

Engaging people in audience research at Wellcome Collection

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Conventional Summative Evaluation (Evaluating Evaluation findings)

- ‘Objective’ and ‘scientific’
- Official objectives and measures
- Detached/add-on/chore
- Tends to confirm what is known or anticipated
- Formal reporting to staff
- Limited, predictable (boring) range of techniques – surveys, observation, ‘learning’
- Organisational constraints
- **Low impact on practice**

Creative Investigation

- Impressionistic, iterative, rich, nuanced
- Staff members' own interests
- Led by in situ visitor behaviour
- Discovers what's there, whatever that is
- Participatory and adds to experience of visitors or staff
- Feedback loops to staff
- Promiscuous techniques
- **Higher impact on practice?**

Researched dozens of possible techniques

Used:

- Comment boxes
- Post-it takeover
- Staff Ethnography

Strand of work on communicating with staff

Coincided with change to main visitor research contract and wider desire to engage staff, eg Unpacking Day rather than fat reports

Embracing formal evaluation

- Engaging staff early in the design of objectives and what we mean by ‘depth of engagement’
- An ‘immersive day’ for the partner company
- Blending traditional quantitative with innovative qualitative work
- 6 month presentations of our ‘story’, with an accompanying infographic slide deck – no PDF reports
- **A recognition of what we need to know and having the right questions with the right research area (formal or Creative Investigation)**

'Unpacking' everything

Creative
Investigation

opinion leader
Formal

Facilitated discussion

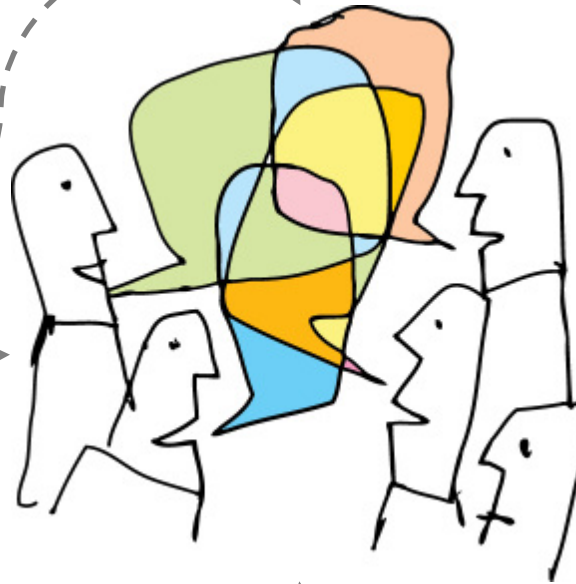
Online

Benchmarking

Staff expertise, opinion, observation and discussion

**welcome
collection**

ALVA



2 hours, “stalls” of staff sharing information, light-touch prompt cards and facilitated discussion: “I think this form of workshop is useful and it provides a focus where its possible to explore different audiences” – participant, December 2015

Comment boxes

Four designs of card

Prompts based on
staff interests
expressed prior to
new spaces opening



Did any aspects of the Institute of Sexology make you...

- ♥ Blush
- ♥ Feel warm
- ♥ Wish you were somewhere else
- ♥ Feel aroused
- ♥ Shocked
- ♥ Anything else

Please explain



Seven penises

Seven faces

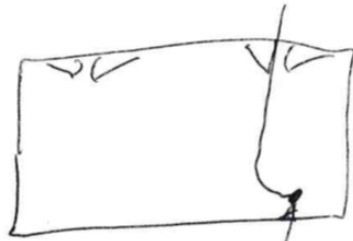
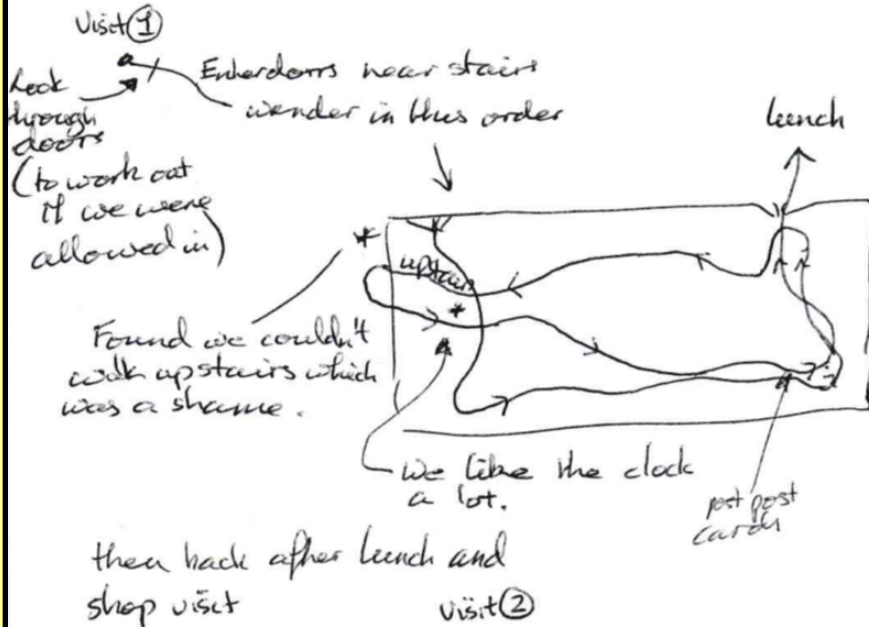
Five Hearts

(One drawn around one of the penises)

Three pairs of breasts

One vagina

- We'd love it if you drew us a timeline of your Reading Room experience today



drawing this now

Set on stairs and read and magazines & newspapers.

↳ looked at all bookshelves

I then plan to read some books if I find interesting ones, or maybe the Borges book I bought...

↳ left @ 8:45 pm

Post it takeover

Popular with visitors – looked and thought harder, noticed different things, some interaction with other visitors' comments

Individual comments not that illuminating

As a whole, perhaps gives a sense of visitors' inner monologues, relatively unmediated



Several colorful sticky notes (pink, yellow, green) are attached to the wall to the left of the painting.

The Woman in Black
By Peter Paul Rubens
1630
Oil on canvas
100 x 120 cm
The woman is depicted in a state of distress, her face contorted in pain. The dark background emphasizes her figure and the dramatic lighting.

A cluster of colorful sticky notes (pink, orange, blue, green) is attached to the wall between the two paintings.

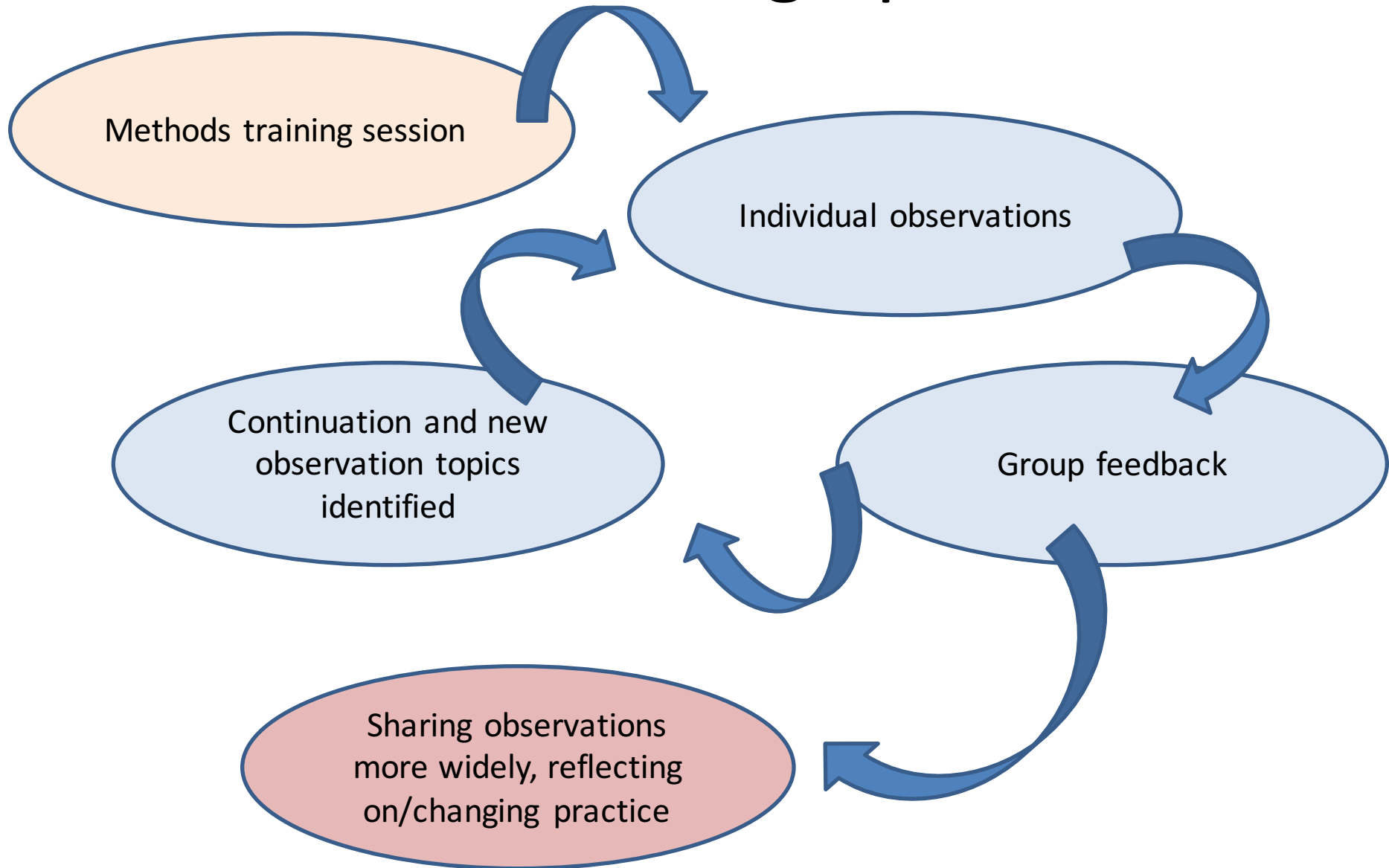
A Study for Rembrandt's 'The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp'
By Peter Paul Rubens
1632
Oil on canvas
100 x 120 cm
This study shows the artist's focus on the anatomical details and the dramatic lighting of the figures.

2



The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp
By Rembrandt van Rijn
1632
Oil on canvas
146 x 113 cm
The painting captures a moment of intense study and learning, with the figures' faces illuminated by a single light source, creating a powerful contrast.

Staff as Ethnographers

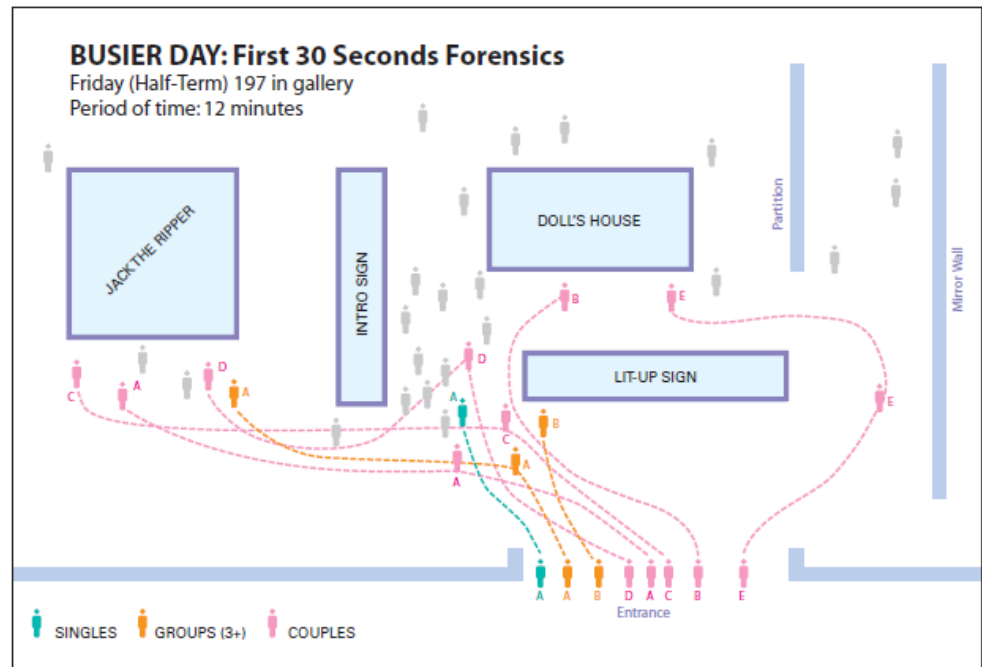
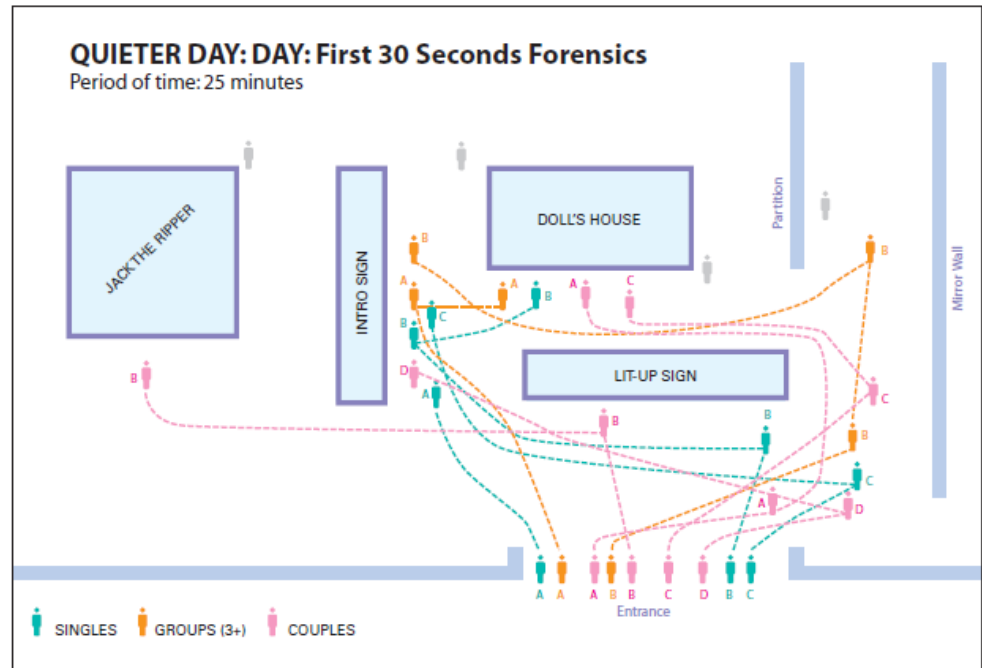


Training

- What routines and practices seem to inform the way visitors engage?
- What activities and knowledges do they draw on?
- What are the intuitive practices people rely on?
- Start with small, taken-for-granted actions
- Record observations in a field notebook, followed by reflections ('comments') alongside
- Then focus and observe small things in more detail
- Try to see things without bias or preconception

Individual observations:
Sarah B

Entrance behaviour



Individual
observations

Staff impact

Visitor Experience Assistant Actions:

- Engage or not?
- Positioning of body
- Gestures
- Eye contact
- Effective chat-up lines

Individual
observations

Other themes

Visitor engagement with interactives:

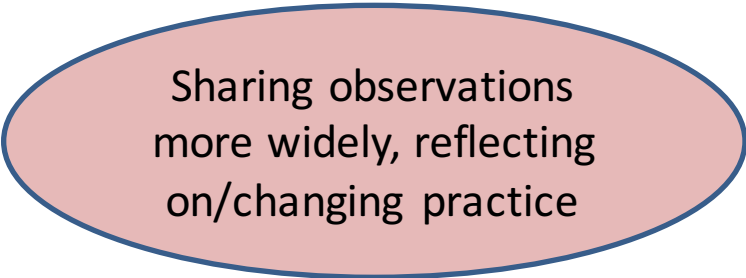
- Participatory artwork
- Different ways of presenting video

Couples behaviour

Reading Room routes and patterns

Group feedback

- Sharing insights from our chosen focus topics
- Confirmation of 'common' experiences
- Changing working practice in light of observations
- Space for refining and reflecting upon how we work



Sharing observations
more widely, reflecting
on/changing practice

- Reading Room initial 6 month report
- Spot in evaluation un-packing workshop (events, curatorial, library, wider Trust)
- Language and framework to discuss in-gallery experience
- Support to expand work – PhD?

Challenges

- Office-based staff allocating time
- Safe space to engage curators
- So much data, so little time – PhD?