

[REDACTED]

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

R: Female.

[REDACTED]

A: And how old are you?

R: I am 36.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: And can you tell me, I know it's hard but approximately how many times, would you say, you have visited the Manchester Craft and Design Centre?

R: Oh, at least sort of 10 times, maybe more.

A: More than 10, that's an estimate. And what would you say your average spending per visit is?

R: Probably, it would be less than £50.

A: So, would you say there is a minimum, or £0 to £50, I guess?

R: I think £0 to £50, somewhere like that.

A: Okay. And what would you say that your average spending per visit is in other craft and design organisations?

R: Probably the same, I would say.

A: Okay, that's all in terms of demographics so we can make a start. Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your relationship with craft and making?

R: I mean I've always enjoyed crafting, I've got a slightly artistic side but just as a hobby, so I really enjoy looking at makers, at any kind of arts, either in art galleries or art centres, art and craft centres, design centres, independent ones in particular, so yes, I'm always really interested in, you know, like objects of art to have in our house to make it look nicer, I guess. Yes, that's something I've always been interested in because I can appreciate the sort of skill that goes into that work, and it's always really, it's kind of interesting and nice to have that kind of thing and be surrounded by that kind of stuff.

A: And do you do any types of making yourself?

R: I do a bit of painting, do a bit of sort of child crafting, if that makes sense, crafting with my child, out of recycled stuff, well, we try to anyway, yeah, I do a bit of painting, I've done a mural in my son's room when I was expecting, watercolours, oils, pastels, I tried a bit of, not exactly pottery but, I can't remember what it's called, but it's a bit like you can buy a whole block of clay and make stuff out of it, and then it just dries, air-dries, that kind of things.

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

R: Not particularly, I mean my mum can draw, I guess she did a lot of knitting and needlepoint kind of thing, same as my grandma; as a child, I did a bit of knitting and needlepoint, and then I've always liked to do crafts and painting as well.

A: And you've mentioned that you do a bit of making with your child as well?

R: Yeah.

A: Is this something you enjoy?

R: Yeah, definitely, we really enjoy it, particularly during lockdown, since we've a bit more time to actually sit down and do that; we've done a lot more sort of drawing together, painting together, in fact he's downstairs, just painting on his own now, and that's really, he's got a real enjoyment of painting and drawing at the moment, it's really come along, so it's been really nice to sort of do that together and now he can do it quite independently as well.

A: That's really nice, he's developing an artistic side as well.

R: Yeah, absolutely.

A: And do you like that about him?

R: Yeah, it's lovely because I was a bit concerned at one point that he wasn't that interested in drawing, but like I've said, in the last 3, 4 months that's really developed and yeah, that makes me feel really happy, yeah, definitely.

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

R: As a woman? I guess I probably haven't really thought about it that much, but I guess it is quite empowering to be able to put your ideas, your stamp, your individuality sort of out there, I guess, and have it be seen, even if it's for personal, like me personally, I guess, to be able to have done something creative, something to be really proud of.

A: Have you ever bought anything that is political or feminist, in terms of arts and crafts?

R: Probably not outwardly so, no, I don't think so. For me, a lot of the artwork that we do buy tends to be more the natural world, like landscapes, nature, that kind of thing, rather than political; like I can't have anything with words on because I would just read it every time I go past it, I would read it and then it gets into my head, and same with my husband as well, and we're not into any sort of celebrities or portraiture, we're not really into that either, so not so much on the political side. On the feminist side, again, I don't really like, this sounds really stupid but I don't really like, as much as I like nature and stuff, I don't really like having lots of floral, like typically feminine stuff, and I'm not saying that's what feminism is, but I don't necessarily like very girly stuff, but as I've said, I know that's not what all feminism is, at all, so yeah, I guess I'm kind of quite picky with what we buy and what we like, as is anyone, I guess.

A: You've mentioned at the beginning that you prefer independent artists. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

R: Yeah, we go to quite a few print exhibitions, or individual, like little art galleries and things like that to support those local businesses, those local artists and things like that if we can, and yeah, so whenever we go anywhere on holiday, we always look for places like that, whether it's abroad or in the UK, we always look for things like that, or little, you know, local markets often have arts stalls with independent makers, so we always try and look for something that would be suitable for the kind of art look in our house and we often try to buy something, even if it's something small.

A: And, I mean I understand, you know, the appeal of something independent, but can you describe why you go looking for it when you're travelling and also at home?

R: I think when you're travelling, it's a reminder of that moment, it's a reminder of that holiday, that time, that enjoyment, to take back to your house, something that is not like ultra

“this is a souvenir”, you know, like the Eiffel Tower or something, it’s more individual, I guess, not everybody is going to have that particular piece of art in their house; even if it’s a print, there’s a limited run of prints, and I think my husband and I both prefer the idea of having that little memory of that holiday with a piece of art, and that time-travelling with it too, I guess. Did that answer your question?

A: Yes. Thinking about the Manchester Craft and Design Centre, can you tell me how you’ve first found out about it?

R: Well, my husband is from the North West anyway, he’s from Bury, so he’s lived around here since he was born, basically, so he already knew about it, so when we first went to Manchester together, that was one of the places we visited when we went to Manchester for a day, because he already knew about it, and he knew that I was into art and craft, and stuff like that, and he thought it would be a really interesting place to take me, so yes, that’s how I’ve heard about it.

A: And are you aware of its history?

R: No, probably not actually, I don’t think so.

A: Do you remember your first visit?

R: Yes, so my first visit was with my husband, well before we were married, when we were both at uni in Lancaster, we went to Manchester for a day and he took me there.

A: And do you remember how you felt when you walked in, what did you think of the building and the space?

R: I mean it’s a brilliant space, isn’t it, because it’s got that really high ceilings, it’s got all the little stalls and studios; it was just quite exciting to see all those different makers there and at really sort of affordable prices as well, there’s lots of things that you can buy that are not

super expensive. I don't think I've actually bought anything on that first visit, but I was a student then. Mind you, I could have made the effort then, I guess, but I didn't; yeah, it was exciting to see it all going on and quite inspiring, I think, oh I could maybe try that, you know, that kind of thing.

A: And do you remember what brought you to the Centre at your last visit?

R: In my last visit, did you say? My last visit, what did I go for? I think I was looking for a watch for my husband; I was really just going to see, I didn't have the intention of buying at all, I was just going to see what they had because it was this particular brand that I was looking for, that one of the makers actually sold. I think that's why I went the last time, or it might have just been, in fact I think I might have been later than that, but again, I just like going to just peruse, to just go in and see what is there, to have a look at the art, just to look at it, really.

A: And can you tell me a bit more about your visits, like from the moment that you walk in, do you normally browse, do you go into every studio?

R: Yeah, I normally start at the bottom, I normally go in the sort of main entrance and then do a little circuit around, so I'd go left first and I do normally go in most of the studios, or certainly have a look in the window of all of them, and like I've said, but sometimes they're closed because often we go sort of, we end up there at lunchtime or sort of afternoon, so sometimes some of the studios are closed, but I always look in the windows, and then often go in most of them, I think. So yeah, go in downstairs and then make my way upstairs, the main entrance and then do the circuit, anti-clockwise, actually, normally, around the top bit.

A: And can you recall anything that drew your attention when you last visited or in any of your visits?

R: Yeah, I always really love the guy that does the tile art, he quite often does birds on tiles, on square tiles. In fact, I've bought three, quite a while ago, I think it was his quite early stuff, so he's kind of developed his stuff a bit more since then, but I always look at his stuff because I always really, really like it. And there's the jeweller in the main entrance, there's the maker, I think she probably shares the studio but there's one, she makes these round globes with little coloured crystals in, her things are really beautiful, and oh I tell you, I've just remembered what my very last visit was, it wasn't for watch, sorry to go back, just thought I'd bought my mum some earrings for Mother's Day, not last year but I think the year before, that was what I bought, because I was thinking what do I look at because there's a woman, another jeweller, who makes dichromatic glass into earrings and necklaces, and my mum wanted some pink earrings; I really like the dichromatic glass so I went and bought my mum some pink dichromatic glass earrings, so that was the last thing I've bought from there, so I always look at her stuff, and there's somebody who makes animals out of paper, folds it, owls, birds and things on branches, I always like that. I like all of it, there's bags, purses and stuff that always catch my eye; yeah, lots of stuff, pretty much all of it, to be honest.

A: Yeah, I mean there's a lot of studios there and it's a fascinating space.

R: It is, yeah.

A: You've mentioned the earrings that you've bought for your mum as a Mother's Day present, do you normally go to the Craft Centre for gifts?

R: I do actually, because I think it's really, it's just, like I was saying before, because it's independent it's very individual, and you know that really, you're not, whoever you're buying for is not going to have anything like that because it's all individually crafted, and I think particularly if I'm sometimes stuck for present for somebody, just can't think what to buy them, I like to go to the Craft Centre to have a little look, either to get an inspiration or to

actually buy something. I've bought quite a few gifts, in fact most of the things that I've bought there has been gifts for other people.

A: And it's interesting that you've mentioned the studio that does the tile art, do you keep track of how their process evolved?

R: Yeah.

A: Is this something that you notice if you've been somewhere a couple of times, and then?

R: Yeah, definitely. The more you go, and particularly that guy because I remember, I think the tiles were the first things that I've ever bought from there, so yeah, it is interesting to see how their style develops, and then you can see oh, I'm not quite sure if I like what they're into, or really like the stuff that they're now making, yeah, and you can kind of compare it what you've already got, yeah, I like that.

A: Are you aware of any other similar spaces?

R: I think not that got the kind of breadth of products, I guess. There's the Reget Centre that we went to, well, before lockdown, February I think it was, because they had like a print exhibition on which was very good, and then in the gift shop they had a few little bits, trying to think where else we've been. We quite often go down to Cornwall, so they've got loads of independent shops in Cornwall, like arts and makers, and stuff like that, but in terms of specific centres, I can't off the top of my head now, I can't think of anywhere that we go to, other than the Reget Centre that we go to on a regular basis for that kind of thing.

A: Can you tell me a bit about your experiences and interactions with the makers at the Centre?

R: They're always really friendly, like when you go in; if we do choose to go into one of the studios, they're always working on something which I think is really fascinating, that they're

just in the middle of their process which is great, and they're always look up and say hello, and you know, offer help if you need any, they're very welcoming with a smile but they don't mither you; they'll look up and say hello and then just carry on, which I like because I like to just browse, and I don't like to feel like I'm being watched, like are they gonna buy something? So, I quite like that idea, and then if you've got any questions or want to look at anything, they're always really helpful, and a few times I've been in the studios where they're sharing a studio, and if I wanted to have a look at something or decided to buy something where the actual maker stepped out for 5 minutes or something, the other person is available to always help and they're as helpful as they can be, you know, with the actual maker not being in there themselves, so yeah, it's always a really positive experience, really positive.

A: Do you normally ask questions about the process or the product, do you like talking to them?

R: I'm not really much of a talker, I guess, in that kind of situation. I think because I've got a kind of artistic or art maker sort of background myself, I feel like I often can sort of, in part and not in any kind of depth, I can kind of understand some of the process, so I don't often feel like I want or need to ask questions, but I know that if I wanted to, that I could and they'll be more than happy to talk about what they're doing, how they do it and stuff like that.

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

R: If I'm honest, I probably never really noticed; I don't know whether that's because there isn't much diversity or whether I've just been completely sort of blind to it, I don't honestly know, I'm afraid.

A: Thinking about the diversity in terms of products and, you know, options, how do you feel about that?

R: I think there's a huge range of products and different techniques, yeah, huge, huge, huge, I think it is massive, the different amount of processes and products and things, yeah.

A: How do you find the actual building of the Craft and Design Centre?

R: Oh, I love the building! It's such a brilliant building with that iron work on the outside and on the inside, and the big, tall, because I think it's got glass windows at the top, I think, doesn't it? Yeah, it's a really beautiful building, and as I, my husband and I, whenever we go to Manchester, we're constantly looking at the buildings and the architecture anyway; I'm always awed by the North West in general and the architecture. So yeah, that's always, you can't help but go in and look up and around when you go in the building.

A: How do you find the exhibition space? Have you attended any of their exhibitions, or checked out anything while you were visiting the shops?

R: No, I haven't actually, I've never gone to an exhibition. I don't even think I've kind of accidentally gone to one, so no, I can't really comment on that, there's never really been one when I'd come to visit, and I've never deliberately gone to one.

A: How long are your visits normally?

R: It depends; I think when I'm on my own, I'd probably be there for the best part of an hour, I would imagine, just like slowly going around and looking at stuff. I think when I go with my husband I'd probably, or my son is there, I'd probably be quicker, probably half an hour.

A: And which days or times do you normally visit?

R: Well, because we work, we normally go at weekends, so probably on a Saturday, or unless it's a holiday, because we're teachers, we have like half-term holidays and everything, summer holidays, so it would be in the sort of school holidays. In terms of time, really anywhere between sort of 10, between 10 and 4 o'clock, I would say, anything between there,

but often we end up going, like I was saying before, it ends up being around lunchtime because there's always a few studios that are closed for, you know, someone's gone to lunch or something like that.

A: You've mentioned that you visit alone, with your husband or with your child as well; which do you prefer, visiting alone or with other people?

R: It is nice going with people because you can chat and say oh, I like that, or look at this, isn't this great? That kind of thing; that has its merit but equally, sometimes it's just nice to go on your own, so you can just go on your own pace and you're not feeling rushed, and you can, well, I like sort of having that conversation in my head, really. Yeah, so I don't know if I've got a preference, both have their merits, really.

A: You've mentioned that you have visited with your son as well; do you find the Centre family-friendly?

R: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, absolutely, I've been there since, we've been going since he was a baby, so went in when he was in a pram or I was carrying him. Yeah, definitely felt like it's family friendly and a nice space for children because there are parts of it that are quite open, so yeah, definitely.

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

R: No, but I do always say when my parents come up, because often when they come up, they come to see us and basically we just stay at home for the day, kind of thing, but I always say if they ever come up to see us and they want to go out to Manchester, we'll definitely take them there.

A: That's really nice. Have you attended any events or workshops at the Centre?

R: No, I haven't.

A: Are you aware of things that are happening, like events and workshops, that just didn't draw our attention or you're not aware of it at all?

R: I think probably most of the time not that aware unless I've recently visited. I think maybe when I visited and they had a workshop, it does draw my attention, but I guess probably, in the nicest way, maybe not that interested. I quite like being quite independent in terms of my own making and try to kind of feel my way around stuff myself, and experiment myself, or kind of look at little tutorials and things, little workshops via YouTube, or makers on the Internet, kind of thing. Yeah, I think it's also finding the time because you can do that at your pace at home, rather than having to go somewhere at a certain type kind of thing, so I guess I find that easier, rather than going to workshop, if that makes sense.

A: It does, yes. Do you take any photographs when you visit the Centre?

R: No, not unless, I think part of it probably because I feel a bit awkward almost, like I'm going to steal an idea or something, I don't know; I just feel a bit like that's how they may feel, but they probably don't, but I don't know, I feel a bit cheeky, I guess, taking photos. I think if there was something that I saw that I liked, I'd then try and find it on the internet if I wanted a photo, I'd probably go and try to find the maker on their website or something, and find that piece, rather than take the photo when I was still there.

A: Do you take photos of things that you've bought, maybe, and share them with other people or online?

R: Sometimes, not very often, we're not particularly sort of that kind of social media brag-y kind of people. I guess having said that, more so with the craft that I do with my son, I probably do put on, more to show family, really, because I know they'd be interested, but no, I don't think that we tend to take photos of stuff that we'd bought, not really, no.

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



[REDACTED]

A: What is your favourite thing that you've bought from the Centre?

R: My favourite thing is probably the tiles with birds on; we've got three of them and I think the tiles with the birds on, they're in our bathroom, we're moving so I've just taken them down, but they're probably my favourite. What else have we bought from there, the tile with the, the much larger tile. No, I think the bird is probably my favourite.

A: So, the tiles and the birds, why are they your favourite?

R: Why? Because they've got some gold on them, some sort of gold lacquer, and it's kind of, I just really like the detail, even though it's kind of his early work, I really like the detail of it, I like the shape of the birds, lots of them are kind of long-legged, I just really like the quality of it.

A: Talking about quality, is it something that is important for you when you buy things that are independent?

R: Oh yeah, definitely, definitely we want quality. Yeah, definitely.

A: You've mentioned at the beginning that the Craft Centre has affordable prices; can you tell me a bit more about the prices at the Centre?

R: Well, I think what's great is a lot of the stuff is between that sort of, I guess maybe like £15 to £50, something like that, a lot of the stuff is in this kind of price range, which makes

everything sort of tempting, I guess, because that's quite an affordable, I know some people may have to I guess, but we're in a very fortunate position and we, I wouldn't necessarily have to save to do, to buy something at this kind of price, I could probably just buy it, so that makes it really, really great.

A: In terms of, we've talked about price range before and the things that you've bought, would you say that the prices at the Craft and Design Centre are comparable to other spaces that you have visited?

R: Yeah, I would definitely say so; in some ways maybe a little bit cheaper. There's a lot more stuff that you could buy from the Craft Centre in Manchester than from other places we go to sometimes, where it's maybe just an individual shop or stall, and I think maybe their stuff is sometimes more expensive, I don't know whether that's because of the rent that they've got to take into account that their stuff is a bit more expensive? I don't know, but that's just me guessing, I guess.

A: And how do you feel about this distinction of handmade products versus mass-produced products?

R: I'd always much prefer not to have mass-made products. Like I've said before, it's that uniqueness that the makers have, that those independent makers have, the uniqueness of their products, you know that it's kind of small batch or literally unique, individual, because they've had to make one at the time, kind of thing. I think I really like that quality.

Obviously, not all my stuff is handcrafted on that kind of small basis, but I kind of try where I can.

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

R: I'm not sure if I have actually; no, I haven't.

A: That's okay. Have you ever donated to any arts and crafts organisations?

R: Probably not, other than just buying stuff whilst I was there. No, I haven't.

A: So, if you wanted to support an independent artist, you'd prefer to buy something directly from them, rather than ...

R: Yeah, I think so, that's what I'd rather tend to do, yeah.

A: How about when you're visiting a museum and they have donation boxes?

R: Yeah, I guess I do. When we go to a museum, yeah, we do normally give a donation, particularly ones when it's free to go in, like MOSI, it's free to go so we always give a donation, but I guess when we've already paid to go in somewhere, we don't tend to. I guess with places like craft centres, I'm not sure I ever think of them like that in the same way I do, you know, like a museum or a tourist attraction, I don't really see them in the same light but perhaps I should.

A: And would you be more or less inclined to give and support artists at the moment, with the pandemic and everything that is going on?

R: I definitely feel more inclined to support artists because it's, I mean to be fair, a lot of them can sell their stuff online, it's easier than musicians at the moment, I think anyway, but they're artists and they can sell their stuff online, so I think that's kind of good, that gives them an option to sell their stuff at the moment, and I mean I'm happy to buy or just look at stuff online and go and see it physically; it depends what it is, really, I think.

A: I'm sorry, you're breaking off a bit.

R: Oh, I haven't moved, that's strange.

A: Do you mind telling me what you've said at the beginning about how it's different than musicians?

R: Yeah, it's weird, isn't it, because they are all artists but I think because musicians perhaps rely more, I don't know, perhaps rely more on people going to gigs, putting on a gig, so that people take their music live, and I think that's really important for musicians. I think for the maker side of artist, I think, well for me anyway, it's more simple to see their products live, as it were; I'm happy to see it online and then buy it, and if I don't like it when it gets to my house then you can return it. I think it's, so I think that makers perhaps aren't in quite, they're in a better position; I'm not saying it is great for them at all, but I think they're perhaps in a better position because they can still sell their stuff online and they can still get it, it may be easier, I don't know.

A: In terms of the pandemic, how has it impacted your engagement with arts and cultural organisations?

R: Probably heightened my engagement because I've got more time to engage with it, I've got more time to look at stuff, so yeah, heightened my engagement.

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

R: Yeah, funnily enough yeah, yeah, definitely.

A: You sound very sure; do you have a specific plan in mind?

R: Not really but I think we, we often go [REDACTED] so it's not far from Manchester, so we normally go to Manchester at least once a month, if not more than that, and obviously because of the pandemic we've not gone, I mean I've not gone anywhere, so yeah, we really want to go to Manchester and one of the things we'll definitely do when we go to Manchester is go to the Craft Centre. I mean not, we may not even buy anything but

it's just going and seeing, kind of contradicts what I was saying before, I guess, but just, it's being in that space as well, I think, that is quite exciting.

A: How do you feel about visiting the Craft Centre and also other similar spaces again?

R: I feel quite excited about it, but I mean no more excited that I may feel about going to the supermarket. I mean I've not been, like I've said I've been sort of shielding a bit; I've not even been to the supermarket, so I feel quite excited, when I visit anywhere at the moment is quite exciting, go to places and see stuff, and be able to touch physical things, so yeah, I'm quite excited about our upcoming, at some point, visit to Manchester and the Craft Centre.

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

R: No, I don't think so, other than perhaps not being so touchy-feely with things, I think that's always the thing when you go to an art and craft centre, you always want to pick stuff up if you can unless it's like nailed to the wall, because it feels nice, but other than that I think that's the only impact that it might have. Other than that, I don't think it will impact massively.

A: How do you think that the pandemic will impact the Craft and Design Centre and other similar organisations, in terms of visitors and events at the moment, and also in future?

R: I think in terms of events it will impact because they can't get as many people into a space, I guess it's got to be much more thought gone into that, I guess, and maybe people may be a little bit more cautious going to places and events like that, so I think it will have an impact. I guess it depends on the person, so yeah.

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

R: I don't think so. Other than I guess it's nice to have, because when I first started going or visiting, I don't think there was a café, so it's really, not that I've ever sat in that café actually, we've always, because when we go into Manchester, we always eat somewhere that we've been looking forward to eating, that kind of thing, so we've never actually eaten in the café but it's really nice that you can just go and sit in the café if you want to, and I've seen people sitting and it's just made that space look really comfortable, and I've always liked seeing people chatting away, so I think that was a really good addition to the space.

A: It's lovely, the café, and yes, it brings the space together, it brings a homely feeling.

R: Yeah, definitely, that more kind of community rather than just being there to sell stuff, it's got more of that community, we'll just sit here and have a chat kind of feel, and it's really nice that since that's opened, whenever we go there's always people sitting there, it's always quite busy as well, so that always makes me feel, like I've said I've never actually sat down, but it's really nice to see.

A: And I suppose in some of your visits, you may have found the Centre to be a bit more empty, and in others, you know, crowded with people. Do you prefer when it's more busy and vibrant?

R: I don't really mind, I mean it goes both ways, I think. It's got a great feel when it's really busy and it's bustling, but at the same time, when it's that busy you kind of, you can't necessarily see everything that you want to see and you can't stand there as long looking at something because you feel like you may get into somebody's way, so it's quite nice going when it's quite quiet because then you can hog areas, you know, and you can just stand and

look at something for 5 minutes if you want to, without feeling like you're getting into somebody's way or hogging the area, so you can kind of go at your leisure, so I think both have their merits, really.

A: Perfect, thank you so much, I don't have any more questions so I will stop the recording now.

R: Okay, brilliant.