

A: So, first of all, I know that you have been informed about the project. Is there anything you'd like to ask, any questions before we start the interview?

S: No, that's fine, I've read your documents and the email you've sent beforehand.

A: Okay, that's great, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: That's great, thank you. So, do you mind if we start with some demographics?

S: No, it's fine.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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

S: Male.

A: And race?

S: White British.

A: And your current family situation?

S: Single.

A: And do you mind telling me your age?

S: I'm 36.

A: And your place of residence is Manchester?

S: Yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: Okay, that's great, and how many times have you visited the Craft and Design Centre in the past, approximately?

S: So, my partner is one of the makers in residence, so I visit frequently.

A: Okay, so would you say more than 50 times, 30 times?

S: Probably 50 times.

A: And your average spending at the Craft and Design Centre?

S: Probably about £20 to £30.

A: Okay, and your average spending in craft and design in general?

S: That would probably be the same.

A: Same, okay, that's great, thank you. So, just starting with the interview, can you tell me a bit about yourself and your relationship with craft?

S: I think most of that has started when I met my partner, actually, I probably had little relationship with craft generally before meeting my partner, probably Craft Centre would not have been somewhere that I would visit, I don't think, previous; at the moment, I find myself there a lot of the times to help out with her process and to help out with, and just generally a lot more inquisitive about what other makers are making, and I've found myself noticing things online as well, probably quite a lot more than I would have done over the last few years, but I think having met my partner, that's what sort of change my probably perception of craft, I would think.

A: So, you didn't have any prior relationship or engagement with craft?

S: Yeah, I think engagement is probably the best way of describing it.

A: Alright, but you didn't have any influences in terms of crafts or making with your family, for instance, growing up?

S: No, not so much, if I'm honest.

A: Okay, and you've mentioned that, I mean since you've met your partner you are involved much more in craft, so are you also involved in making, do you do any type of craft yourself?

S: I'm not that talented, no. I think it's more the supportive role, more than anything.

A: Alright, so what does craft mean to you, as a supporting role but how do you, how does craft sit in your life, what does it mean to you? You've mentioned that your perception of craft has changed since you've met your partner, so do you want to talk a bit more about that?

S: I think craft to me is something that, it's recognising something that's been made by an individual and that person's influences and evidence of whatever that piece of work is, rather

than something that could be more readily available in a mainstream shop, retail environment. I think it's just, it doesn't necessarily, as far as I'm concerned, it doesn't have to be any particular type of work, it's just where you can recognise it's a little bit more individual and you can see a bit of a story from the maker via an object, or a piece.

A: So, it's like a personal creation, in a sense?

S: Yeah, that's my perception anyway.

A: Okay, and in terms of different types of craft that you've been purchasing, what is your preference?

S: I find that most of the craft that I would purchase generally would be ceramics, more as a present or a gift because I know that there are certain elements of ceramics that I know my partner likes.

A: Okay, and have you bought or are you interested in any political craft, or craft that has something to do with ideology or anything similar, in terms of ceramics?

S: I don't necessarily have any, if it was a piece that appealed to me then I would be interested in purchasing something like that, but I wouldn't necessarily go and seek something with a message.

A: Okay, so it's mainly about the aesthetics, actually.

S: Yes, that's right.

A: Okay, so how did you first find out about the Craft and Design Centre? I suppose that was through your partner?

S: Yeah, I think I was aware that the Craft and Design Centre was there, but I don't think I've been in until I met my partner a number of years ago.

A: Okay, so what did you know about the Craft and Design Centre before you were with your partner?

S: What did I know, I think that's difficult to answer; probably not very much, if I'm honest, and I suppose it might have been the not knowing that maybe put me off visiting previously.

A: Alright, so are you aware of the history of the Centre?

S: I'm a lot more aware now, having visited quite a number of times, about it being an old fish market from the Victorian era.

A: Okay, and do you remember your first visit, by any chance?

S: My first visit, I remember visiting, I can't specifically recall if it was my first visit, but I do remember going, must have been quite early on in the relationship with the Craft Centre, and I just remember feeling that it was perhaps a different type of environment than perhaps what I would normally visit, which was actually, it felt quite nice to visit something different.

A: Okay, and what brought you to the Craft and Design Centre in your last visit? Do you remember your last visit there?

S: Yeah, I do, yeah, it was a painting job, so yeah, I'm helping out with a bit of a DIY project at the moment.

A: Right, okay. I mean could you tell me a bit more about different times that you've visited, like the moment you walk in, do you recall anything that drew your attention, for instance, when you walk into the Craft and Design Centre? Can you tell me a bit more about the actual space and the layout of the space, anything that you find interesting or fascinating about the space, maybe?

S: I think as you come through, I think the big veranda that's at the front is really nice to see with all the glass and iron work outside it, it's quite cool, I do quite like that. As you kind of

walk through to the building, I like all the tiling that's around on the floor, that's nice and colourful too; it feels like a big and open space, especially because of the glass ceiling which sort of adds to the nice atmosphere, I think, but sometimes I do think that there are some areas of the space that maybe perhaps are not utilised the best they could; for example, at the moment there is a little cupboard that is used for children's soft play and I'm not quite really sure if I understand that in the context of the Craft Centre, it doesn't seem to fit in, but as a whole, I think the building is quite a bright environment.

A: Okay, so apart from that, are there any other spaces that you feel are not utilised as well at the moment, can you think of any examples?

S: Well, at the moment I know there isn't a coffee shop, I know the people that actually have had that tenancy there recently have moved away, and I think the coffee shop that was there previously was mainly aimed towards vegan food, and if you sort of compare it to other shops and other places around the locality, I think vegan was quite a niche market, so I do think that if they can try and find somebody with more of an appeal for the space, for the coffee shop space, that could be a real benefit to the whole building and to all the makers if there was somebody there that actually brought their own customers because of their own products that they had.

A: Okay, so something more inclusive, in a way?

S: Yeah, that's good, because it's not that the offerings from the previous tenants of the coffee shop were, it was nice food, but I think it was just quite a niche share of food market, but I think, like you say, if there was something that, if it was a business that was a little more inclusive and bring more footfall through the building, I think that would probably benefit everybody as a whole.

A: Okay, that's great. Are you aware, or have you visited any other similar spaces, not necessarily in Manchester, like Craft and Design Centre, and can you tell me a bit more about your experiences there?

S: You know, yes, I think, there was a place in York I went, I fail to remember its name, and it was a nice area but it felt very much more like a gallery, and I think again, it was, because there wasn't that interaction with the makers, like the makers are in their studios in Manchester, there didn't seem to be, it felt very much like gallery setting. There was another place we went to in Stoke that was predominantly ceramics, but I think there were studio spaces there with some makers residents, but again, it was predominantly gallery-type based of work, so I think, at least in my experience, the Craft and Design Centre seems to me a little bit unique in that respect, it has makers there in a shop, in retail environment, but they have the capacity to actually make in that space.

A: Okay, so the fact that it is retail space, but it's also a space where the makers produce their own work, in a sense.

S: Yeah, to me, from my experience, that seems quite unique.

A: Do you think this adds to the appeal of the Centre for visitors?

S: I think so, absolutely, and I'm not sure how much the, as a Centre, I'm not 100% sure how much they advertise that as a selling feature.

A: Okay, so you think that this could be something that could be promoted further as a unique selling point?

S: For me, if I was somebody looking to buy more craft, I think that would be something that would interest me to come, if I could meet the people who were making particular items of work.

A: So, based on what you've just mentioned can you tell me a bit about your interactions with the makers? [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

S: Yes, so I think a lot of it is based around yes, I do have my partner that works there but a lot of my interactions do involve asking other people around about their processes, how they make their work, and I find that quite curious, and to me that adds a bit to the appeal to the craft generally, when you understand the journey that somebody's had to do to achieve the final piece, and I think it helps to understand the aesthetics as well, because certainly my partner tells me that sometimes people will perhaps make requests for certain pieces, and sometimes trying to explain that some things are achievable and some things are not is part of the journey that you would go on with somebody.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

S: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: So, do you feel that for a typical visitor it's harder to interact with the makers or start a discussion with them? Are they less approachable?



S: I would say that there's a portion of people that wouldn't have any problem with coming into a shop environment like in Craft Centre and opening up any form of dialogue, but I do think there are, maybe people with a little bit, [REDACTED], where maybe craft was something new to me and I was perhaps a little more unsure of the environment, not as familiar, I think that unfamiliarity may add a little bit of a barrier to some people.

A: Okay, that's great. Just moving to a different question, how do you feel about the diversity in the Craft and Design Centre, or lack of diversity, when it comes to makers and visitors?

S: I think in terms of visitors, I think visitors come from a wide group of backgrounds and different age ranges, and I would say, from a customer's perspective at least the diversity there is probably greater than that of the makers that are in the Centre. I think, not all of, but I think there's a portion of the makers in the Centre that have probably been there for quite some time, and I think, as a whole, sometimes it may be, trying to choose the right words; I think as a whole, sometimes it's evident that some of the makers have been there for a long time and maybe, I know the Centre does have some free spaces at the moment, I can see that when these free spaces are taken up by other makers, I do think it would benefit from a young, fresh, vibrant element to add to the mix of people who are resident makers there.

A: So, kind of like a rotation of residents or different makers that it's currently missing, in that sense?

S: I would say that if there was a group of makers that was missing, I would say it would be a type of younger artists that have maybe fairly recently come through their graduation programme and are looking to establish some form of business, because I think if I compare what happens generally in the Craft Centre, to compare that to other places around Manchester, it feels often that it's quite, like, almost a little bit like a party atmosphere in

other places where there are things like drinks for sale, there is more trendy food offerings, it almost feels like in some areas around Manchester there's more of a destination, that's the word I'm trying to look for, and I think with the right type of mix to fill some of the other empty studios, I think the Craft Centre could help to draw other influences in.

A: So, to make it more as an overall experience, rather than just a place of, a point of sale.

S: Yeah, I think the point of sale is quite an important, but it does feel like sometimes, because some of the people that are there, in the Centre, have been there for a long time, it does feel that sometimes maybe a little refresh is needed; not necessarily the people's work, that's not what I'm suggesting.

A: Yeah, I completely understand that. So, do you also feel that about the product range; how do you feel about the different products at the Design Centre?

S: I think, generally speaking, there is a mix of different products available, but I do wonder what sort of selection process the Centre would go through when looking at people for the empty spaces that are there, I think it would be disappointing if there was a bias towards certain types of offering, like for example, if there was too many makers making one type of, I don't know, textiles or too many people making different types of glass or whatever. I think as long as the Centre are careful about who they select for the spaces that are empty at the moment, I think that would help them.

A: And how do you, what do you think about the building and the exhibition space? Do you think that helps to make it a bit more of an experience, like you've mentioned before, and not just a point of sale?

S: I think it does, yes. I know that the Centre often uses people, I think they often use local graduates to exhibit there, and I think they also have residencies that would come in from elsewhere. It's probably a little bit difficult to answer that question, actually, because there is

a large piece of work that's in there at the moment, it's been there pretty much all of this year because the Craft Centre has been closed for a large part of this year, so usually that environment where things are exhibited, it usually changes quite frequently but it does feel that the piece of work that's there now has been there for quite some time, so it's probably a little difficult for me to answer that one.

A: Okay, that's fine, thanks for that. So, normally when you visit, do you have specific days or times when you visit? How long are your visits there?

S: Not specifically, no. Personally, I think sometimes I would come in the morning if I've had something to do in Manchester in the morning and I'm on my way back home, I would nip in just to see Kathryn in the shop. Other than that, if I was looking to shop for myself, it would not be any particular time.

A: Okay. Have you taken anyone else to see the Craft and Design Centre?

S: Yes, my family.

A: And do you mind telling me about their experience and how they've found the Centre?

S: Like I've said before, I've sort of not come from a background where craft was particularly predominant, so to my parents it was something of a new experience, and I think I enjoyed, I think they enjoyed walking around, seeing different elements of different types of work and being able to have conversations with different people about how they've, what have been their influences and how they've made different aspects of their work.

A: That's great, and because as you've mentioned before, you're much more interested in craft than you were in the past, have you attended any events or workshops in the Craft and Design Centre?

S: Not in the Design Centre, no.

A: Okay. And normally when you visit, do you take any photos, or do you take any photos of the things you've bought? Do you post them online, for instance, do you use social media when you visit Craft and Design Centre, or is it more like a ...

S: I'm not somebody that tends to post on social media much. I do have various accounts and such, but I sort of use them more to, I would use social media more to engage with the Craft Centre, so if they were advertising what they were doing, I would use that to find some information rather than me posting about items that I've purchased or whatever.

A: Right, so how do you find their online presence, on social media, their website? Have you used their online shop, for instance, do you follow any of the makers online?

S: I follow some of the makers and I follow the Centre itself on social media. I do know that they do tend to post quite regularly on social media, but I do find what they post is sometimes, a lot of it seems more about the building, to be honest, like somebody may take a picture of the sunlight coming through the window, through an old window or something like that, and it would be more of an aesthetic, a scenic picture. I don't think they perhaps use social media quite as much as they could do to advertise individual makers or workshops, like you've suggested. Yeah, I do think they could advertise and make their presence more in that respect, but they do tend to talk about the building itself quite a lot.

A: Okay, so you think they could showcase the work on individual makers much more on socials?

S: Yeah, I think it would add to the appeal more, I think it would draw more customers through the door.

A: So, just moving to another question, do you have a favourite studio, can you tell me a bit more about that? I suppose it would be your partner's maybe?

S: [REDACTED] I think there are, for me it's about the work that I see in the studio, the studio that I, if I was to sort of exclude my partner's work and take any bias away, I think the work that I like the most is probably the pewter I work, I quite like the metal shaping element of it but it almost looks very delicate in many ways as well, but for me, I think it's more about the product rather than the shop, space, environment itself, although I do see how they're both connected and I do see that when you've set up your space to best highlight what your products are.

A: Okay, so do you have a favourite thing that you've bought, maybe from that particular studio, or something that you recall buying that you felt you're attached to, to a certain extent?

S: You know, I don't think I had bought anything from there, I'm not too sure on that, if I'm honest.

A: That's fine. How do you feel about the prices at the Craft Centre?

S: I think generally, they're quite varied and I think something that is, it's evident to me now, because I live with somebody who makes craft, it's evident to me now that price doesn't always represent the amount of time and the processes that they had to go through to make an item. I think, generally speaking, most people appreciate, whether something is large or small, or whatever, I think most people generally appreciate the pricing aspect, I don't think that things are generally under-priced or overpriced, in my experience at least, but I do know that there are, I think actually, it goes a little bit back to one of the earlier questions, where I've mentioned things that were perhaps more readily available in mainstream shops, craft things do require time and effort to make and therefore, price has to reflect that, doesn't it, in many ways, so I think perhaps, for me it's up to an individual to decide whether they think a

particular items would be worth whatever its price tag is, and I think it's a little individual as some people would see that value and other perhaps may not.

A: So, you think it also reflect the difference between handmade products versus mass-produced, in a sense?

S: Yeah.

A: Okay. How do you feel about handmade products in general, compared to mass-produced ones?

S: I often like how things are never quite perfect, there's often something that just makes them a little more individual, makes them a little more different than something that perhaps more mass-produced. I mean that may just be a reflection of my personality, I don't know, I do like it when some things are maybe a little wonky.

A: So, more different.

S: Yeah, a little more individual, yes.

A: Okay, and again, just to slightly move to a different question, have you ever donated to arts or crafts organisations, have you ever used the donation boxes at the Craft and Design Centre?

S: I'm not sure that there was any, I can't say I've ever come across any donation boxes so no, I don't think so.

A: Okay. Would you be more or less inclined to give at the moment, to donate?

S: I wouldn't have a problem with that. Do you mean to an individual or to ...

A: I mean to an organisation like the Craft and Design Centre, for instance.

S: Okay, I would probably be more inclined to give to an individual artist because I suspect if I purchases something that was, the price tag was an odd number, I may round that up to, I don't know, to the nearest £10 or something like that, if I was going to donate.

A: Okay. Just some final questions about Covid-19 and the whole Coronavirus situation, how has that impacted upon your own engagement with the Centre, with the arts and cultural organisations in general?

S: I think naturally, there's been a big shift online to try and look for ways, I think it's probably been as difficult for different centres and organisations to try and reach out to people, but I think sometimes, maybe there hasn't been, I'm not actually sure what the Craft Centre has done other than to amend its opening hours, I'm not sure if the Craft Centre has done anything to reach out in terms of on social media, or maybe they, I don't know, they may or may not have done like a, what's it called, like a workshop via social media or something like that, for people to do at home. I'm not sure if they have done anything along those lines but I think, for me, that would have been something that I could do at home.

A: So, a way to engage with their audience online, in a way.

S: I think that's what I would benefit from, yes, especially when things like opening hours are a little bit reduced, and people are restricted in terms of movement a little bit.

A: So, have you visited the Craft and Design Centre since they've reopened?

S: Yes, I've been. It was interesting to note, and I do appreciate that there might have been a number of reason but not all of the shops spaces that were occupied were open, there were only certain spaces that were open, and I guess that each individual has their own reasons why they aren't open but I'm sure that would affect the public, in some way or another.

A: Have you visited any other art or cultural spaces since the lockdown?

S: Not since the lockdown, no.

A: How do you feel about visiting such places again?

S: I don't think I would have too much of an issue, I think it would be something that I would have to feel comfortable and make sure that that environment has taken reasonable precautions in terms of social distancing and other safety elements.

A: And do you feel like with social distancing measures, wearing a mask for instance, do you think that this has an impact on your experience in spaces like Craft and Design Centre, or other art spaces?

S: Probably because I think, I know it's not comfortable necessarily to wear a mask all day, and it would probably make people feel that they would want to spend less time in any particular environment, so just for the sake of being able to take the mask off their face, and I guess it would also make people want to touch things less, and I know a lot of things are tactile and involve a little bit of interaction in some way, and I guess if maybe there's a fear or not wanting to spread anything via touch, then yeah, I think that probably adds to people's worries.

A: So, it's an important element of the experience, in a way.

S: Yeah, exactly.

A: Okay, just a final question, how do you think that Covid-19 will be influencing Craft and Design Centre and other arts and crafts places in terms of visitors, in terms of events, in the near future? What's your perspective on that?

S: I think that, for me, that's down to each individual centre or organisation to find ways in which they can engage with people and perhaps a different way, so whether like I've mentioned some form of online engagement, I think at least with things being at the moment,



I would anticipate the visitor numbers would probably be down on what they would usually be in previous years, so I think any sort of supplementary way in which you can get people to engage and understand any messages or anything that an organisation wants to put out, I think would be beneficial for them.

A: Okay, that's great. Thanks so much, I think that's all. Is there anything else you'd like to add, based on the discussion that we had, anything else you'd like to mention?

S: I don't think so, I think I'm happy with our chat.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]