



REVISIONING MCAD Report

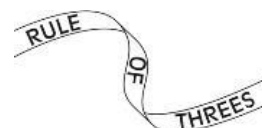
Manchester Craft & Design Centre
July 2021

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

Rule of Threes were commissioned in early 2021 to support MCAD to establish a new vision to underpin a route-map for both post-Covid recovery and future development, and ensure focus on core purpose, enabling strategic approaches to new opportunities.

An early recommendation of positioning of MCAD as a Values-led organisation was incorporated into the process, which included benchmarking, desk research, key internal and external consultation, a provocation document and collaborative visioning exercise.

1.2 Situational Analysis

- The MCAD building is the organisations greatest asset but isn't fit for purpose. A key site within Manchester's Northern Quarter, with resonant history and enormous place-making potential, it has importance in the minds of the people of Manchester and stakeholders alike: but nostalgia hampers clarity of thinking and the organisation is in service to the space, rather than the other way around.
- MCADs resident makers are its lifeblood, but relationships are not working as they should. MCAD must establish a new basis for relationships with resident makers that is dynamic and mutual. Makers will need different support structures to help them to diversify and develop during this phase of recovery. This also creates space for change.
- Craft is potentially the most democratic artform, but the way that it is presented and experienced at MCAD can appear monocultural and inaccessible. MCAD was initially established around a paradigm of the artist-maker that is no longer sustainable, or for many, desirable. MCAD must fundamentally orientate itself around an inclusive framework, or risk losing all relevance in a post-pandemic city.
- MCAD is trying to be all things to all people. The current scale of operation is insufficiently resourced to deliver even against all its current objectives, roles and activities satisfactorily. MCAD needs to intentionally scale up or scale down and adapt organisational structure accordingly.
- MCAD needs to understand and assert its role in the cultural ecology. MCAD should take a pragmatic approach that is asset-based and partnership focussed, looking outwards, addressing its place and relationships in its immediate locality and the city.
- MCAD's planning and operations have been led by an evolving set of Business Drivers that themselves creates tensions: MCAD should shift, instead to being led by clear, shared Values, adopted by all engaged in the organisation and articulated to its publics.

2. Mission, Vision, Values and Strategic Objectives

2.1 Mission statement (defines our business)

MCAD is Manchester's space for craft, community and making.

2.2 Vision statement (desired future position)

We promote craft in all its forms, expanding the definition and relevance of craft for everyone. We nurture and develop emerging and established talent, support viable creative careers, and showcase innovative and ambitious craft practices.

MCAD is a place of enterprise, production and creativity and reflects the rich diversity of Manchester's 21st century communities. We welcome everyone to experience and engage with making and our creative community. We safeguard a space for everyday creativity in the heart of the Northern Quarter and look outwards beyond our building.

2.3 Values

All of our work will be developed through the lens of equality and environmental sustainability. These are intrinsic values placed at the heart of our decision-making.

1) Welcoming

We welcome all who wish to visit, work and learn with us. We aim to create spaces that are vibrant, social and safe. We base our plans on listening to our key constituencies, creatives and diverse communities and pursue ways to make our work more useful and relevant to more people. We actively seek to remove barriers to participation and leadership for those who might be excluded from our programmes, activities, staff team and governance.

2) Transparent

We behave with integrity and accountability around our decisions, programmes and strategies. We passionately believe in equality of opportunity and the value of craft and making in the world today. We look outwards for partners and projects with shared values.

3) Supportive

Our approach is compassionate and people-centred, in our dealings with our creative community, staff, audiences and collaborators. We work towards shared wellbeing with everyone we encounter. We embrace our civic role to take action on social injustice and climate change, and improve our local area.

4) Empowering

We seek to inspire and support creative and sustainable ways of living and working. We create opportunities for visitors to experience and participate in the positive power

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of making. We support creative careers and skills development, particularly for those with the least advantage and opportunity.

5) **Vibrant**

We support artistic, creative and entrepreneurial risk. We are confident and capable of making change. We are an innovative, listening and learning organisation, accumulating and embedding knowledge. We are energetic and well networked, generous in sharing our learning, and actively advocate for our sector.

2.4 Strategic Objectives

Following the Rule of Threes work, MCAD's Board and CEO distilled the actions proposed in the initial report into four Strategic Objectives linked to the new Mission, Vision and Values. These will also inform MCAD's work and strategic development:

1) **Create space and activities for craft and community to flourish**

- Shared values
- Creative contributors, staff, partners and stakeholders
- Local community – wellbeing, diversity and inclusion
- Both in and beyond our building

2) **Nurture and celebrate the talent of practitioners and makers**

- Developing diverse talent
- Bursaries
- Strategic partnerships including higher education
- Next generation makers

3) **Be a powerful advocate in our sector and to funders for craft and making**

- MCAD's regional and national profile
- Creative programming and outreach
- Everyday creativity, health and wellbeing

4) **Ensure financial, social and environmental sustainability for MCAD**

- Leadership and people
- Business planning & commercial activity
- Fundraising and income diversification
- Capital improvements
- Post-Covid-19 recovery and resilience

3. Methodology

Rule of Threes were commissioned to support MCAD's Director and Board leads through a process that would establish and articulate a new vision for MCAD at a critical time, that could underpin a route-map for both post-Covid recovery and future development, that would help to address entrenched issues, and ensure focus on core purpose, enabling strategic approaches to new opportunities.

The consultants worked with the Director to design a process based on the original brief set out in the tender, which hinged upon use of a provocation document intended to disrupt habitual thinking and focus on the day-to-day issues that hamper capacity to imagine new modes. The process was also adapted to incorporate an early recommendation of positioning of MCAD as a Values-led organisation to solve 'internal' issues and assist in decision making via future direction.

The revisioning process consisted of two phases:

Phase 1. Consultation and Research

Desk review of materials provided by MCAD regarding current operations, plans and evaluations

Benchmarking of Models and Precedents

A typology of different kinds of organisations engaged in the promotion, development and support of contemporary craft to identify models and exemplars of good practice. (Data, Appendix 1)

Resident Maker Survey

All resident makers were invited to complete an online survey. The results were used as a benchmark for deeper consultation and to provide a baseline of opinion and experience from the maker point of view. (outlined in Section 3.2 and data in Appendix 2)

Two online group Workshops with Staff and Makers.

Phase 2. Provocation and Visioning and Values

Situational Analysis

Provocation Document & Delphi Panel (Data, Appendix 3)

Vision and Values session with Staff and Board & online Values consultation with wider Board (Data, Appendix 4)

Formation of Vision and Values

Proposed Objectives and Action Plan (Section 6)

3.2 Resident Maker Survey

An online survey was opened to all resident makers to consult them regarding their current experiences, needs and wants as a baseline process.

Key findings:

Makers valued the creative work environment and networking opportunities. They liked the opportunity MCAD provides to interact directly with customers. They also valued having studio space and shop space within a beautiful centre. A key theme was also being part of a maker community.

“The opportunity to make, sell and provide workshops in a well-regarded centre, in a beautiful space with the support and company of other makers”

“People! The makers and our customers”

“feels like part of a team and there’s a prestige attached to it”

The most effective parts of the support and opportunities provided by MCAD were identified as:

- Support of other makers
- Professional development opportunities
- Peer learning
- Direct selling

“Contact with like-minded makers has been effective as regular contact makes you feel you can ask advice, see what other are doing and make sure that you’re not missing opportunities”

“selling direct means, I get feedback. Galleries and other outlets do not get this. To meet and grow relationships with customers which informs future work and encouraging commissions”

It was felt further development could improve:

- Marketing Support
- Communications within the centre
- Opportunities for commissions

“The main part of the centre is us the makers.... a lot of the marketing strategy isn’t aimed at supporting the makers and encouraging high end craft buyers to attend the centre”

As creative business owners the makers who responded to the survey felt that MCAD offers:

- The chance to meet other makers
- A beautiful building to work in

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- Ability to sell direct
- A space to design and make
- Strength from being part of a large organisation
- Being part of a community that promotes and supports each other.

Makers articulated frustration around the ability of the organisation to be responsive and make change due to lack of money and compromise that can stifle creativity. In addition it seems that the Maker's perceive some difference in agenda between their own interests and those of the MCAD charity.

Makers felt that MCAD's support offers:

- provided help and advice, including funding applications
- filters and provides information from funders such as Arts Council England
- created solid space to experiment and explore
- sometimes tended towards generic business support rather than creative or craft-specific development
- were valid and useful, but were difficult to take up because they were not designed with a clear understanding and accommodation of the time constraints for individual maker-businesses

3.3 Provocation & Delphi Panel

Informed by the consultation process, a provocation document was prepared for sharing with MCAD's Board, and a "Delphi" panel of invited guests with expert knowledge of MCAD's work, context and artforms.

The paper set out, alongside the situational analysis, a range of potential future forms and purposes for MCAD that could be adopted, in their entirety or in combination. These were all hypothetical, intended to invite discussion around intentions, ambitions, activities, outcomes and models.

The Board session confirmed a number of areas of clear commonality as follows:

Who MCAD and its' work should be for: Local People and Makers

The potential of MCAD as an active agent in the local and city ecology was a priority with a strong desire to assume a civic and community role

The specialness of MCAD as a place for making and seeing making in action is vital to its form and future purpose

The Board believe that the current retail-centred model is not viable, without adaptation and new strategy

"The Centre cannot continue to exist if it is thought of as just somewhere to nip to for a last minute gift! If it can only survive as retail, it must be the most wonderful emporium of items to suit all pockets."

The paper was adapted to reflect the Board's views before being shared with the expert panel with a set of key questions which formed the basis of the "Delphi" panel session.

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The panel offered a range of perspectives that emphasised MCAD's importance and potential strategic role for Craft in the North.

Strong consensus emerged as follows:

MCAD primary focus should be to support Makers and craft sector then local people/people of Manchester:

"What is missing from Greater Manchester is a venue exhibiting and selling high end work by leading artist-makers of national significance"

MCAD's building's symbolic importance in terms of the Northern Quarter as a place for creativity has power and value:

"There is something special and essential about a place dedicated to making and craft"

"The heritage of making in the NQ – MCAD is part of the area's history of being an alternative space where start up and creative business is still possible"

There is potential for MCAD to strongly affirm and utilise craft and making as a democratic artform, and to centre this in the organisations positioning, artistic and operational thinking:

"A place to see, imagine, try out a different or alternative way of living - a point of resistance to the idea of capitalist or speculative land values"

That MCAD needs to prioritise and embed anti-racist and inclusive action in its future structures.

MCAD could and *should* articulate a greater sense of ambition for its role in the regional and craft ecology:

- MCAD should aim to be a "Northern powerhouse" for craft
- There is a need for leadership in the sector and MCAD is best placed to provide it
- MCAD should aim to fill the gap of being "a consistent bar-raising place" for craft development and visibility, for both the public and creative producers:

"The north needs contemporary craft representation, championship and promotion in the way that the Crafts Council provides nationally. MCAD could become the northern hub, representing northern cultural and heritage organisation and providing a regional voice on a national and international stage/scale."

4. Vision and Values Exercises

Nine Staff and Board members took part in a Values exercise through an online workshop followed by an online invitation to participate asynchronously.

Vision

A Board and Staff group took part in a facilitated online session that invited them to imagine their hopes and aspirations for what key stakeholder and audience groups would say and feel about MCAD in 10 year's time. These statements were used to test and affirm the directions emerging from the research and consultation work. These ideas have directly informed the articulation of the proposed vision statement.

Values

In the provocation document, Rule of Threes proposed that MCAD become a Values-led organisation.

Through consultation with a number of different stakeholder groups (Board, Staff, Makers, Stakeholders and Peers), key ideas and descriptions arose often repeatedly as Values that MCAD holds, or should aspire to embed within the organisations operations.

These are grouped in themes below:

<p>Relating to Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally relevant • International • Reflecting the city • Community-informed • Connected • Welcoming • Diverse 	<p>Attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible • Porous • Caring • Welcoming • Social • Inspiring • Inclusive • Accessible • Democratic • Welcoming • With Integrity
<p>Approach to the work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk taking • Experimental • Excellence • Innovation • Visionary • Activist • Sustainable • Aspiring • Talent centred • Dynamic 	<p>Art-form focussed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurial • Authentic • Original • Valuing the handmade

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Participants were invited to highlight, select and prioritise the values that resonated most with them and their ideas of how MCAD currently operates and should operate in the future.

In the session, the following values were highlighted with most regularity:

Welcoming 7; Caring/Compassionate 5; Inclusive 5; Inspiring 5; Authentic 4; Entrepreneurial 3.

Experimental, Dynamic, Sustainable, Community-informed, connected, creative, democratic, diverse, excellent, international, locally relevant, with integrity all were mentioned once or more.

The session led to detailed discussion of the meanings, importance and relevance of these concepts for MCAD that were synthesised and presented as a set of proposed values. These were then refined further by staff and Board members into the final five values.

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5. Revisioning Action Plan

Rule of Threes created a plan of potential actions that were reviewed by Board members to feed into the subsequent business planning process:

Objective 1: Create space and activities for craft and community to flourish	Short term	Medium term	Long term	To be decided / not pursuing
Shared values	<p>Prioritise and restructure internal communications.</p> <p>Improve formal and informal communication channels between makers, MCAD management team and Boards.</p> <p>These should be purposeful, action-focussed, consistent and intend to build mutual trust and co-operation.</p>	<p>Bring clarity to contractual relationships between MCAD charity, enterprise, and resident makers</p> <p>Develop strategies hand in hand with the existing maker community ensuring that their creative input is valued and that it is viable for them to participate</p>	<p>Create new social contracts focussed on vision and values and what each party brings</p>	
Creative contributors: sustainable businesses	<p>Review opening hours in line with trends in retail and footfall</p> <p>Assess and test the viability, opportunities and constraints of opening on Sundays, evenings where possible</p> <p>Review the Creative Business Development programme in consultation with resident makers to ensure relevance for mid-career practitioners</p>	<p>Develop high end digital storytelling that supports a “commercial gallery” approach to sales and development</p> <p>Support the development of new and diversified methods of income generation for makers</p> <p>Support maker-led projects offsite to increase visibility and awareness</p>	<p>Add capacity to MCAD staff team to enable a full-time role to support enterprise and “pastoral” support</p> <p>Role assumes a brief for enhancing the flourishing of the collective as well as individual makers through joint and strategic projects</p>	<p>Develop further digital capacity creating an online sales point (or shopfront) that encompasses products from all resident businesses.</p> <p>Consider an in house retail outlet model that enables purchases at different price points and by a changing selection of Manchester Makers to complement the range offered by resident makers and encourage regular repeat visits.</p>

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<p>Creative contributors: mid-career makers</p>	<p>Understand the conditions that mean mid-career is a point at which makers need support in order for practice and business to retain relevance</p>	<p>Development a programme of opportunities in house</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Curatorial and Maker studio visits, talks and workshops ● Mentoring ● Exchanges and visits ● Time and space bursaries ● Incoming residencies <p>Build imaginative partnerships with industry and cross-sector to support the creation of new opportunities for established and accomplished makers</p>	<p>Develop a pipeline of connections and scheme with galleries and museums to acquire and commission work for permanent collections</p> <p>Develop a network of craft collectors</p>	
<p>Local community – wellbeing, diversity and inclusion</p>	<p>Identify and build key community relationships to establish reciprocal and mutual development</p> <p>Work with local partners and stakeholders on environmental and climate change initiatives</p> <p>Revise Audience Participation and Marketing Plan with a focus on diversity and inclusion</p>	<p>Increase local awareness and engagement with local visitors</p> <p>Further actions tbc during business planning process summer 2021</p>		

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Objective 2: Nurture and celebrate the talent of practitioners and makers	Short term	Medium term	Long term	To be decided / not pursuing
<p>Develop diverse talent to ensure MCAD's creative community reflects the diversity of Manchester's population</p>	<p>Engage with craft / cultural sector initiatives to understand the barriers for participation in the making community for people of colour, disabled, and all protected characteristics.</p> <p>Implement pilot projects and models to support diverse makers, and rigorously evaluate to ascertain their potential to address the barriers identified.</p>	<p>Develop a positive action strategy to address barriers identified through sector research and MCAD pilot projects</p> <p>Identify key partners and develop relationships with groups / communities that better reflect Manchester's diverse population</p>	<p>Devise and trial longer term approaches to identifying, cultivating and supporting makers from a wider range of backgrounds.</p> <p>Build partnerships and knowledge to ensure that these strategies can be evaluated, maintained, adapted and replicated.</p> <p>Continue to nurture community partners and relationships for long term impact</p>	
<p>Strategic partnerships including higher education</p>	<p>Generate a new talent pipeline through partnerships with HE modelled on reciprocal benefit to include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Awards ● Studio bursaries ● Shared and collective studios ● Subsidised starter spaces ● Exhibition and showcases ● Shop/outlet opportunities ● Space, support and resources for post graduate projects 	<p>Utilise the skills, knowledge and capacities of the resident maker community to support talent through placements, internships, and supporting the building of partnerships</p> <p>Connect with and complement national and local talent development projects (eg Crafts Council, Enterprise Nation, Castlefield Gallery, Islington Mill)</p>	<p>Advocate for and support initiatives on Craft and Making in education such as (Ceramic Biennial/Crafts council)</p>	

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<p>Next generation makers</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for non-professionals to explore or begin their practice through workshops, professional development, and enterprise support</p> <p>Develop partnerships with FE as well as HE across GM to create education progression routes</p>	<p>Develop frameworks and projects through which people might come to crafts careers and enterprise later in life, through routes other than art school and traditional, multicultural crafts</p>	<p>Support the establishment of diversified, collective, and socially-driven models or practice and business</p>	
<p>Objective 3: Be a powerful advocate in our sector and to funders for craft and making</p>	<p>Short term</p>	<p>Medium term</p>	<p>Long term</p>	<p>To be decided / not pursuing</p>
<p>Regional and national profile</p>	<p>Utilise exhibition space and capacity for active public programme, and showcasing new talent, keeping the space fresh, inhabited and fluid</p>	<p>Develop exhibition and artistic programme that is not limited to the capacity of the building</p> <p>Programme occasional showstopper events and projects at the centre to draw a wide audience</p> <p>Develop partnership exhibitions & events of national calibre and interest</p>	<p>Develop a commissions programme that creates exceptional developmental opportunity for artists and audiences including work for public space, takeovers, community collaborations and digital</p>	

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<p>Regional and national profile</p>	<p>Relationship analysis: evaluate existing partnerships and networks, identifying potentials for growth, synergies, gaps.</p> <p>Review and prioritise existing partnerships</p> <p>Continue to host, lead and build the North West Craft Network to support collective advocacy and voice for craft</p> <p>Commit to active participation and presence in city wide initiatives including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Manchester Cultural Leaders Group ● MAST ● What Next 	<p>Build presence in national networks based on reputation of key staff and organisation</p> <p>Explore, build and maintain mutually beneficial partnership models with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural Sector spaces and organisations ● Universities & FE <p>Develop robust, ongoing, trusted key sector partnerships resulting in opportunities for makers (joint commissions, exhibitions, programmes, resources, PhDs) talent pipelines, and joint research programmes.</p>	<p>Develop cross-sector partnership models in relation to health, community, heritage and city-wide models</p>	
<p>Creative programming and outreach</p>	<p>Develop an audience development strategy that aims specifically to widen participation, aligns with Let's Create and diversifies visitors and participation</p> <p>Work with partners and local communities to co-create programme and projects</p> <p>Design a public programme that</p>	<p>Take an iterative approach to evaluating audience development and public engagement</p> <p>Build on what works, review and adjust</p>		

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	achieves the objectives of the strategy including offsite projects			
Everyday creativity, health and wellbeing	<p>Open out the offer of the space to host everyday making groups, reading groups, and other relevant community/self-led activity</p> <p>Deliver free and affordable family friendly activities inside and outside the building</p>	<p>Increase levels of participatory activity that connects professional practitioners with everyday makers</p> <p>Explore health and wellbeing partnerships e.g. social prescribing</p>		
Objective 4: Ensure financial, social and environmental sustainability for MCAD	Short term	Medium term	Long term	To be decided / not pursuing
Leadership and people: Governance	<p>Undertake skills audit of board based on new organisational structure, vision and future capital.</p> <p>Review and refresh Board terms of reference</p> <p>Recruit new trustees to address skill and capacity gaps based on ability to support change; set and agree monitoring measures and targets for organisational development and change.</p>	<p>Implement governance systems that support active engagement and working: Task and Finish groups or portfolio approach to drive forward the new ambition.</p>	<p>Create a more nimble and dynamic organisational spirit, which can flex and adapt to business needs and artistic environment</p>	

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<p>Leadership and people: staffing</p>	<p>Review Organisational model and develop a fit for purpose organisational structure which is based on skills and roles needed to deliver the new vision</p> <p>Consider additional short-term leadership support to assist change management process.</p>	<p>Review Staffing structure; suitability of job roles and functions and gap analysis.</p> <p>Review suitability of leadership structure</p> <p>Build capacity and make resource to enable the undertaking of capital works programme</p>		
<p>Business planning and commercial activity</p>	<p>Undertake a financial review to create a fully costed plan which reflects the new ambition</p>	<p>Develop a resource plan, underpinned by a funding and action plan to deliver business development plan</p>	<p>Develop communications and marketing strategy and implement across all areas of MCAD business</p>	
<p>Fundraising and income diversification</p>	<p>Create a simple, streamlined monitoring, review and evaluation plan that generates data to support social, economic and artistic impact claims.</p> <p>Develop a fundraising plan based on a mixed income approach that ties together capital ambitions, business strategy, talent development, audience and public programme</p>	<p>Secure and invest in fundraising capacity focussing on supporting core costs, leadership and audience development work.</p>	<p>Embed fundraising across the organisation</p>	<p>Implement a Development Committee of Board, Staff and Stakeholders to support Fundraising, Networking and Development</p>
<p>Capital improvements</p>	<p>Review options and opportunities for capital development that draw on all aspects of the centre's value</p>	<p>Develop a proposal for capital development that marries with the new vision and ambition</p>	<p>Utilise Manchester Covid Recovery Plan to underpin arguments for initial feasibility and development fundraising</p>	

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	<p>Swift review and analysis of previous capital plans and funding applications</p> <p>Review with MCC about options for asset transfer or joint applications for capital works.</p>	<p>Ensure a capital plan is collectively shaped by stakeholders including resident makers</p> <p>Seek external funding support via AHF/HF for initial work.</p>		
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