite an older guy, but I don't think he is sort of selling stuff in that studio anymore, but yeah, I don't really, I can't really think of seeing any male makers there, or anybody non-White when I've been there.

A: Would you have liked to see more diversity at the Centre?

P: It's not something I've really thought of until you've asked the question. You know, there is always room for diversity because with diverse background, you'll probably going to get more diverse products.

A: How do you feel about the products' range at the Craft and Design Centre?

P: Personally, I really like it but I think there is a lot of stuff that would appeal to me, so there is a lot of jewellery, a lot of homewares and things but I know that if I go with my partner, he's a lot less interested and I don't know whether if there were more different kinds of things, he might be more interested. But yeah, I guess there's a risk that you'll just get the same type of people because a lot of it is quite similar.

A: We talked a little bit about the building itself of the Craft and Design Centre. How do you find the shops themselves, and also the exhibition space?

P: Shops themselves, yeah, I think they're a reasonable enough size to have a range of products for the makers, the exhibition space I tend to pay less attention to, it kind of feels a lot of the time like it's something there that I would walk past rather than feel drawn into.

A: Have you seen any of the exhibitions there?

P: I have seen that there'd been exhibitions there, but not really paid much attention, to be honest.

A: When you visit, how long are your visits normally?

P: Probably about 20 minutes to half an hour?

A: And when do you normally visit, I mean days and times?

P: Generally, would be Saturday mornings.

A: Is there a particular reason why you visit on Saturday mornings?

P: So, I work Monday to Friday, and I don't work in the centre of Manchester, so it would only really be the weekend that I can go. Tends to be in the morning just because the town is less busy, so I try to get in and out before it gets too busy, and then they are not open on Sundays, are they? Yeah, if they were, I would probably go on a Sunday as well sometimes.

A: Do you tend to visit alone or with other people?

P: Probably more alone, 70% to 80% of the time alone.

A: And what is your favourite, do you prefer going by yourself or with friends, family or your partner?

P: Probably with friends, but yeah, it kind of tends to be if I have a friend visiting or we've arranged to meet up, then we might go in there, but I'd say with kids and things, mornings can be awkward.

A: Have you taken anyone specifically to see the Craft and Design Centre?

P: Yes, I've taken my sister when she was over, visiting before, when we've done the workshops I've taken care specifically to see it, and my partner sort of earlier on when we were in town once, I've got this place I want to show you!

A: Why did you want to show them this place?

P: I think because it's so kind of, it's tucked away so a lot of people don't necessarily know about it, and it's just so unique, and also, I thought if anyone wants to buy me a present, it would be a good place for them to remember.

A: That's a really good reason to take someone. When you visit ...

P: He has actually done, he has actually been back and bought me jewellery there, so it was worth doing.

A: Okay, so that was a successful experiment, perfect. When you visit, do you take any photographs?

P: No, I don't tend to.

A: How about of things that you've bought from there?

P: No, not that I can think of.

A: So, you've never posted anything online, you know, maybe from the things that you've bought, or you've snapped a picture of the Centre? Would that appeal to you, or it wouldn't appeal to you to have that online?

P: It's just something, I don't tend to post a lot on social media, tends to be fairly infrequent, so it's not necessarily something I wouldn't do, but yeah, it's not something that automatically occurs to me there, and I think quite a fair few things I've bought had been presents, I wouldn't want to give my ... Actually, I did, we've done the bangle workshop, when my sister and I had done that, I posted some pictures.

A: Where did you post them at that time?

P: I think Facebook and Instagram.

A: And why did you post them?

P: So, friends and family could know, I guess, about what we've done together. My mum uses Facebook, so otherwise I would've just put it on Instagram, but it went on Facebook, so my mum, aunts and uncles and cousins could see what we'd been up to together.

A: How do you find the Craft and Design Centre's online presence?

P: Really good, I follow them on Instagram and Facebook, and it's good in terms of getting to see the accounts of different makers in there, and I did go on when they did the sort of virtual pop-up Craft and Design Centre night a few months ago.

A: How did you find that one?

P: I thought it was really good, yeah, it was a good way to sort of see some different things and different makers, and I did start following quite a few different people from having seen those posts.

A: Did you buy anything from the pop-up sale?

P: No, I tried to buy a couple of things, but they sold before I got in.

A: Have you bought from them online?

P: Sorry?

A: Have you bought anything else from the Centre or from the makers online?

P: No.

A: You've mentioned that you've started following some of the makers after this pop-up sale on Instagram. Did you follow any of them before, and what, you know, what made you follow them, what did you like about them?

P: Main one I can think of, it's difficult to remember sort of who is who because there's quite a lot of people that I follow on Instagram, makers and where I come across them from, but the one that does stand out is Ink Ink, which I've started following because I've bought quite a few things from them, and yeah, with them it's just a kind of I like the designs, it's something a bit different, and we're looking for wedding invitations and things like that at the moment so have been in touch with them through having looked at their various designs and things.

A: So, you're thinking about commissioning invitations from them?

P: Yes, yeah.

A: Have you commissioned anything else from the Centre or from somewhere else?

P: No, I have commissioned some lyrics from a local maker, sort of hand-drawn lyrics for my birthday this year, but that was from a maker that's not in the Centre. That's the only thing I can think of.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: From everything that you've bought from the Manchester Craft and Design Centre, what would you say is your favourite thing?

P: I think probably a painting that I've bought, must've been about 8 or 9 years ago, which has been in two different houses, taking prouder place, so that's probably the thing, because a lot of the other things are jewellery and things that are worn some of the time, and that's the one I see every day and really like.

A: What is the painting about?

P: So, it's a kind of abstract but of flowers in a field, so it's a purple background and a lot of different kind purples, blues and whites and red squares on there that are poppies, but when I bought it, that's probably the most expensive thing that I've bought there, so it's a good thing that it's a favourite. When I bought it, I was looking at quite a few of the painter's different

paintings and sort Go of chatting to him about what they were and that kind of thing, so I think that's always good to do with art in particular.

A: And did you go there looking for a painting, or did you just come across it?

P: I'd gone there open to buying a painting, so I've been some redecorating and I thought it would be nice if I saw something today but I'm not going to buy something just for the sake of it, but if there's something that I really like then I would.

A: So, this was more a gift to yourself?

P: Yeah, definitely. It was moving on from buying just cheap Ikea prints on the wall, and I think that was the first piece of original art that I've bought, and I've bought a few since.

A: Have you bought anything else that stands out, apart from the painting, from the Centre?

P: Got a very nice handbag.

A: That's always nice.

P: Yeah, and just some little Christmas decorations which, you know, sort of don't feel like much but when you get them out every year, and it has that kind of nice association with it.

A: What was the occasion with the handbag?

P: I think that was probably just a present to myself as well. The danger with the Craft and Design Centre is I often go in for presents for other people and come out with no present for them but presents for me.

A: Something else I wanted to ask you is if you've ever noticed the donation boxes at the Craft and Design Centre?

P: No.

A: Have you ever donated to arts and crafts organisations?

P: Not that I can think of, no.

A: How about museums that have donation boxes?

P: Yes.

A: You've mentioned at the beginning that you wanted to support the independent artists and makers, particularly at the moment. Would you be more or less inclined to support them and make a donation now with, you know, the pandemic and everything else that is happening?

P: Yes, yeah, I would.

A: Why is that?

P: I think that I feel kind of very fortunate that I've been able to work and been on salary for the whole time of the pandemic, and I know a lot of other people aren't, and so you know, I kind of see it from a personal point of view as well because my partner is a musician, so he's in a kind of similar position where a lot of his work just doesn't exist at the moment, and it's that kind of feeling of not wanting people in the arts to both to lose their income temporarily, but also to be able to continue once things get a bit more stabilised, and not be in a position where they just have to stop and do something else.

A: How did the pandemic impact your engagement with arts and cultural organisations?

P: I guess it's mainly taking it more online, but I think a lot of the time I am less likely to buy something if I've just seen a photograph of it than when I've seen it in person. Yeah, there's something about seeing something in the flesh, being able to see it from different angles and, depending what it is, being able to pick it up and touch it, so a lot of handmade things are quite tactile, aren't they? And you just don't get that sort of same experience when buying online.

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



P: I may do, I guess at the moment, because I'm sort of outside the centre of Manchester, and travelling by public transport puts me off a little bit to get into the centre of town, so it just depends when I get over that, really. So, the Craft and Design Centre, I would be very happy to visit, it's more the getting into the centre of town that is very off-putting.

A: How do you feel, in general, about visiting those types of spaces again, like the Centre and other similar organisations?

P: I think somewhere like Craft and Design Centre I'd feel very safe because it's a big space, there's plenty of room for people to move around, and if one studio has got people in it, you can go into another one easily, or there's space to wait outside. And yeah, I think it's one of the things that would make me feel more normal, to be able to get back into that kind of space.

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

P: No, I don't think so. Like I say, other than using public transport to get into town, I don't think the sort of social distancing, masks and things would make my actual visit or time in the Centre particularly different.

A: Thinking also in terms of your interactions with makers, do you think it would make a difference or not necessarily?

P: No, I don't think so.

A: How do you think that the pandemic will impact the Centre and other similar organisations, you know, in terms of visitors, buyers and so on, both in the short term and in the future?

P: I think it kind of feels to me like people have been, or become more aware of supporting small business, supporting local businesses, so I would hope that although being closed in such time would have a significant impact on the Centre and individual makers, that kind of recognition will stay with customers, and that people will continue to support smaller, local businesses, and there's something more attractive about walking around there than walking around the Arndale Centre or the Trafford Centre, which are so busy, but I don't know if that's sort of my social bubble that is, you know, the sort of echo chamber effect of social media that you tend to be with people that are like-minded. But yeah, for me there would be a concern that places like Craft and Design Centre would lose too much money and end up having to close down, which I think would be a huge loss.

A: Do you think that, you know, the support from visitors is essential at the moment for those type of spaces in order to survive?

P: I guess so, yeah, it's either support from the visitors or support in other ways to, that kind of online support or fundraising, and donations, yeah, I think they are really important.

A: I forgot to ask you before, I mean, during this period, would you be more interested in supporting through donation or by buying something from an artist directly?

P: Probably by buying.

A: And why do you think is that?

P: The kind of selfish element of that, you get something in return for it, but it's also a kind of creative people want to be creating, so you know, I wouldn't want it just to become a charity, and you know, people are still able to do what they love and earn money through doing that, so I would be happier to pay, say, £5 more for something than just to give a £5 donation, if that makes sense.

A: It does. And something else I wanted to ask you from before: at some point you've mentioned a little bit about buying something that is handmade and one of a kind, and I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about that?

P: I don't know, I think it just feels a bit more special, if somebody asks you about it, you've got a kind of story to tell about it, or you know something a bit more about it, you know, actually these earrings (XXX 43:29) and they're made in this place, without becoming a bore about it, but you know, rather than saying I got them from Oasis. So yeah, I think there's something about, it just feels more personal to you if it's something that you've gone and chose directly from the person that made it.

A: Thank you so much, I don't have any more questions, but is there something that you'd like to tell me that we haven't covered in the interview about your experiences at the Centre?

P: No, nothing else I can think of.

A: Okay, let me stop the recording now.