



## Susmita Pujara

### Abstract

This is an arts-based participatory experience for up to 40 people which asks critical questions about 'evaluation' in intercultural arts and educational settings. Flowing between four modes of conference presentation: a paper – performance – workshop - discussion it is inspired by a/r/tographic sensibilities. Thus the session will be divided into three sections (artist, researcher, facilitator). The purpose of this session will be: (1) To reflect through creative methods on the issues which currently face evaluators, educators, artists and researchers in intercultural arts and educational settings; (2) To place the arts at the centre, as its own research methodology: from issue framing, through reflection and analysis to culminating in a performative discussion and dissemination; (3) To raise the status of affect, experience and the participatory in intellectual discourse; and (4) To re-imagine traditional presentation modes which locate knowledge in specific sites, (and not in others) in order to foster more inclusive, interdisciplinary and playful means to participate, connect and reflect. Using Performance as methodology and arts as research, I begin the session by offering a series of performed provocations on 'Evaluation'. In an effort to engage in an embodied way to the subject matter and elicit affect, I will draw upon a variety of media. Juxtaposing the researchers' voice (auto-ethnographic reflections, scholarly writing, spoken word, movement, song) with participant testimony and artworks, I will 'stage' critical questions concerning voice, power and cultural sensitivity in evaluating socially-engaged intercultural arts practices. The provocations emerge from my Masters research at Cambridge, which was a phenomenological study on Care in an intercultural arts intervention with survivors of trafficking. By raising participant voice in the evaluation agenda and revisiting arts as a valid, rigorous knowledge base– the provocation also hopes to resist the hegemonic voice of evaluation agenda setters in this age of measurement and instrumental cultural policy making.

### Bio

Mita Pujara is a dancer, performer, researcher, facilitator and evaluator. Having collaborated on many Theatre for Development initiatives for the British Council in Kenya, India and Palestine (1998-2011), she also directed long-term arts interventions with young refugees in London for Pan Intercultural Arts from 2000-2008. In 2011, her focus shifted to evaluation and research in the field of arts for social change, working with funders, commissioners and arts organisations in the UK (Project Oracle, Living Words, Comic Relief). In 2013, after 18 years practice in the field of socially engaged arts, she began an MEd (Arts, Creativity, Education and Culture) at Cambridge in order to research underpinnings of transformative arts practices. Her thesis explored theories of Care in

intercultural arts interventions with trafficked women. In 2015, she co-founded The Evaluation Project a collective of socially-engaged artist-researchers, evaluators and academics who engage in performative and scholarly critique of current evaluation issues.