



Ethical Practice in Participatory Arts

Why attend this Master Class?

Ethics is at the heart of everything we do as participatory or collaborative artists, but it is an area we often have to navigate alone. During busy project delivery there is rarely space for us as artists to explore the ethics of our own practice or to reflect on the ethical dilemmas thrown up by the contexts in which we operate. For those of us developing and managing projects, the needs of our funders and stakeholders and the fundraising/delivery/reporting treadmill can get in the way of tackling the more fundamental questions that underpin our work. This masterclass will provide the space to stop for a moment and explore the ethical challenges pertinent to our work in a supportive environment with our peers. It will enable participants to become more self-aware in their practice, more able to discern an ethical approach and more conscious of the key debates within our sector.

For the past ten years Collective Encounters has been at the forefront of ethical practice in participatory arts in the UK. Its unique combination of an academically-driven research lab with hands-on delivery in some of England's most marginalised communities, means we've grappled with ethics from all angles. The session will be delivered by the company's Artistic Director and Creative Producer, who have between them 40 years of experience; and who firmly believe that ethical practice is the bedrock for high quality participatory and collaborative arts.

The training day

The day will involve peer-education, group learning and tutor presentation and will be structured around a series of action learning sets. It will share academic research, theory and practical experience; enabling participants to explore new ideas and relate them to their own work.

We will begin by exploring the core ideological questions that underpin our work:

- **Community:** What do we understand by community? How do we use the arts to bring people together, bridge difference, heal divisions, shatter stereotypes, without glossing over problems, defining people with restrictive labels, or seeking an idealised notion of community?
- **Change:** Who do we want to change and why? Who sets the change agenda? What's wrong with the transformation principle? Is large-scale change possible or desirable? How do we measure change?
- **Power:** Who holds the power? Artist? Facilitator? Funder? Organisation? Participant? How do we seek a more equitable distribution of power in our collaborative and participatory arts practice?

We will move on to address some of the more practical questions beset by ethical quandaries:

- **Instrumentalism:** How can we reconcile our work with the social inclusion/big society/liberal policies of funders? How far can/should art be an instrument or tool?
- **Research:** how do we gather stories from potentially vulnerable people, shape material and create art works in an ethical way?
- **Evaluation:** Who is driving the evaluation and what are we trying to get out of it? Whose voices are reflected and how can we make sure we are honest?

Finally, we will tackle some context specific questions:

- **Setting:** What are the ethics of working in non-arts spaces, such as a care home, a homeless shelter, a detention centre?
- **Partnership:** How do we navigate ethics when working in partnership with several agencies with different needs, interests and agendas?

Participants will be provided with excellent learning materials to take away; including notes from the day; references for further reading; and relevant Collective Encounters' policies and publications.