Charming the Systems: Arts Methods for Intersectional Dimensionality in HEIs

Dr. Miranda Matthews, Goldsmiths University of London

How can arts methods enable students to confidently gather all their dimensions together in HEIs? This presentation will explore how arts methods and making processes bring together experiences from diverse origins, and how the discussion, documentation and distribution of art objects offer 'charms' for dimensionality and intersectional belonging in HEIs.

The research I will present is mixed practice-based and qualitative, relating to theoretical positioning and findings in my book *Arts Methods for the Self-Representation of Undergraduate Students: Sensory Transitions into University Cultures* (Matthews 2023). In this book I explore entangled issues arising for students in underrepresented groups in UK HEIs, connecting with the voices of academics working with arts methods in Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England. My *Sensory Transitions* research is transdisciplinary, focusing on how arts methods are integrated in humanities and social sciences. I propose 'dimensionality' as a positive way of exploring fluid identities and self-representation, moving along axes of racialisation, class and gender (Cho et al. 2013, Collins 2019, Crenshaw et al. 1995, Hall 2018, Hickey-Moody and Wilcox 2019, Matthews 2023).

Connecting with the story of change emerging from *Sensory Transitions* research, this presentation will focus on how journies into and beyond higher education can be 'charmed', or re-enchanted (Bennet 2001). I will argue that the making of art objects, and taking part in creative processes, bring in affect, embodied identifications, spirituality, cultural histories, and sustainable environmental connection.

The presentation will then discuss new-materialist and indigenous approaches to art 'charms' as intra-agential objects. The research creates ways of envisioning learning selves as contributing to 'motivational assemblages' (Matthews 2023), and equitable arts economies (Centre for Arts and Learning 2023-24). My argument offers evidence for the beneficial contribution of arts practice to sustainable dimensionality, with confident celebration of all fluid and resolute self-identifications.

Biography and Contact Details

Dr Miranda Matthews is an artist educator, researcher and author. Miranda is Head of Centre for Arts and Learning and Associate Head of School for Professional Studies, Science and Technology at Goldsmiths, University of London. Miranda has researched and published on agency and intersectional self-representation (2018, 2023), motivational artist teacher practices (2019, 2024), affective digital presence (2021), educational philosophies and ecologies in practice (forthcoming 2024, 2025).

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