



Crafts Council

Press release

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UK NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BODY SEEKS TO BOOST THE MARKET FOR BRITISH CRAFT IN THE US POST COVID LOCKDOWN

New Crafts Council Market for Craft Report highlights the appetite to collect handcrafted objects in New York City and LA

The first report to identify and gauge appetite for British craft in the US, the Crafts Council's new Market for Craft Report reveals that a passion for handcrafted objects has never been greater in the metropolitan cities of New York and Los Angeles:

- 70%+ of adults living in these urban hubs bought craft from a living maker in 20193.
- Over 4 million consumers in New York and LA have previously bought craft from a UK-based maker
- It's an active and young market, with half of craft buyers Millennial and Gen Z

The British Crafts Council is now lobbying its government to get behind this opportunity as restrictions lift and to support the industry with a series of targeted export interventions.

The report was commissioned by the Crafts Council among 1,500 US citizens and implemented prior to the COVID pandemic. At the same time the Crafts Council examined the state of play for British craft in its home territory among 5,000 consumers and 1,700 UK-based professional makers⁴. The report has been subsequently layered with a further Crafts Council survey carried out among 573 UK-based makers post national lockdown, which spotlights the grim challenges the sector is facing right now.

The joint findings will be utilised by the Crafts Council, in collaboration with the Department of International Trade, to support the overseas growth of a creative sector predicted to generate over £3 billion for its domestic economy alone in 2020.

In 2016, the USA was the third largest market for UK craft, accounting for £517m or 11% of total UK exports⁵. The export potential for the UK craft sector is highlighted - 2.5m people in New York and 1.7m in Los Angeles have purchased craft from a UK-based maker, but a further 6.9m across the two locations said that they would be likely to buy UK craft in the future.

The shift to collecting craft among a younger demographic in New York and LA echoes the UK and is prompted by wider trends that are likely to accelerate as a



result of the pandemic – the rise of e-commerce, investment purchases over throwaway objects, and an interest in sustainability and supporting small businesses over the mass produced.

The US market report uncovered that consumers of UK craft are highly educated (58% graduates), ethnically diverse (50% non-white), balanced between the genders and are most likely to acquire objects from Etsy (53%) and 76% have made their purchases online. Galleries, stores and fairs are also important shop windows.

Both American and UK-based buyers enjoy purchasing British jewellery and ceramics the most. Americans also regard the country's glass and woodwork highly – while UK consumers are more likely to be fans of its jewellery and textiles. Jewellery is the most popular discipline by volume overall and objects handcrafted from glass and metal have seen the most sizeable growth in popularity since 2006.

The craft trend sees no signs of abating – Netflix's *Blown Away* reality TV series featuring a glass blowing competition was a runaway success last year and sellers of craft supplies are now seeing a surge in sales during the current pandemic.

New Yorkers and LA residents are also creative - 90% have participated in a creative pastime during the past 12 months and half (48%) have attended a craft class or workshop in the past 12 months. They recognise the time and skill required in making craft – it's the number one reason current collectors acquire, and potential buyers are most likely to say they simply love beautiful objects.

Many have a personal connection with the UK (especially in New York) through relatives and ancestors with a quarter (24%) stating they buy craft from the country because it provides a sense of connection with their heritage.

Rosy Greenlees the executive director of the Crafts Council:

“The report provides valuable evidence to understand more about how best to stimulate, support and grow the British craft market in important conurbations: who's buying craft, what they're buying and why, how big the market is, how routes to market are changing, and what kind of infrastructure can best support it. The combined retained and untapped market for UK craft in New York and LA equates to 9.6m adults which is welcome and promising.

“The findings are unveiled at a time when a quarter of British makers are facing a negative impact from Brexit on their business and more are in a precarious situation in a post-pandemic world. The majority of makers reported an annual profit of less than £30,000 from selling their work so, even before the pandemic, it was evident that the industry needs support in becoming economically sustainable. Our more recent COVID maker survey was sombre reading: orders are down by 67% with further losses anticipated and 60% of artists makers have low or zero financial reserves.

“Our first step will be translating the findings into actionable learnings for our craft sector, helping them build a richer picture of different consumers and their habits and interests in order to foster flourishing trading relationships. Lobbying our



government and sector support organisations to help the industry survive and then thrive is top of our agenda, including assisting in the co-ordination of a UK-wide craft export programme to build on the potential of the USA market.

The 100-page Market for Craft report will be made available via the Crafts Council website and includes in-depth profiling of receptive consumers and buying trends. The national development body will also continue to be in dialogue with craft intermediaries (galleries, fairs, markets, retailers) to better understand evolving needs and to give them a voice.

Continues Greenlees: “Upskilling makers to be equipped for the new world is a priority and the Crafts Council is reviewing our sector training offer with a focus on digital marketing and e-commerce. Alongside this, we will continue to invest in our owned digital platforms to provide a window to talent and to help craft makers engage with new audiences.”

Further key findings from the Market for Craft Report include:

- Over 4 million consumers in New York and LA have bought craft from a UK-based maker in the past two years - so it's an 'active' market.
- Half (54%) of US consumers are willing to take a risk and buy craft from an unknown artist maker, compared to 44% in the UK.
- Existing and potential craft buyers in New York and LA are more likely to browse face to face than their UK counterparts. Purchases are most likely to be made at craft fairs (41%), a gallery or craft centre (38%) vs online marketplaces (24%) or websites selling craft (21%).
- Online platforms have fuelled much of this growth: Etsy dominates but one in ten of existing consumers have purchased from Folksy and further sources include gallery online shops and individual makers' sites.
- 76% of those who bought UK craft have made purchases online compared to 33% of Londoners
- New Yorkers and LA residents are also more likely than their London counterparts to buy direct from makers (US - 27%, London - 22%) and the Crafts Council is looking at mechanisms to signpost/direct all to makers.

-ENDS-

Editor's notes

1. The Crafts Council Market for Craft report was carried out among 5,000 UK-based adults, 1,500 New York City and Los Angeles based adults and 1,600 UK-based professional makers between January and February, 2020 by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre www.mhminsight.com
2. Defining 'craft' as original handcrafted objects by professional artists makers includes ceramics, furniture, jewellery, metalwork, textiles, glass, basketry, paper and many stand-alone unique pieces of work realised using technical expertise in a plethora of materials.
3. 70% of adults living in New York and 73% of adults in LA have bought craft from a living maker in 2019.



4. Partners. Arts Council of Wales, Contemporary Visual Arts Network, Craft Northern Ireland, Craft Scotland, Crafts Council, Creative Scotland, Creative United, The Goldsmiths' Company, Great Northern Events/Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair partnered to survey the UK.
5. In 2016, the USA was the third largest market for UK craft at an individual country level, accounting for £517m or 11% of total exports of UK craft, with only France and Switzerland recording higher sales

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About the Crafts Council

The Crafts Council is the country's foremost authority on contemporary craft in all its forms. Founded in 1971, its role as guardian and champion of national craft practice has evolved to include exploring and enabling new possibilities, making methods and technologies. Its work is made possible by the support of trusts and foundations, individual patrons, and corporate sponsors, and through public funding by Arts Council England. www.craftscouncil.org.uk

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