

A: Can we start with some demographics questions, if that's okay with you?

S: Okay.

[REDACTED]

A: Okay, so let's begin. Can you tell me how you identify in terms of your gender?

S: White British and, oh sorry, that's, White British, female.

[REDACTED]

A: Perfect. And how old are you?

S: 52.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: Yeah, that's fine. And can you tell me how many times approximately, I mean I know it's hard, you've visited the Craft and Design Centre?

S: In total, over my whole life? Oh, I don't know, possibly about 50 times maybe?

A: Okay, I was going to say if it's more than a hundred times?

S: How long has it been open for?

A: For a couple of years now, I don't remember exactly when they opened, but I can put more than 50 times.

S: Yeah, I think it's been opened for quite a while.

A: Yeah, because I've had some people who told me that they've been working at the Centre for 12 years.

S: Yeah, I'm sure because I used to work in Manchester city centre and it's been there then, it's always been on Tib Street.

A: And do you have an average spending number that you can give me, what is your average spend in there?

S: Each time I go?

A: I mean in general, what would you say?

S: Well, my husband's just said that he probably spends there more than I do because he goes there and buys me presents from there, so I'd say I'd either spend nothing in there or I'd spend on average about, I don't know, £50 on average, because sometimes I'll buy small things and then I'll buy something bigger.

A: Did you say £15 or £50?

S: £50.

A: Perfect. And what would you say is your average spending in craft and design in general, not at the Manchester Craft and Design Centre?

S: Over what period of time?

A: Again, in general.

S: Well, I spend a lot on crafts because I just love crafts, so over a period of time I don't know, but I can pick something up that's, you know, £5, but I can equally spend a few hundred pounds quite easily, so I'd say the maximum I've spent is, I don't know, depend what you call as a craft. Is chair a craft? In this case, a chair was £1200, I don't know.

A: It's hard, to be honest.

S: If you said how much on crafts in a year, then I could perhaps think about that one better, now I just love spending money on crafts and individual pieces.

A: Maybe we can say from £5 to £1200 as a range.

S: Okay.

A: Perfect, that's all the demographics questions that I had, so we can make a start. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

S: A bit about myself? What do you want to know?

A: You can tell me some general information about yourself, and also about your relationship with craft?

S: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I think if

you buy something that is a craft, is designed individually, then you lock into the story about the individual who has created this as well, and have a lovely piece, rather than just buying things from, you know, shops that you can find all over the country, so yeah, where I am.

A: And you've mentioned that you really love craft and creative and artistic things. I mean, have you ever done any type of craft or making yourself?

S: Well, there's a question. I love going on courses and workshops, I do quite a lot of those. My, I suppose what I'm best at is photography, my mum is very creative, she was a dress designer and very artistic, that gene didn't pass down to me, so doing things like photography, also I've done jewellery making, upholstery, calligraphy, I've tried painting, wicker work, I've been on quite a lot of the courses because I try to support the individuals who have been to my events as well, I go on their workshops.

A: You've mentioned that your mum was quite creative as well, was making something that you did with her when you were growing up?

S: No, not really. She was very, she was a dress designer before she was married and had children, and carried on making things on the sewing machine and she's a very good artist and watercolour artist specifically, and she can sketch and draw so that was always around, so I think I just have a love of the arts and crafts but sadly can't draw, so yeah, I suppose that's where the love came from.

A: And do you also, do you do any craft or making with your son?

S: He's very artistic, actually, so he's just about to do A-levels, so yes, I've always done sort of bits and pieces with him, since nursery school he's sewn with me, so yeah, we always try out different things and he's got a very cool stationery cupboard and arts cupboard, so yeah. I love creating, I feel that's, personally I'm not a very good artist and drawer so I try and pursue that in other ways, I find it easier to go on, for example, a jewellery making course and make lots of bangles, necklaces and earrings and things like that, which I love, but I couldn't necessarily draw or paint.

A: I don't know if you've ever thought about it in this way, but what does craft and making mean to you as a woman?

S: Well, you're right, I haven't thought about this in that way, I tend not to think about things specifically gender-related, but just, as I've said before, I just love the individuality and knowing that you've got something around you that is just a one-off, and has been made and created by somebody whose story you know as well, I think that's important to have that link so you have a bit more of an emotional bond to something, so I don't know if that's because I'm a woman? I don't think so, I just enjoy having lovely things around me.

A: In terms of, have you bought any feminist art, for example, or any feminist ceramics that is quite popular at the moment, or anything else?

S: No, I don't know if I'd be drawn to particularly feminist things; I'm very much, yeah, I just think people should be, if you love something you buy it, whether it's been created by a male or a female, so I go more for the object and then learn the story behind it.

A: Have you bought anything that has been a bit more political, then, not necessarily feminist?

S: No, I don't think I have, to my knowledge.

A: And talking about the Manchester Craft and Design Centre specifically, how did you first find out about the Centre?

S: Initially, I was involved in looking at a few buildings around it with my job, and there was an area that was going to be completely, we're going back sort of 20 years possibly now, but there was an area called the Fish Market that was going to be regenerated and have lots of creativeness attached to it, I think the Embroiders' Guild was going to come up and reside there at one point, they wanted to have a lot of creators in there, and there was, therefore, going to be a link to the Manchester Craft and Design Centre, so I sort of got to know it through my work in Manchester anyway, and then frequented it from then on.

A: You've mentioned that you did some work in regeneration of buildings and renovations, so you might have been aware of the history of the Centre?

S: I might've been 20 years ago, but you're asking a 52-year-old woman to remember that, so no, I don't remember much about the architecture of that building specifically and how it got there, although I probably did at the time but no.

A: Was that something that you've found out later on, by visiting the building, or through workshops there, or is it something that you haven't come across specifically, you know, the history of the building?

S: I haven't looked into it recently in more detail, I have various books on Manchester around me and now you're going to make me want to find out a bit more about it, but no, I don't know much about the building itself.

A: Do you remember your first visit to the Centre?

S: Not specifically, I remember sort of first discovering it and the initial visits that I had there, you know, it's just lovely to find within the Manchester city an area where individuals can create and find themselves, and then they have that space to then sell directly to the public, so it was lovely, as I was saying, in this city life to find something that was a bit more a one-off, as opposed to branded and found in all cities, all over the country.

A: And what brought you to the Craft Centre in your last visit?

S: Probably in my last visit a particular individual I wanted to see, Andrea at Made by And, (XXX 14:45) I think she is a fantastic artist, and specifically last time, I went to Made by And because I wanted something, I follow them on Instagram and sometimes their photos are inspiring, a lot of the time their photos are inspiring, I think I just fancied a treat, to be honest.

A: And did you go in to buy something for a specific occasion, or was it just something that you liked and wanted to see up close?

S: I think the last time I went, I just wanted, we've redone a bit of space in the house and I wanted to have a look at some paintings to see if they were going to fit in the theme of the house, and also thought I'd just go by pass [REDACTED] at the same time and pick up something nice for there, which I'm sure I did, it's on the shelf behind me.

A: That's nice. Can you tell me a bit more about your visits to the Centre, you know, from the moment that you walk in, if you can just describe how it feels and what do you normally do, do you go everywhere, do you go only to specific shops?

S: No, I tend to go to every single studio, I think pretty much every time I've been, I've been to every single studio. Quite often I also have lunch there because I think it's a lovely café and it's just nice to go in and have that sort of space around you, it's nice to just walk up the street and have the light, airy sort of welcome that you get when you walk in. I don't think I can say that I've spent too much time looking at the exhibitions because I normally arrive just as they're being installed, or as they're being taken down, I don't think I have my timing quite right there, and then I just enjoy pottering around and watching people make, and have a bit of a chat with them as I go around. I do know quite a few of them now so yeah, it's lovely.

A: Can you recall anything that draws your attention when you walk in, or when you walked in the last time that you've visited?

S: Nothing, last time, nothing specific that drew my attention, I think I'm quite familiar with it, so I don't think last time was an exhibition on. I think I probably had a bit of meander and then went to the café, and then meandered the rest of the round, so no, there was nothing specific that struck me as I walked in.

A: Are you aware of any other similar spaces?

S: There's one down in Cirencester, no sorry, Chichester that I go to, and I've been to a few workshops there, (XXX 17:53) what it's called, that slipped my mind. Any other spaces, there's also not as big as Manchester Craft Centre, there's quite a few that I've been to around the country, you're just trying to make me think where they are. There's, I have to think about that, I can email you later if you want?

A: That's okay. Talking about the Craft and Design Centre specifically, can you tell me a bit about your interactions with makers?

S: Yes, they're always very willing to chat and they tell you their story, their background, they always seem quite busy. That's another thing about the Craft Centre, you don't go and find people sitting behind their desks, eating their lunch; they're always busy working, so it's lovely that they are working on a project that you can just cast your eye over what they are doing, and again, you know, that makes it into a much more inspiring space to go into and it has a soul to it and a sort of a community to it.

A: Inspiring in what sense?

S: In what sense? Because I think they're all in it together somehow, they all enjoy what they're doing, I always get a sense, generally working with artists and creators that their focus is very much on what they're creating, as opposed to the business surrounding in some way, I don't know if that makes sense but they want someone to buy their piece that they're going to absolutely love it and sort of take care of it and nurture it, as opposed to just selling something. So, I feel that they want to tell you their story as to how that piece got made and their background, and you know, how they set out their business. Maybe it's just me with an interest in that, but you know, it's lovely to speak to those people directly, as opposed to just going to a craft shop or somewhere where you can't see who's actually made that piece of work, which is why it's that special for me.

A: Yeah, it's really fascinating that you can talk to them and learn about the process and everything as well. You've also mentioned that they always seem busy because this is their studio, and not only a shop. How does this make you feel when you walk in?

S: It is just a lovely sense when you go in, you know, I keep saying that you feel inspired but you feel the love going into that piece they're working on, and their focus and their attention,

and to see that and then to see the work around them and know that they've actually produced it, you feel just, you're a part of their story, really, and then you the end buyer who's going to take it away, so you could see the whole process all the way through, and there's not many places you can go, you know, some lovely galleries and things like that where you can buy lots of these people's work at the same time, but you don't actually meet them and find out about them, and also, there's the opportunity obviously to asked them to, to commission a piece specifically, they're right there in front of you and they're waiting for the next piece of work to be produced.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: I was actually going to ask you if you have a favourite thing that you've bought from the Centre? Is that it, or is it something else?

S: I think probably anything that I get from Made by And because she's just lovely, and the painting (XXX 22:58) which is lovely, the jewellery obviously went to my bridesmaids so I don't have that. I do have other pieces of jewellery from there that my husband's bought which is also lovely. I think the enjoyment I get from Andrea's things are my favourite at the moment.

A: Do you tend to share your stories with the makers, you know, how you've used them or send them photographs, or just tell them?

S: Yeah, some of them know, I tell them and I also send my husband in and he tells them, so yes, I do and when I did my events, if I've brought anything from there I also put it online to direct people to the Centre.

A: That's really nice. Can you tell me a little bit about how you find the actual building? You've mentioned that you love the building; what do you like about it?

S: How I find it; you mean how I get to it or how I ...

A: How you find it in terms of if you like it, if you don't like it, what do you like about it or don't like about the building itself?

S: I like the airiness of it, what don't I like? Some sections of it down where the loos are and there's a backdoor out that way, and then the stairs going up, I'm not so keen on that area, and the balcony is quite nice. It would be nice if there were some more studios in there, and more different studios in there, just because I'm interested in different creators so would be nice to mix it up a little bit. I don't like it when there are empty units, yeah.

A: When you've mentioned different studios and different creators, what do you mean in terms of different types of specialties like ceramics and jewellery, or also?

S: Something new, something different. I don't know, it's difficult, I suppose, because it's also someone's working environment, it's not like they could be a, I don't know, there could be more of a gallery area so there's some guests people who are selling things there, as well as the studios that are around, I don't know if that would work? But then, I don't know, for some reason I don't really get to see many of exhibitions, I don't know if they are at wrong times for me, or there are not as many as there used to be. I've never been to a workshop there, and again, I don't know why, I tended to go to other creators in there, their homes or other venues, but I've never been to a workshop at the Design Centre, so I don't know how

big their programme is of that there, but no, it is a lovely space, I don't know what else, what more you could do with it.

A: You've mentioned before that when you go, you visit all the studios and normally you're gonna have a lunch there as well, so how long would you say your visits are, and also when do you normally visit?

S: So, how long my visits are? Well, if I have lunch, they're probably around an hour-ish, otherwise, say on average about an hour, I'll just pop in for half an hour, and if I have lunch there with friends, then we could be there for an hour and a half, maybe. What was the other part of the question?

A: When do you normally go there?

S: Normally, it's midweek, I'd pop in from sort of 11:30, lunchtime, it's middle of the week and middle of the day, I wouldn't go in the evenings and generally busy at weekends, although I've popped in previously on a Saturday.

A: And do you prefer to visit by yourself, or with other people?

S: Both, really. I love introducing other people to it, so if somebody hasn't been there and, you know, we'll go and have lunch and I'll show them around the studios because I just really enjoy telling people, and then we'll go out around Manchester and make a day of it, so if I'm going for something specific I prefer to be on my own, but yeah, otherwise I'd go with a friend.

A: Do you take any photos during your visits?

S: No, I've never done that.

A: But you've mentioned that you would post online if you would buy something, just directly to the Centre?

S: Yes, so I would take a photo of what I've bought when I get home, I've not taken photographs whilst there.

A: And how do you find the Craft Centre's online presence, do you follow them, have you used their online shop or any of the pop-up sales that they did recently on Instagram, for example?

S: Well, they did a pop-up sale in lockdown and I followed it pretty much from beginning to end, and the designers that I wanted to see on there either weren't selling or didn't appear to be selling, I don't think I've missed any, and I wasn't actually inspired by much of what I saw, strangely, but I had my phone on the whole way through the evening, so that was. I don't know how successful that was or not. There were a few online events going on through lockdown, and there were a few craft events and markets that were doing something similar, so it was nice to sort of sit and think okay, I'm going to, you know, I'm going to this event now, have a look around, but the one at the Design Centre, I didn't quite find anything that I liked, so I don't think I was in the market for the jewellery, there was quite a bit of jewellery and so on, so I think I might've been to one of their Christmas events or a couple of the Christmas events over the years, but no, I haven't really been to any of the e-events, I think.

A: How do you find their online presence in general, on social media, on website?

S: I haven't been on their online, I don't think it's been anything that's, I'm not too excited by their online presence, I've not been on their website for quite a long time, but when I was, I don't think I was too inspired by that, maybe they could do something more. And then, you know, I just follow particular makers on Instagram and go directly to them, but a lot of them, they don't really have much of a sales presence that I found, so yeah, maybe that, particularly in this climate at the moment, maybe they should improve that a little bit more.

A: Yes, definitely, this is something that a lot of makers have mentioned as well, that they need to be working on their online shops at the moment.

S: This is perhaps what I said earlier, they are so focused on producing beautiful things that the business side of things is secondary, and I've found that a lot with my show that I did, that everyone was very willing to come, wanted to come but then to get the application forms in, you know, it was pretty much a second thought, so yeah, it's a different mindset, really. I think if there was more sales presence, then I would definitely be more online, looking.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: Can you tell me a bit more about that, I mean why are these two you're your favourite within the Centre?

S: I just love the neatness of [REDACTED], and she's lovely to talk to anyway, and I like her back story and history, and I just wish my life was, just seems so organised, neat and beautiful, everything that she creates, and then completely the other way, really, with the (XXX 32:29), it's the, just the sort of freedom and ease of her paintings, really, yeah, they are my two.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: And how do you feel about the prices at the Craft and Design Centre?

S: Well, they're not the cheapest, but you know, once again, if you're going to buy something, I'm afraid I'm, I could buy something from China and it would look nice, but if you think about all the hours of work that go into making a piece, then you appreciate the value of it as well, so I don't have a problem with the prices. Yeah, I don't buy as often because the prices are reasonably high, but I appreciate why they are at that price.

A: You've mentioned before that, you know, this idea about buying products that are a one-off and not necessarily mass produced, how do you feel about handmade products in general versus mass produced products?

S: Oh wow, there is no comparison! I mean, there's handmade and then there's handmade, if there is a talent behind the handmade, they're absolutely beautiful, and mass produced things, you know, I think I go out of my way to try and buy something that is not mass produced, so obviously, I do buy things that are mass produced because you have to, but I go out of my way to support creators and independent shops, and you know, I go to reclamation yards and whatever just to find something that's a bit different.

A: You've mentioned before something about having an emotional bond as well. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

S: Well, I think that comes more from when you see the person who is making it, which is why at the Manchester Craft Centre it's lovely to meet that person, and you can see the love that goes into their piece of work and why they're doing it, you could find the back story, you can talk to them about it, you can talk to them about, let's say, their background and how they got to be in Manchester Craft Centre designing, making, producing, whatever they're doing, and then you have that bond with that piece of work. If you just buy something randomly, either mass produced with which you would have no real emotional bond with, in my opinion, you know, it's just another thing in the house, but if you have something that you

know a lot more about, and you know how it's been produced, then you have that emotional connection.

A: Yes, I completely agree with you, it's a different story when you have something that is handmade, and you also get to know the person and the maker. Have you ever used the donation boxes at the Craft Centre?

S: I don't think I have, to be honest, no.

A: Have you noticed them, or haven't even noticed them?

S: I don't know if I had noticed them. Are they the charity, are they for the Manchester Craft Centre?

A: For the Manchester Craft Centre.

S: Okay. No, I don't think I've noticed them.

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

S: Not directly, no.

A: Would you be more or less inclined to make a donation at the moment, with the pandemic and everything else that's been happening, and the impact that it has had on makers?

S: I think, to be honest, I think I'd prefer to buy something directly from them and see that as supporting them in that way, as opposed to a donation to some form of a charity organisation where I'm not quite sure where it is going. I'd rather support them directly by buying their pieces.

A: And, I mean this is something that we didn't think that we would be discussing when we were setting out to start this research project, but we need to talk about the pandemic and the

impact that it has had on the craft sector, so I wanted to ask you how did it impact your engagement with arts and cultural organisations in general?

S: I don't think in a negative way, I think the period when we've been in lockdown has, and people have been so, you know, they're trying to find different ways to get the crafts to them, then actually it's given, since I've been looking at it, it's given me more time to look at them and to consider and, you know, make purchases online, so I think the inventiveness of things like (XXX 38:40), Great Northern Craft Centre is going to go down similar route where you can watch things online, watch things on (XXX 38:53) their sales on Instagram or Facebook, whatever, you know, it's actually quite nice in some ways that there are no crowds at the events, and you can sit back and properly look at what's available, but having said that, you can also then find the holes in creators that you want to buy from, like they don't have any online presence, they're not quite up to speed and only put one or two things on their sale, and you know full well that there is an awful lot that they haven't actually posted. It's also, you know, opened up quite a lot of other creators whom I've never heard about in different areas and I've had that time to research it in a bit more detail.

A: And can you tell me about anything that you've bought online during this time?

S: I've bought quite a few cards, actually today, a couple of prints, so presents for different people, little bits of jewellery, so when, again, through lockdown period if there was a birthday, then rather than going to Amazon and buying something off there and getting it sent, I try to support an individual, either creator or an independent shop and buy what they were doing online and get that sent instead, and often in the area where those friends or a family member was, so I think I just had the time to do that, as opposed to being quite last minute and chasing around, and then ending up on Amazon and sending something from there. I made more of a sort of promise to myself that I will do more shopping locally.

A: Have you visited any arts or cultural organisations since they've opened, or are you planning to do in the near future, including the Craft and Design Centre?

S: I definitely will be doing in the future, I haven't yet, they've been open, what, three or four weeks now? Local shops I sort of have and bought there, but I've not really gone much further afield at the moment to go and shop somewhere else, but it will come back, I had no particular reason to go into Manchester yet.

A: How do you feel about visiting arts and culture organisations again?

S: Not a problem at all. It's just finding the time, with being away, then the summer holidays, school summer holidays, it will probably be September before I get the space and time to actually go out to these places again, without dragging my 16-year-old son with me.

A: And, I mean you participate in workshops in Manchester Craft and Design Centre, and I get the sense that you are involved in the craft, in design and arts scene in Manchester; how do you think that the pandemic will impact them in terms of visitors, events, in the short term but also more in the long term?

S: Well, before, in fact just as lockdown was happening, I've been asked to put together a series of workshops for another venue, and so I was in touch with a lot of makers and also people who do workshops with craft, and booking them to this particular venue in Cheshire, and then we just had to shut them all down because obviously, the venue was shutting down and it's interesting because I have been thinking, you know, are we ready to open it up again, will people attend the workshop? I think it very much depends on the space, and I think at the moment, everybody has a different view about how Covid has affected themselves and their family, and whether it's right to go out, right to socialise or it isn't, you know, everyone seems to have very different and personal experience about it, I find it quite difficult to gauge whether it's the right time for people to go to a workshop. I don't quite think it is just yet, and

I'm not sure how it will work with social distancing, so I'm in no hurry to kind of set them up again, I'm in no hurry to go to one, although I'm a part of a big group and we all do craft workshops together, so I don't think we're quite there yet. As for events, I'm not sure how they're gonna run at the moment, just with the social distancing. I mean, they're starting to put markets back on, we've got the Makers' Market and that's opening the next week, how that's going to happen I'm not quite sure with social distancing, and also, shopping in general and wearing face masks, I think that's going to be difficult. I was with some friends at the weekend and they've said they're just going to shop online because it completely takes away the fun of shopping experience, so I think whilst there's the argument that wearing face masks will make people feel safer when they're out and about shopping, it's just not a pleasant thing, is it, to wear a face mask, you know, and to talk to people and communicate with people, that's not a pleasant thing, so I don't know how long that's going to last, but I think that's going to curb my shopping a little bit more.

A: Like you've mentioned, though, there are other ways to support makers and artists through this time, I think it's also really important, like buying directly from them instead of visiting or going to a workshop that they would normally organise during this time.

S: That's right, and also things like, so my, Not on a High Street, great website, my sister used to work for them, but I know places like that take a massive percentage, so I am slightly naughty in that I go and look online and Not on a High Street, and then I look directly to the, I go out of my way to find that business or that creator personally, and buy directly from them rather through those sort of websites. It's slightly naughty of me to say that, but that's what I do.

A: That makes sense because they keep a percentage and then not all of it would go to the maker, yeah.

