



**BIRMINGHAM CITY**  
University

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## **BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY RESEARCHER EXPLORES RACISM IN THE UK CRAFTS SECTOR**

**People of colour working and creating in the UK's craft sector have been hit by racist behaviour and micro-aggressions, new research has found.**

Studies carried out by a Birmingham City University academic has uncovered how people have been made to feel like outsiders in professional craft, with initial findings highlighting racialised incidents in craft spaces such as fairs and studios.

After conducting research in the UK for two years in collaboration with Crafts Council, creative industries researcher Dr Karen Patel has secured follow-on funding worth over £200,000 from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to expand the studies globally, which will include work in Australia focussed upon social enterprises, community organisations and exploring inclusivity practices.

“During my research and interviews with craft workers, I have met creative makers who say they have felt dehumanised by some of the experiences they have encountered,” said Dr Patel.

“Many participants have further realised the unacceptable nature of such behaviour since the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement.”

‘We don’t want brown people here’, one craft maker was told at a fair in the north-east of England, whilst others reported being interrogated about their religion, with one maker being asked ‘You’re not a Muslim, are you?’ by a fellow studio holder.

According to Crafts Council, there are an estimated 129,000 people working in craft occupations.

“Craft has become so popular now, but it is incredibly tough to work in craft and particularly if you are from a marginalised group,” added Dr Patel.

The experiences of makers of colour in the craft sector can be heard in the Maker Stories podcast series produced during the first phase of the project.

Rosy Greenlees, Executive Director at Crafts Council said: “This is an important study, and we are privileged to be a Birmingham City University partner. The findings inform our commitment to use Crafts Council programmes of activity to promote a different narrative: one that challenges institutional racism and inequality and one that champions social justice.”

Dr Patel will discuss her research highlighting the lived experiences of makers from ethnically diverse backgrounds in UK craft at an online event with Crafts Council on 29 June.

For more information and to book tickets, visit [www.craftexpertise.com](http://www.craftexpertise.com)

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Birmingham City University, Press Office

Tel: 0121 331 6738

Email: [press@bcu.ac.u](mailto:press@bcu.ac.u)

### **About Birmingham City University**

With over 26,900 students from around 100 countries, we're a large and diverse university set in the heart of Birmingham with a focus on practice-based learning.

For more information on the BCU visit [www.bcu.ac.uk](http://www.bcu.ac.uk) and follow @mybcu

### **About the Crafts Council**

The Crafts Council is the national charity for craft. We believe craft skills and knowledge enrich and uplift us as individuals and can change our world for the better. Through our activities we inspire making, empower learning and nurture craft businesses.

We do this by:

- championing craft and its positive impact on society by showing diverse examples of craft and making, and by reaching new communities who have previously felt excluded from our activity
- increasing levels of craft education and participation by equipping and connecting craft educators, and by campaigning for craft on the curriculum
- growing the market for craft by supporting craft businesses and providing leadership to the craft sector
- building a sustainable and inclusive craft sector by providing support, and by listening to new and existing stakeholders in order to co-create relevant and impactful activity

We want to share our power, work with others, and increase the agency of our communities in order to create an inclusive and thriving craft sector.

For more information on the Crafts Council visit [www.craftscouncil.org.uk](http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk) and follow @CraftsCouncilUK on Twitter and Facebook

With over 24,000 students from 80 countries, [Birmingham City University](http://www.birminghamcity.ac.uk) is a large, diverse and increasingly popular place to study. The University puts students at the heart of everything it does, giving them the best opportunities for future success.