

A: Okay, perfect. I have some demographics questions to go through before we begin. Can you tell me first of all how you identify in terms of your gender?

V: Female.

A: And what would you say is your racial identity?

V: White British.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: Perfect. And how old are you?

V: 37.

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

V: 12.

A: Perfect. What would you say is your average spend at the Centre per visit?

V: Is that including food and drink at the café?

A: It can be, it can be from 0 to something.

V: Probably about £25.

A: And how much would you say your average spending is in other craft and design organisations or similar spaces?

V: Probably quite similar, I buy smaller items rather than larger purchases.

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

V: Yeah, I mean my employment since 2007 has been at an art gallery, I'm particularly creating and developing creative activities for children and adults, and vulnerable people of

all ages, really, so it's something that is not only in my education background and interests, but it's actually what I spend a large amount of my time doing and I'm very passionate about it, in particular, I suppose, it's also to do with the links between creativity and wellbeing. The area of work that I'm in is quite broad in the sense that there's a lot of different approaches, it can be more contemporary and fine art-based, and then there's also much more design, like interior design and (XXX 4:26) and then craft and, you know, including teaching people to do things that are purely for interest and more of a hobby level, so I have quite a broad and varied relationship with craft and creativity and making, and outside of employment, I do my own projects sometimes. I do print making, I do a lot of embroidery and sewing which also includes making dog coats. So, yeah, creativity is a massive part of my life and that's social as well, in terms of what I do with my time and the people I spend time with as well, we're all in a very similar, you know, professional, working and social environment, and in all areas of life, I suppose, in many ways.

A: You've mentioned that you do making yourself, and you've mentioned dog coats? How did you start making those?

V: It's literally something that I've just started to do because I couldn't find what I was looking for online, so I've just adapted something that I had already and I made a prototype and I've done it, and just kind of see how it goes. It's really just thinking that I had some skills back from a long time ago when I did textiles in school at A level, but I thought oh yeah, I probably got enough skill in the background somewhere to give this a try, and it worked alright so it just came from there.

A: That's really nice. You've also mentioned that you do some embroidery and print making, have you attended any workshops to learn how to do those things or was it something that you've picked up by yourself?

V: No, I think it was, I've done the print making for quite a while and now I do it every now and again, it's not something I do a lot of. No, I think it's from having quite a broad exposure to all sorts of different techniques that I feel able to be confident and try something new on my own and just, you know, you've got that benefit of being able to just look things up online, YouTube videos and that kind of thing. Yeah, I've just got that bit of confidence to give things a try, so I think yeah, the print making just, definitely haven't done a course on that; embroidery, using skills that I had from A levels in textiles, I did machine embroidery which is hand embroidery, but again, it's just using things that I kind of know the principles of. Actually, for this one I was using books because I've had some books that I got from the library for different stitches and done my own designs, and very much experimental, just doing to my own projects, not thinking of selling them or anything, you know.

A: Sorry, I think that sometimes you're moving away from your microphone and I can't hear you very well. Mostly I can, just sometimes I don't know if it's the microphone or the connection.

V: Right, okay. I'll try and keep really still, I won't move as much and maybe that will make a difference. Let me know if it, it may be the connection, I'll keep an eye on the connection.

A: Will do, sorry about that.

V: Do you want me to repeat anything?

A: No, it was the case that it wasn't that loud at some point, that's why I didn't know if I was losing you during our talk. That sounds really interesting and looks like you're working with different techniques as well. Was making something that was typical in your family when you were growing up?

V: Not in my immediate family, not parents. I have, a lot of my cousins are in very creative careers, but they lived in entirely different countries and they are quite a lot older, so didn't

really, probably wouldn't have come from them. I was always encouraged to be creative, but my parents aren't particularly.

A: You've mentioned that you've done some sewing when you were doing your A levels. Do you remember when you started picking that up on different techniques?

V: I mean we did textiles all the way through the school, from age 12 to age 18, so we were taught in a very structured way until I was 16, and then we were given a brief to respond to, I was the only one who took the course so I really was just exploring the things on my own from that point of view, there wasn't, yeah, I just remember working with the teacher very closely, obviously being the only number at the course, and she was very good at suggesting different things to try. A lot of the things I produced were quite patchwork mosaic of different techniques, put together to make a whole pieces, so in its nature actually, they were very experimental pieces that were a part of a whole, so that was what I did probably for two of the years, it was actually just trying things out, whether it's combination of different material or brand new technique, so yeah, probably some of the experimenting was age 16 to 18.

A: And I don't know if you thought of it in those terms but what does craft and making mean to you as a woman?

V: I think now, it means something that is actually quite (XXX 11:23) positive, so I've been working from home for the whole time since March, and since then I've been trying to do for a long time before March, was be more creative and do things that were purely for my own enjoyment because I definitely felt that that was an area of frustration where I know I am creative, I know I have skills but my day job is incredibly mentally draining, and the fact that I've been able to have a clear headspace through working at home has meant that I've now, this real surge in creativity has been, it definitely correlates with the lockdown months, which

I think is a really interesting thing to have happened, really, in a sense that we are in a very stressful and uncertain time, yet mentally I'm in a better place than I've been at work so, like physically, in the building, in a different way, so for me making craft, and actually, you know, I participate passively in a lot of craft-related social media, that's mainly what a lot of social media feed is, it's really quite craft-related, love ceramics, embroidery and glass. It's been something that has become incredibly valuable for me and I'm getting a lot of enjoyment, I'm getting a lot of personal reward, I'm getting a lot of inspiration and validation as well in some ways, something I was probably quite a lot because working in (XXX 13:33) when, as a person, I don't have a creative practice that I can talk about or demonstrate, so there's a validation that comes from that as well, I feel like I have a practice that backs up what I do for employment, so it's been a very interesting time and something I have, I can keep when things transition back to different working patterns, so yeah, craft has been incredibly important and yeah, it's been very good for my wellbeing.

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A: Have you ever bought any feminist art, or anything else that was more political?

V: No.

A: Would that appeal to you?

V: It's not what I go for in terms of my aesthetic, it doesn't mean that I don't support its message, absolutely not, but it's not something and, you know, I can picture, there's a few people that I can think of that I can picture now, it's more, it's nothing to do with the message, it's nothing to do with the content at all, it's, yeah, it's not something that I've been drawn to.

A: You've mentioned that it wouldn't be, I guess, in line with your aesthetic. What would you say your aesthetic is when it comes to craft?

V: Oh, it's quite varied really. That's an interesting one, in terms of handmade crafts, I tend to purchase ceramics more than anything, I don't know if that's maybe because when I think of some of the feminist art, a lot of it is perhaps more print-based and it's perhaps the type of things that I buy as well. What's my aesthetic? I've got a complete range of things, the colours, I guess colour leads a lot of my decisions, in blues, yeah, colour and texture. I'm not a very feminine person but some of the things that I buy craft-wise are probably very feminine.

A: In what sense feminine?

V: I realised I've opened an interesting door. Some of the things have got birds on, floral, blues, pinks, purples, massive stereotype and cliché, what else, a lot of animals, but then there's jewellery that I buy that is very minimal, very plain silver or brass jewellery, very geometric, got some ceramics that is monochrome and geometric. I don't know, you've raised a very interesting question, I don't feel like I can answer it.

A: It's hard sometimes to describe.

V: Yeah, I don't think my description does those things justice. So, I've got a handmade drinking glass here and that's very minimal, and I suppose I think what appeals to me, and I don't know if it's because I do make things and I have a very in-depth knowledge of particularly glass and some ceramics techniques, it's things that appeal to me first is their quality of finish and I suppose intricacy and its technique because there's the (XXX 20:24).

A: Sorry, I can't hear you, I only heard until intricacy and technique.

V: Oh sorry, I don't know, maybe it is the connection issue.

A: It sounds like you're far away because I can't hear you very well.

V: Oh, I don't know because I'm leaning right over my laptop. I mean I can change devices if that would help?

A: Let's see if it continues. Remind me what you said after intricacy and techniques.

V: Yeah, perhaps because it is that I can look at, particularly something made with glass or ceramics where I have quite a good understanding how something is made, but if I see something that I know is required a skill for and that's often quite appealing, and being able to see if something is really well finished, I've got appreciation for that, so I think technique is really quite important as well which is why I struggle to answer the aesthetic question so much, because actually the thing that draws me first to something is, obviously there is the



initial visual, colour and form, but then there is, because I can recognise techniques and the skill that's gone into it, and perhaps things that if you don't have that knowledge because not a lot of people work in glass, you know, it's inside knowledge, that's really appealing and particularly with glass, I suppose it's the same across a lot of techniques that sometimes the most simple looking things are the things that are most technically skilled, when you think of precision and then looking at the drinking glass that I've got here, it's clear, it's very straight-sided, it's got a swirl texture on it and that's it, but the skill is in having everything as perfect as it is, it's very thin and it's very consistent and it's one of the most precious things that I own, so yeah, I can't remember what your question was. Did I answer it? Sorry.

A: You did, thank you so much. Thinking about the Manchester Craft and Design Centre, how did you first find out about it?

V: I did my art and foundation course at Manchester Met museum and I grew up in a museum, University, sorry, and I grew up in Bolton so, you know, used to go to Manchester regularly for all sorts of different social, and then yeah, later when I studied at Manchester Metropolitan Uni, so I don't know how old I was when I first went but yeah, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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

V: Vaguely, but not much.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: Do you remember where you went, did you go to buy something or just to visit the place?

V: Mainly went just to have a look around, just to see what was going on at the time, and I definitely bought something and then I got in contact with the artist afterwards and got two more things to go with it because I regretted not buying some of those.

A: What was it that you bought?

V: Some ceramic tiles from [REDACTED], I believe they're still there?

A: Yeah.

V: I've bought one tile and then realised that more would look better, if there were two more with it together, so I think that was the last time I was there, so that was, and I probably, I mean I went with friends so between us, we would have (XXX 26:03) bought something, I'm sure.

A: Can you tell me a bit more about your visits at the Centre, you know, from the moment that you'd walk in, would you go to every studio, would you go only to specific ones?

V: I think almost every time I've been it's been with the intention of doing a full kind of loop around every studio, as much as it's open, and really kind of going with an open mind. I mean there are some artists that I'm aware of that have been there for a number of years, but I think because I go infrequently, I would deliberately go around everywhere because there would always be changes and I'm not familiar enough to remember exactly where everybody is and yeah, it's always a very deliberate visit with the intention of spending quite a long time there, just going around and spending a good amount of time, really, in most studios. I'm not going particularly for anything, so that means that I'm not looking for, you know, I'd probably look around most areas of every studio with quite an open mind, and then sometimes you go back to something that you saw earlier and make a decision or whatever.

So yeah, it's definitely something that I would class as a part of a day out, it's not a quick nip in for a kind of 10 minutes, it's a considered visit and probably would involve maybe having a drink or something to eat, that would be something that we would do as well there.

A: How long would your visits be?

V: If I was with other people, like I've said the last time I went with, I think there were 4 of us, we'd be there for at least an hour and a half, I think.

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

V: It would be a weekend, yeah, I think weekend.

A: You've mentioned that you've been there with other people. Have you visited alone or only with other people?

V: Probably almost always with other people because when I'm in Manchester I'm visiting other people, so it's something that we would have made a plan to do together, because that's the only reason I would be in Manchester. If I lived there still, I would definitely go alone but my circumstances mean that my motivation for being there is different.

A: Which one would you prefer, to go by yourself or with friends?

V: Ordinarily, I would, I suppose probably with friends; for other things I prefer shopping alone, but maybe for something like a craft centre, it's a nicer thing to share with a few of us, yeah.

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

V: Yes, people I was with the last time, I think one of them hadn't been before.

A: Where did you take them, why did you think it would appeal to them?

V: Because they're artists as well, they teach fine art at a college level.

A: Can you remember anything that has drawn your attention when you walked during one of your visits, anything that was, you know, that caught your eye?

V: In terms of, I mean I don't know if it's still there but I remember that there was (XXX 30:54) some beautiful ceramic pieces that were like spiral staircases, I think they were (XXX 31:05), they had a light inside and there were a few of those. I've loved seeing those because I remember seeing them for years. I think what catches my eye as well is when, I suppose it is the way you enter on the ground floor, but the display cases, all the window displays are obviously facing into the courtyard but they belong to other studios, they're doing their job, they're catching your eye but I suppose they are the things that you are drawn to first. I think the first thing when I walk in, it is just such a lovely atmosphere, it's such a lovely building, it's very nice, welcoming feel when you walk in, just that connection to the building itself that's not related to any one particular studio. Yeah, it's a place that I'm very fond of, yeah, that's my first, absolute first experience is the actual feeling of the Centre itself.

A: You've mentioned that it has a welcoming feel to it and that you like the building. Can you tell me a bit more about the building itself?

V: You mean just in terms of my feelings?

A: Yeah.

V: I suppose it's, in some ways I guess it's because whilst the studio owners would've changed over time and there's been adaptations, they've been relatively insignificant in the way the overall building looks and feels, because I go infrequently, when I do go in it feels largely the same so it's nice nostalgia to that and the fact that it's familiar, even though it might be quite a long time in-between visits, there's something nice about familiarity. I mean the bright airiness to it, I feel like there's some plants and things and it just made it feel really nice, and also, the fact that it seems to be so well run, so well cared for, there's a definite

pride in the way, I guess every individual but all the, you know, I don't know how it works but however the management and the operations of the building itself, you know, it just presents itself really well, everything does as a whole, I suppose, which is why I guess I keep going back as much as obviously the content of the artists' work.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A: How did you find the exhibition space?

V: I think, I'm trying to, I can picture where it is, don't know if it's, let me just double-check I'm thinking of the right space: it's on the, or it has been anyway, on the one, trying to think how to refer to it, but on the ground floor, kind of near one of the entrances?

A: Yes, next to the café.

V: Yeah, because I come in through that way. I don't know if it was more the kind of just walked past a little bit, because we kind of, because we were doing more of a deliberate studio to studio, just along the order that they are. I can't remember what was in it, I can't

remember if it was artist's work showcasing studio owner's work or if it was, you know, somebody else, somebody who wasn't a studio member.

A: That's okay. Can you tell me a little bit about the studios and how do you find them?

V: I mean I think it's a perfect set up in the way that they are, as much as possible they're always open and that you are, part of the experience is going in and the designer, maker is there, in the space, you know, doing their work and they're available to talk to. I think it works really well and the thing that I'm certainly comfortable with going in and just saying hello to people, but then have a look around and say thank you if I've got no questions; equally, you know, I'm quite comfortable talking to people and asking them questions, so for me it's really interesting and I like the fact that you can see the activity going on of (XXX 39:05) equipment, whatever. I think, I hope it probably really helps people understand value of things when they see how long something may take to make as well. I think about the, because I was thinking about the fact that there isn't an equivalent up here, there are lots of different artist's studios and a couple of times a year they have open studio events, and that's really popular but it's not typical, it's a one-off, so I was thinking it is so unusual to be able to have that completely open, working studio for people to come in and just have a look around. I think the number of them is really good, I think the fact that there's however many there are, 20-whatever, studios, that's also a massive positive for me because I know there's a lot to see, there's a lot of variety, there's however many different artists working together, producing all sorts of different things. I think that's a real positive, the number of studios that there are. Like I say, we go with the intention of spending quite a long time.

A: Can you tell me a little bit about your interactions with the makers, do you tend to ask them questions?

V: I don't normally ask that many questions, may be more kind of small talk conversation rather than questions so much, but I would feel comfortable doing so if I had something. I think it depends who I'm with, my mum is very chatty and she asks a lot of questions, so if I'm with her I probably talk less, so yeah, it maybe does depend a little bit who I'm with but I certainly feel comfortable being in that environment, even if I don't have anything particular that I want to know, it's not because I don't feel that I can ask.

A: You've mentioned before that you can appreciate how things are made and the technique. Do you ever ask questions about the process of making something that you're interested in?

V: Probably rarely and that's not to say that I know how everything is made because I don't, obviously, but yeah, probably not.

A: You've mentioned that you feel comfortable walking into the studios, so how do you feel when you walk in?

V: Just completely at ease, really. Yeah, just at ease and I think because it's familiar I know what to expect as well. I always make sure I say hello, but I think there's nearly always somebody who is there, you know, who says hello and gives you a nice welcome as you enter anyway, so you feel like you're allowed to be there, you feel like you belong, that you're welcome in, but I've also always found that it's quite nice that you're then just left to have a look around quietly. There's a good balance in that because I think that's actually something that is really important because I like to browse for a long time, and I think the fact that you're welcome to do that is quite instrumental in that feeling comfortable.

A: How do you feel about the diversity or lack of diversity in terms of who works at the Centre?

V: That's probably where I'm going to struggle to answer in terms of simply being able to recall individuals when it's been a while. The only thing I can say if it's, the North East is, I'd

imagine, less diverse than North West and Manchester, Manchester is probably more diverse than Newcastle, however, there is very little diversity in craft and design in the North East, and I'd assume it's probably underrepresented in the North West as well but I'm basing that on what I know from the work that I do with audience development, not based on anything that I've experienced in the Craft Centre. So yeah, I don't feel I can answer that fairly because it's, yeah, I just couldn't say.

A: From your work with audience development as you've mentioned, is there lack of diversity in terms of to whom it appeals, craft and design, and also to the makers?

V: Yeah, probably both. I think there's, when you're talking about ethnic background, there's very little diversity in craft and design in [REDACTED], I think the absolute majority of people who would spend money in that area is a very white audience, it's a very middle-class audience, still there is a lack of social diversity, in many ways it's a very exclusive area of the sector and I suppose that, yeah, in terms of the audience like other people in the Craft Centre that I've seen, they were probably of that same kind of demographic.

A: This is something that we've been observing as well with this project and who had reached out to us for an interview. How do you feel about the product range at the Centre? You've mentioned before that there is a lot variety.

V: Yeah, I mean I can think of quite a lot of different approaches and different media, and you know, even though there would be a number of people using the same, the number of ceramicists and printmakers, they're all different, they've got their own identities, that's quite clear. I think there's a really good range of different types of things and I don't know if that's something that is quite well acknowledged in terms of studios and that kind of thing, it works. However it's come about, I think the range is really good, it's really balanced and interesting, I've always found that there's quite a lot of, like I've said I spend probably around the £20-



£30 mark and there's always multiple things for my budget but there's also something for people who want to spend more.

A: You've mentioned your budget. Just wanted to ask how do you feel about the prices at the Centre?

V: I don't remember ever feeling that there was anything that was kind of different to what I would expect. I mean the fact that I buy things there often, yeah, I think, yeah, I don't recall thinking that anybody had priced their work really kind of overly high. I mean that's, yeah, I think I would have remembered if I found it shocking and outside of what I would expect, that makes me think that it seems like it was in line with what I would expect.

A: How do you feel, you know when we were talking about pricing in terms of handmade products versus mass produced products?

V: That's an interesting one because one of the things that I've just made, one of the embroidery things that I've just made, I was laughing to myself because if I priced that to sell and I priced it fairly, based on the number of hours it took me, it would've been the most ridiculously high price for what you have looking at in front of you, and I gave it to my friend as a present and I, you know, I've actually said to her this is the least commercially viable piece of embroidery ever made, so I really appreciate the time that goes into things, and if anything, there is probably a lot of work there, like for almost all artists there would be some things there that are probably under-priced for the time it took to make them, I'm sure there would be.

A: How do you feel about the handmade products that you own?

V: Oh, I love them, and I treasure them, and I put a lot of pride on the fact that I own handmade things. One of the things that I kind of, not promised myself because it's not strict, but I, as much as possible, I like to only wear handmade jewellery and things that I think are

unique, they are things that I've chosen, that are quite often the only one that is exactly the same, and the things that I, I don't buy a lot but I buy things when I really, really love them and I think because of that, I really love the things that I've got and things that I have out on display or jewellery that I wear, that I genuinely still really love and appreciate. Sorry, kind of forgotten what your question was.

A: You've mentioned the jewellery and that you promised yourself only to buy handmade jewellery. Why jewellery specifically?

V: I suppose because that's in some ways maybe the most affordable and the most, trying to think of a word, I suppose because it's not a necessity and the fact that, let me try and think. You can buy mass-produced jewellery for a couple of pounds in any shop, but I would like to, you know, I could spend, every week I could buy something but I wouldn't like it as much, I wouldn't keep it as long; I'd rather spend £40 on a pair of earring and buy 2 or 3 pairs a year and really, really love them and wear them for years, than have something that I care less about and won't like as long, so I suppose the jewellery thing is probably the easiest thing to do that with. You know, I would love to have handmade, I've got this handmade glass, got a few more, I would love to have only handmade glasses, only hand-thrown ceramic mugs, that's a very different financial commitment, you know, (XXX 53:36) mug the other day and it wasn't that it was incorrectly priced, it was £30, but I can't justify spending £30 on a mug because you need several mugs, I suppose that's the thing, but because jewellery is the thing that I can not buy mass-produced things and save up or put money towards handmade things, I suppose that's the first thing and it's the easiest for me and my position as, you know, I earn a decent wage but I don't have that much disposable income because I live on my own, you know, I don't have a lot to spend on non-essentials, so what I do spend, I spend very wisely.

A: Thinking again about the Craft and Design Centre, have you attended any events or workshops there?

V: No, I haven't.

A: When you visit, have you taken any photographs?

V: Can't remember doing so, probably not.

A: Maybe of things that you've bought?

V: I've got photographs of the things that I've bought, yeah, like when I got home.

A: Do you normally post them online, or do you just send them to people?

V: Probably not posting them online, no, probably not. Oh actually, I might do, yeah, but to be honest, when I last went it was probably that I wasn't using those social media platforms as much as I am now, and I was using them in completely different way, so I probably didn't when I was last there but I think I probably would in the future, if that's probably the point you're trying to differentiate between.

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

V: Yeah, I follow their Instagram and I follow quite a lot of the individual artists on Instagram as well. I like the tone of their Instagram, I don't follow anything else, just the Instagram, but I like the tone of it, it's upbeat, it's personable but it's still an organisation putting forward its offer to everyone who is consuming that.

A: You've mentioned that you also follow some of the artists? How did you decide to follow them, what did appeal to you?

V: Most of them are ceramic artists, I think, from what I can remember, I think they're nearly all ceramic artists. I think like I've said before, majority of work that I buy is probably ceramics so the things that would appeal to me are the things that I would potentially buy in the future, and in fact, I contacted one of them the other day through her Instagram account to ask about purchasing a piece, so yeah, it's kind of, it's with the view that I would buy something at some point, even if it's not at that time when I decided to follow them.

A: What was the piece that you've asked about?

V: It was a ceramic planter. I didn't buy it because it was smaller than what I was looking for, so it was simply that the size was wrong, but I can't remember the name of the artist.

A: That's okay. Have you bought anything else from them online?

V: From that artist?

A: In general, from anyone at the Craft and Design Centre, or maybe directly from their Instagram?

V: Not recently.

A: Can you tell me a bit about your favourite studio? Do you have a favourite studio at the Centre?

V: I mean I've bought most from [REDACTED], I've got 5 pieces of his work, yeah, so I suppose yeah, he would be mine.

A: Why is this your favourite studio?

V: Because I like birds and he features birds in a lot of his works, probably. In fact, his work might've been the work that's kind of, shapes the things that I buy, I think I've got the first piece of his work probably 10 years ago maybe, yeah, and I like birds. One of the pieces of

embroidery that I'm working on at the moment is of a bird, the prints I've done have birds in, so I think it's the birds.

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

V: One of his bowls.

A: Why is that your favourite?

V: Had it a long time. At the time I got it, it was probably the most expensive thing that I've purchased that was handmade, I think, so it was quite a big deal. Again, I've had that quite a long time. In fact, I think I might've had the other ones longer than 10 years now, might've had the bowl about 10 years. Yeah, I think it was when I got my first house and I was starting to invest in things that were very personal choices, so it was then a bit of a change in direction of decisions I was making and choices I had about things in my home.

A: Have you bought anything else during your visits that stands out?

V: I've got a little, from [REDACTED], I've got a little knitted cactus that I love, it's tiny, little knitted cactus, I love that, and bought some for presents for other people and they've been a nice little, it's cute and I love it. It's a little thing and it wasn't very expensive, but that's not the point.

A: I've seen those, and they are adorable, and I have one. You've mentioned that you've bought some presents. Why did you decide to buy presents from the Centre?

V: I suppose because they are things that are unique, a lot of the people I would buy things for are artists or people that are interested in art and craft, and would appreciate having something that was handmade and individual, and actually like I've said before, there are things at prices where you can find something that is, I don't come from a family or a friendship group of people that would give big, extravagant, expensive gifts; we give

thoughtful gifts, and there are things that are, there are hundreds of things from the Craft Centre that would fit that bracket.

A: I don't know if you've ever noticed them, but have you ever used the donation boxes at the Centre?

V: I can't remember either way, sorry.

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

V: Yes, because I understand what goes into running things and how funding works, so yeah.

A: Do you recall any examples of where you have donated?

V: I mean that would be more local to up here, don't know if that's relevant. There's the Baltic Contemporary Art, or museums, yeah, if I go to a free museum or a free art gallery, I would donate.

A: You've mentioned that if they were local that would appeal more to you, why do you think that is?

V: Oh no, sorry, I just meant that my examples would be local to here.

A: Ah, that's okay, I thought that if it's a local organisation you would be more likely to donate, sorry.

V: No, no, it's okay, although I mean it would, I'd be more likely to donate to a smaller, independent organisation, but yeah, that's kind of splitting hairs.

A: You've mentioned that you are more or less aware of the challenges that those spaces are facing. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

V: I suppose it's, trying to think, you know, for instance where I work, I know that the percentage of donations that we try to achieve per head versus what we actually get per head,

which is less, I know how much things cost to run, (XXX 65:47) funding often comes for specific things, doesn't necessarily cover running the building, repairing its roof or (XXX 66:02) and I guess somewhere like the Manchester Craft Centre, it's an older building, it would have high repair costs, that kind of thing. I think what I would be drawn to if there was an explanation as to what donations are used for, that would impact my decision to donate more, or whether or not I would (XXX 66:37), for instance if it was gonna cost us £15,000 to replace the roof or something.

A: Yeah, to know exactly how the donation would be used.

V: And I think sometimes that's not always the case.

A: Would you be more or less inclined to make a donation at the moment, with the pandemic and everything that's going on?

V: I'll probably be more inclined, yeah.

A: How has the pandemic impacted your engagement with the arts?

V: Interesting because, and this is slightly on a side note, I don't know if you've heard of [REDACTED] who have been doing a weekly survey about arts engagement? So I've been participating in that (XXX 67:43) and actually, I haven't participated in that much actively, in terms of I haven't signed up to do any online workshops or stuff like that, but what I have done is being more passive in my arts engagement, that's part of the reason why I spend more time on my creative-only Instagram and I barely use Facebook and I don't use that much Twitter at the moment because of what I get most benefit from is looking at things that are craft and design-related, because they are less stressful, so I'm getting huge benefit from seeing what artists are doing, what makers are making and, you know, for no other reason that I find that really interesting, I find it quite a nice way to just scroll through something without any need for interaction, you know, when you've been behind a computer screen and

you're working from home on your own and that kind of thing, like I want something that I'm very passive in it. What I have got is loads and loads of different designers and makers that I follow and find very interesting and genuinely (XXX 69:21) things that they've made.

A: You've mentioned that you've been working on a survey on audience engagement as well. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

V: It was something that started in, so I've just been a participant in it, and then yes, that's a weekly thing and I don't know if it's just in the North East or they're based in the North East anyway, yeah, I was a participant, (XXX 70).

A: Sounds very interesting as well, especially if it's a weekly thing. Do you have any plans to visit Craft and Design Centre again when they reopen and you're in the area?

V: Oh, I definitely will when I'm (XXX 70:29), yeah, that's kind of doable to do so, yeah.

A: How do you feel about visiting those kinds of spaces again?

V: I think that feels relatively safe, I think in some ways there's benefit in the studios being relatively small, that makes it really easy to control how many people are there, so I would feel much more comfortable going somewhere like that than I would with a shopping centre for clothes or whatever, you know, I would feel extremely more comfortable in terms of me being somewhere like that. I think if I'd be nearer, I would be going sooner (XXX 71:35) I'm not that close.

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

V: No, but I think that's probably just because the likelihood of my visit is based on other things (XXX 72:01).

A: Sorry, what did you say?



V: Sorry, I wasn't quite sure my answer. I don't think it will impact my decision to visit, partly because I do go in infrequently but I think [REDACTED]

A: How do you think the pandemic will impact Craft and Design Centre and other similar spaces in terms of visitors, events, in the short term and in the future?

V: It's very difficult to know. I mean, in some ways it would probably be quite a lot of people who would be regular visitors, who like myself can see there's benefit to the studios being small, individual rooms, really. I know that's something that is quite easy to understand and make a decision on whether it is the space or not, so I really do hope that actually, it's one of its strengths over other places; for the individual artists – I don't know, I suppose the impact on them is going to vary, everybody is in a different situation, some people's work may be more saleable and they've been able to post it out, some people's work may be too fragile, you know, I would hope that it could be in a, I mean I definitely see its benefits in the layout over other places. I think one of the things that I'm professionally uncertain about is other people's decision making and I work in a venue that isn't going to be open until October, so we still don't know what to expect, how many people are going to come and everything changes so quickly that it feels very difficult to make an estimate or an informed decision of what it may look like, it's still so many weeks away and there'd been some things that are opening up from lockdown that have really surprised me and then there'd been some thing that really shocked me and it's just so difficult to predict and understand people's motivations for things. I don't know.

