

## Associate Artist - Susan Merrick

I am a multi-disciplinary Artist interested in conversations, language and power, in questioning whose voices are heard, and in the access and spaces that can challenge or facilitate this. Over the past six years I have been awarded five project grants from Arts Council England to run projects focused on making more voices visible in and around my local community. Research is a huge part of my practice and I have been investigating how social engagement can form the basis of research for practice, especially a 'local' practice. Engaging with people, organisations and audiences, the dialogues that come out of this are not only far more illuminating than research solely being an abstract element of practice, but it also informs further debate, research and potential social change. The other main aim of my practice is access into the 'artworld' and into art practice, with a focus on class. What barriers are still in place? How do we challenge these? And how ultimately do we do things differently to restructure what is considered the art world and art practice?

With a background in BSL/English Interpreting and Sociology I make work, projects and collaborations exploring the above themes, utilising a context-based mix of social engagement, live art, photographic performance, film making and space making.

Key to my work is: language, it's use, conversations, the spaces that allow these to happen, the voices that are hidden and how we access these; power and how language affects and is affected by this; and access, how we hear other voices, who hears our own, how art reaches audiences and how do audiences reach art and artists?

I have exhibited nationally and internationally, performed at Colchester Arts Centre, Toynbee Studios and Leydon Gallery and my residencies have included the National Archives, Platform 1 Gallery, Floating Island Gallery and Chapel Arts Studios. I have been awarded project grants from Arts Council England for 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. In 2019 began the Woman Up! podcast series with Amy Dignam of Desperate Artwives in association with the Women's Art Library, Goldsmiths.

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