

A: So, I'll start the recording. Again, thank you very much for your participation and first of all, the interview normally lasts approximately one hour, so first of all I'd like to go through some demographics if that's okay with you?

S: Okay.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: Right, okay. And your age?

S: 44.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

S: I've only discovered the Craft and Design Centre about 2 years ago, but since then I've probably been about 10 times.

A: Okay, that's great, and your average spending, if that's something that you'd like to share, at the Manchester Craft and Design Centre, so if you purchase anything, what would you consider as your average spending per visit?

S: Oh, I've purchased probably 2 things in there for £45 a piece, but I also go to the café, so I spend money on teas, coffees and cakes per each visit.

A: So, around £40 per time or something like that?

S: Yeah.

A: Okay, and similar question, just to finish with the demographics, your average spending on craft and design in general, not necessarily in the Craft and Design Centre?

S: It varies a lot because I make my own things too, so hundreds of pounds.

A: Alright, okay, that's great. So, just to start with a couple of initial questions, do you want to tell me a bit about yourself and your overall relationship with craft?

S: Yeah. I was raised in a very, I was raised in a religious cult, I should say that, I wasn't allowed to have any activities, any holidays or anything like that, but the one thing I could do was draw on paper, so I started being very artistic in that respect and I've kept with art and anything I could do to get my hands on, to do art and crafts I would do, so I started to work with clay and felting, and beadwork, and also I'm Native American so I was allowed to do beadwork, so I would make earrings, necklaces and try to sell those to friends, so it's been, my entire life I've made things, I've never made them to make myself a profit, I just did it

because I liked doing it, I enjoyed doing it and for me it was an escape. Luckily, I'm not a part of that cult anymore so I can do whatever I want, whenever I want, but I think the crafts as a means to escape my, the place where I was, was really important to me. I lived in Japan for a few years too, and crafting supplies and things were very expensive there, so I had to learn how to do with more natural materials and things from nature.

A: So, what types of craft do you normally do? You've mentioned jewellery and things of nature, any other types that you do?

S: Jewellery, felting, I do lots of sewing and embroidery, so fabrics, textiles, dying materials, I pick mushrooms, for instance, and make dye out of the mushrooms to dye fabrics and things like that, so if I couldn't find fabric dye or it was too expensive, I had to use items from nature.

A: So, how is it that you're particularly inclined to these parts of crafting?

S: I'm not sure if it's culture for me or not, because being a Native American, you have perceived that there is a relationship with the Earth and land, but I like to spend a lot of time out in nature, so again, it's another way to kind of escape anything that can be going on at home, go out to nature and then come back into the home, bring nature into the home and then work with it the way you could, to make things.

A: Right, so in a sense, craft making was typical in your family as you were growing up?

S: I would say it was typical in me but not in my family; my family just didn't have, my family had no interest in it but I did.

A: Okay, and do you make craft alone right now or with your family?

S: I do with my son, we do crafts every day, he loves it. He likes more science crafts.

A: Alright, okay, what types of crafts in particular when it comes to science?

S: He likes to, he'll do things like flint-napping or making drums and then making music from the drums, he likes, you know, the foods too and finding the genes in species of plants and mushrooms to categorise things, and then make things from them.

A: That's really interesting.

S: Yeah, he took a mushroom yesterday, it's called an artist's mushroom I think, to carve his name and a picture of the mushroom into the polypore mushroom.

A: Okay, I think you've also mentioned before, just going back a little bit, in terms of what craft means for you, you did mention that it is escape, so do you want to tell me a little bit more about that, this idea of craft as escape, what is it with craft that makes you feel this escapist feeling, if you like?

S: Yeah, it gives me the time to just focus on one thing rather than the million things around me that I have to do and get done, it gives me something to think about if I have a lot of things on my mind, I can plan and just kind of relish the time that I'm going to have in the future to finish the craft, it's something enjoyable for me but it's also an escape, so it's an enjoyable escape,

A: So, it's the focus element of craft, just focusing there and just being focused, and no distractions at all that makes you associate it with escape, or would you say more or less?

S: Yeah, I think so, definitely.

A: Okay, just to add to the question, have you bought, not only in Craft and Design Centre but in general, have you bought any feminist art or anything in relation to craft that you would classify as political, for instance, or any other type of art that signifies something for you?

S: Yeah, feminist no, I would say, no it's more land-based that I think, I can't think of anything particularly feminist-driven. I think I maybe had once a carry or tote bag that had like Manchester and they did a feminist theme of Suffragettes, of course.

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

S: I was walking past it and thought I would look in. it wasn't what I expected when I walked in, but it was nice.

A: Why is that?

S: I think it was a bit more, I wasn't sure if it was a place where I can go to buy and purchase craft materials, that's what I thought when I first seen it, so I went inside to see that it was just a kind of makers' studios, it just wasn't what I expected in that case. It was still nice, and I liked visiting it, and it was calming, and it was different from the rest of the high street.

A: Okay, are you also aware of the Craft and Design Centre's history, what it used to be in the past, what is the history of the Centre and everything?

S: I'm familiar with the history.

A: Okay, and what brought you to the Craft and Design Centre in your last visit, let's say?

S: I think my last visit, I saw online a picture of some earrings and a necklace that I liked, and I wanted to go and have a look at that, what they were. The prices weren't online, so I wanted to check that.

A: Yeah, yeah. So, I mean can you tell me a little bit more about your visits to the Manchester Craft and Design Centre, thinking about the moment you walk in, whether you engage with the different studios? You did mention before that you may go to the café as well, so can you tell me a bit more about your typical visit to the Craft and Design Centre?

S: Yeah, I would walk around and just kind of look at what some of the makers had out in the windows first, so I would go the bottom level and then up to the top level, and then I would stop to have cake and a tea, I like seating outside too, they have outdoor seating, and then I would maybe go back in and go inside one or two of the studios that I liked best.

A: Oh, so there are particular studios that you frequently go back to, every time you're at the Centre, right?

S: Yeah, I think maybe sometimes some of them feel more welcoming to walk into them than others, so I was a bit shy my first time and I didn't know if I could walk in, I wasn't sure if it was just a working studio or if it was a working retail space, so the places that had, like, very, you could tell there was a space inside where you could go and purchase something, I would go into those spaces.

A: Okay, so welcoming in terms of whether the place is there, and not necessarily just to purchase something, in terms of the people inside or the actual layout of the studio?

S: Yeah.

A: Yeah, okay. So, can you recall anything that drew your attention when you first walked into the Craft and Design Centre? Anything that, you did mention before that it was not the same as the high centres that sell crafts, so what was it in particular that made you feel like it was a different space?

S: I think when I just walked in, I remember the first thing I could see was toward the left as you just walk in, there's a display case with different jewellery off different makers, and you know that it isn't mass produced and it isn't cheap, so you could tell it was higher quality and then there's also information, maybe a table there that had information about the different crafts, things you could do, like silversmithing, making bracelets or things like that, so different workshops, so there was information about workshops you could do to make your

own jewellery and then, you know, some examples of other people's jewellery; that's not what you would see if you go to the Arndale Centre or the Trafford Centre, so I felt it was more personal and you could possibly meet the maker too, and I've noticed that some of the people there would do custom-made work, so if you had a photo of a child or something, somebody can silversmith that into a charm necklace or something, so it felt very personalised and the fact that you could feel free to walk around different levels. I think the signage was good, you know, the signage would say that there were more makers upstairs, and I've found it to be very welcoming.

A: Okay, so can you tell me a bit more about your interactions, actually, with the makers?

S: Yeah, I remember walking into one place, she was obviously working on something but she still stopped what she was doing to say hello and I thought that was nice, so I've had that experience, and then I've also had experience from, you know, just of purchase of the items from the makers directly and that was always nice and welcoming. I've not had any trouble not getting anything or, yeah.

A: So, personal, the makers were friendly and everything, so that was ...

S: Yeah, I've not had any problems with the maker not being friendly. There's a place called Afflecks Palace nearby, and that place has like a, there are makers there too, but sometimes when I walked in, the makers were just on their phones and not acknowledged me as a customer, and I didn't feel that way in the Craft Centre, it felt more welcoming.

A: So, other than that, did you normally have any discussions with the makers about craft, about design or basically about seeing something and choosing something?

S: I'd say it's all been transactional.

A: Okay, that's great. Just moving to a slightly different question, how do you feel about diversity or lack of diversity at the Manchester Craft and Design Centre, in terms of the visitors that go there, in terms of the makers?

S: I would say there's a great lack of diversity.

A: Why is that?

S: I've never seen anybody else there, a person who was visually of colour and I don't remember seeing any maker there that was of colour, so yeah, staff working there, I've not seen any people of colour.

A: Okay. So, that applies for both makers and the visitors as well?

S: Yes.

A: Okay, okay. And how do you find the different exhibition spaces, I mean you talked about the shops and the different studios, how do you find the building itself and the different exhibition spaces, different exhibitions that they host there? How do you find these things?

S: Yeah, I did look at those, they have like cases around the café that usually have items from the makers in them and those are nice to look at too, and those are also welcoming too. I think they may be the first things that people start to look at before they look at the makers' things, so it's kind of transitional thing to have those out there and I really appreciate those because you don't feel pressured to buy anything or look at anything, they're just there and they're separate from the makers' studios, those are nice.

A: Okay, and what about the building itself and the overall layout of the Centre?

S: Yeah, the building is well lit, I like the fact that it kind of has an open, airy feel to it. I think there's also restrooms that are available to the public; I've not used them, but I know they're there, so that's nice.



A: And how long are your visits normally, and which days or times do you normally visit the Centre?

S: I would go sometimes before, just after it opens maybe, I go between 10 and 2, before I have to go and pick my son up from school, so would be there between 10 and 2, around lunchtime or having a snack, about 30 to 40 minutes.

A: Okay.

S: Sometimes it's just a good place to go when I'm shopping, to sit down and rest for a moment and I know it's not going to be as busy as some of the other places around lunchtime.

A: Right, it could be just visiting for a coffee, rather than necessarily going to buy something or to look at different shops that are there.

S: Yeah.

A: And I suppose from what you've said, you tend to visit alone, or with other people as well?

S: Yes, I'm by myself.

A: Okay. Have you taken anyone else to see the Craft and Design Centre, maybe your son or husband, or friends?

S: I think I took my husband and son there once to look through everything, and I've told them if I had a birthday coming up, they could come here to buy something.

A: Sounds good. How did they find it, did they tell you anything about the Centre and their experience there?

S: My husband doesn't talk much, so no. He seems to be nonplussed about most things.

A: What about your son? Because you did mention that he's also into crafts.

S: Yeah, I don't think there was anything there at the time that really caught his attention, like for kids, there wasn't really a lot of anything for him that he would necessarily be drawn to.

A: Okay. And have you attended any events or any workshops at the Craft and Design Centre in the past?

S: No.

A: And are you familiar with events and workshops that they're organising?

S: Yes.

A: So, are you planning to attend, would you be interested in attending or is that something that is not for you?

S: If I've found something that I didn't already know how to do, and that didn't require a lot of things for me to purchase to do it in the future, I would attend it; for instance, I don't have metalsmithing tools, so I probably wouldn't take a metalsmithing workshop, but if there was something about felting, for instance, and that is easier to acquire those materials at home, I would be willing to go to a workshop like that.

A: Okay. And I suppose, like, from your perspective, because you do make your own craft as well, what are the things that you're looking at when you're visiting the studios at the Craft and Design Centre, or when you assess particular piece of craft? I suppose you have more insider knowledge of craft, I'd say, than other people who visit the Centre and don't necessarily make their own craft at home?

S: Yeah, for me, I think I'm more willing to buy craft that I know I can't make myself at home, so if I know I don't have the tools and things at home to do it myself, I would be more willing to invest the money into buying that. There are some things I've seen where maybe

people recraft or repurpose items, I really like that idea, I think those sorts of things sell, but I also know that I could do that myself.

A: So, what would normally be that, like, that would normally include jewellery or things of nature? Are there any specific categories or anything at all that you couldn't make yourself at home?

S: It's usually particular kinds of metal jewellery. Anything with metal I don't know how to do it myself, so I'm more willing to purchase those; glass is another one, I don't know how to do glass blowing and things like that, so glass. I know how to do sewing and embroidery and I can do all of those things myself, so you know, those are nice things to give me inspiration for future projects, but I wouldn't necessarily purchase them myself.

A: Okay. Just going back a little bit, again, to this element of escape that you've mentioned before when you're making your own craft, do you feel that or something similar when you visit the Craft and Design Centre, or any other places like that?

S: Definitely, I think it's a bit of a respite, and for me it's a bit of a respite from the high street area that's around the Craft Centre, so the Northern Quarter, lots of high end retail shops, to me it's just kind of a respite from those areas. I don't see it as being too unaffordable.

A: So, could say you prefer it from high street areas?

S: Definitely.

A: Okay, and is that mainly because of, I don't know, why is that, is that mainly because of the way it's set up, because it's not as popular as other high street stores?

S: Yeah, you don't feel any pressure there, I do appreciate that there's no high pressure sales, you don't feel like people are staring at you or watching you all the time to see if you're

going to buy, and it's a nice place to sit down and just have a chat with a friend, although I go by myself but it would be a nice place to sit down with a friend and have a cake and a coffee.

A: Okay. And as part of your visits, have you taken photos, do you post any photos online from your visits?

S: Yeah, I took a few photos of the purchases I've made in the area, by sitting at the table at the café; I haven't taken any photos of anything made there yet.

A: What do you think of the area itself, do you think it's well-positioned within the Northern Quarter?

S: Yeah, I like the area, I visit the charity shop that's next to it, so I would make an extra stop to visit the charity shop that's nearby and then to the Craft Centre.

A: Alright, okay. I'm going back to, are you familiar with the Craft and Design Centre's online presence, do you follow them on their social media? I think you've mentioned before that you have used their online shop, but you couldn't find the prices there?

S: Yeah, I couldn't find, I think I couldn't find anything to purchase online that I'm interested in but I know I can go to the Instagram for some of the makers, and so I can follow the makers and they post items but again, they don't post prices there either, so it's hard to find prices but I like seeing what some of the makers are posting; I would go to Instagram rather than the webpage because I think the webpage doesn't have a lot of information that I want on it.

A: Okay, so you'd like to see more information on the website, for instance?

S: Yeah.

A: Right, just a couple of more specific questions as well, you did mention before that there are a couple of studios that you frequently go to, which one is your favourite studio? Can you tell me a bit more about that?

S: I can't recall, I'm afraid. There is one that did leather works I liked, I believe she was on the bottom floor, and then there was a jewellery maker on the top floor, when you first walk in she'd be on the right, but I can't remember anything more specific than that, that's because I'm terrible with names, that's my, I can't remember the names.

A: Not necessarily names, but what did you like about those studios, what drew your attention? Was it just the things they were selling?

S: I think it was, I could tell that you could walk inside the space and they had more things on display for the public to look at, rather than just having them outside of the space displayed, so they had space that I could visually see from the outside that I could easily go into and look at further, feeling like I'm intruding.

A: Yeah, I think this comes up a lot, this feeling of intrusion and you've mentioned that before. Do you think that's probably a part of the fact that they both make and sell the items there, or is it something else that makes you feel like you're intruding?

S: Yeah, I think it's the idea that I don't want to mess up their, I don't want to interrupt their working if they're, you know, working where I could see, yeah, and I wouldn't want to walk into a space that didn't, I wouldn't want to walk into a space that was clearly a studio for someone working, that didn't have things to purchase already made and ready.

A: Okay, yeah. So, what is your favourite thing that you've bought from the Craft and Design Centre?

S: It was a silver ring I purchased, I don't have it anymore because I lost it, it was my favourite ring.

A: What was so special about that ring?

S: I liked the design, so it was a unique design, it wasn't something that I could just buy at a high street shops, like Claire's, it felt, it fit me perfectly and I was able to meet the maker at the time, and I just loved it .

A: Okay. What else have you bought during your visits; do you remember of any other objects that you've bought?

S: Yeah, I've bought a necklace as a gift. It's the ring and the necklace as a gift, two things that I've purchased.

A: Alright, okay. And I suppose we did cover that a little bit before, but how do you feel about the prices at the Centre?

S: I think the prices reflect the amount of work that the maker has put into it. When you go into a place like this you know that it is the maker's time that goes into the pieces, so I think they are higher priced than some things that you would get elsewhere, but if you know how much time it takes to make a piece, you have to also add that value to it. I'm not sure a lot of people do that, but as someone who works with things like that myself, I understand that.

A: So, would you say, from that point of view because you did mention the maker's work as well, how do you feel about handmade products versus mass-produced ones?

S: I think the quality is much higher, they are less likely to break and they could be more unique, so you may get more compliments on some of these products because someone would want to know where you got it because they haven't seen it before. I think when I buy

something, I want it to be something that people will notice and stand out, and different, and maybe commented on, and then for me, I know that its value is worth is.

A: So, it's functionality on the one hand, and then on the other hand it's the fact that it's something that not everyone can get, in a sense, it's not something that everyone can have a similar product or a similar object.

S: Definitely, the originality is good and sometimes it's, I know that I could go there if I wanted something very unique too and have something made.

A: Other than that, can you think of anything else that makes you prefer handmade products, or any other reasons why you like handmade products more than mass-produced ones?

S: I think it is definitely, it's basically originality because I do lots of charity shopping, I go to a charity shop every day and I know which items, for instance with jewellery, I can see which items are from the same shops because people have bought them at the same time and gotten rid of them at the same time, so it's not fast fashion and it's more thoughtful.

A: Okay, so it feels more authentic, in a sense.

S: Yeah, and timeless.

A: And timeless? How is that?

S: I think if you buy something that had more thought put into it, it may not necessarily be trendy and fast fashion, disposable fashion, it's usually something that works with, for instance, different outfits, no matter what style, or the trend at the time, so I appreciate that.

A: So something that doesn't necessarily follow trends, yeah, that's durable as well and goes with time also. Have you ever used the donation boxes at the Craft and Design Centre?

S: No.

A: Okay, are you familiar with those or is this the first time you've heard of them?

S: I'm familiar.

A: Okay, okay. And have you ever donated to any arts or crafts organisations in the past?

S: Yeah, I've donated to my tribe's programme for children.

A: Alright, can you tell me a bit more?

S: Yeah, so my Native American tribe does a culture camp every year and my son takes part also. It's partly funded by the government, but I like to donate to them just to be able to have extras for kids, yeah, extra beads, extra flint napping material and things like that, so I give back to them.

A: And at the moment, do you feel like you would be more or less inclined to donate something to arts or crafts organisation?

S: Right now a bit less, because of the pandemic we kind of have to buckle down on things, which is very sad because the arts need more money right now.

A: Right, so going into the pandemic, how do you think that the pandemic has influenced your engagement with arts and with cultural organisations in general?

S: It's greatly impacted it; it's been absolutely horrible. I'm used to going to a lot of concerts and music, concerts are a way to escape, and it's cut me off from that, cut me off from my sources of inspiration and my sources of comfort, and I don't feel safe yet going into retail environments so I've stayed home.

A: Right, so any alternatives, like when you've stayed home, you did mention like live music or retail stores and shopping, so do you have any online alternatives for that? In other word, during the pandemic what are your means of escape, are they similar to what you're used to?



S: Yeah, I mean I've purchased lots of crafts materials to make things with my son for school, for instance; I'm spending a lot of time schooling my son and have less time now to go out and do shopping in places like Craft and Design Centre, so my focus had had to change now to educating my son first, and then crafts come down the line further, but as far as music goes, I'm just completely cut off from that. I have purchased records online actually to support local artists, so I've purchased music to support the artists because I know that's the only means of income at this time and I haven't been able to support theatre yet, and I haven't been able to do a lot of crafts support yet. I have purchased some items off Etsy.

A: Alright, what items? Would you like to tell me a bit more about that? What is it like, similar to the ones that you would normally purchase at the Craft and Design Centre?

S: Probably similar, yeah, just some necklaces and earrings, again, things that I like, some vintage goods that wouldn't necessarily be in the Craft Centre.

A: Okay, so I suppose since they've reopened you haven't visited the Craft and Design Centre, right?

S: I've not visited the whole of Manchester since before the pandemic began.

A: Yeah, completely understand.

S: I've not visited since January, actually.

A: Are you planning to visit in the near future, both Manchester and the Craft and Design Centre?

S: I'm hoping so. I know with this study I'll get a voucher. I'm hoping that it will give me a reason to go in and get over my fear.

A: Yeah, I do feel like that a lot, obviously. You hear all this stuff on tv, on radio, it's all you read online and yeah, just feels a bit, yeah.

S: Yeah, so I've been doing that recently, places that I know will be doing distancing, where I know that they'll be doing frequent cleaning so I have to know these things in advance and have to know they take these things seriously in order for me to go there.

A: Yeah. And other than the Craft and Design Centre, because of the pandemic, how do you feel about visiting arts and cultural organisations again? Like you did mention before, for instance, music venues or any other arts spaces or cultural organisations, like Craft and Design Centre?

S: I really, really want to do it, I just don't know if I can yet. I know people are going to be restarting live music, but I'm also terrified of that experience because I know it's closed doors and it's not going to be the same way that I loved to experience music, which was with the energy of other people around me, I'm afraid of that not being the same.

A: So, not being the same in terms of how you will experience it or in terms of the act?

S: Yeah, and how comfortable I feel, will I be able to let my guard down and relax, or will it be a tense experience that will put me off it in the future, so I just don't know yet.

A: Yeah, it's still early days with the pandemic so it's hard to predict how it will go on in the future, especially. Right, okay, just now a question in terms of Covid-19 and the Craft and Design Centre, how do you feel that this whole Coronavirus situation will impact, and is impacting at the moment, the Craft and Design Centre, in terms of visitors, in terms of events, now and in the future?

S: I think it's going to be massively impacting it, you know, if you can't have as many people go into a workshop as you could because you have to distance them, I know that it means more work for the people who are doing the courses and the workshop, or you know, not getting enough, breaking even to make it worthwhile for the people, and with the sales too, you know, focusing more on an online presence, but with the high street shops and

everything shutting down, it's still important to keep those brick and mortar places so I do worry about those place disappearing.

A: So, do you think the online presence for the Craft and Design Centre could make up for the loss of the actual physical experience that people have there, including yourself?

S: I think it could help, but I would also hope that they could further promote the brick and mortar place, if that makes sense? I think if people know what's available and that there's more of the same thing available in the Craft Centre, they may be more likely to go. You know, you don't put everything online, I guess, but some items.

A: Okay, I think that would be all. Do you have any questions for me, anything that you would like to ask about the interview, about the project, anything at all that you would like to add maybe?

S: Nothing that I can think of.

A: Okay. Anything that you would like to add in terms of, you know, the Craft and Design Centre, your experience there, in terms of craft, making?

S: I hope that I do see more workshops in the future, I know they will be a hard thing to do but I would like to see those. Even if I haven't done one myself, I still check in sometimes to see if there's something there that I could do.

A: So, just to ask again, I don't remember if I've asked before: why was it that you didn't take part in the workshops in the past, was it because you didn't find it useful for you?

S: I felt like I could do it myself, I already knew how to do it or I wouldn't be able to do it at home because I wouldn't have all the materials to continue doing it at home, so it would be something that I could only do at the workshop, for instance.

A: Right, great. So, thank you so much for taking the time to participate in our project and for this interview. [REDACTED]

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