

EVALUATION OF CLEAN BREAK OPEN LAB
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

ARTWORKS LONDON

March 2014

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1 DESCRIPTION

1.1 Introduction

ArtWorks London collaborated with Clean Break Theatre Company from June 2013 – March 2014 to develop their open lab. Clean Break used the Pit Lab to experiment and explore their practice freely, to support the development of its Leadership Training Programme. The two main content areas are:

- Helping to create exercises to understand the experiences of women with experience of the criminal justice system.
- Helping to create exercises to understand Clean Break's theatre making practice with women with experience of the criminal justice system.

For two decades Clean Break has been responding to requests for bespoke training focused on a range of specialist areas for different professionals, including Youth Offending Teams, educationalists, mental health and criminal justice staff. The intention of this Open Lab experience was to provide an experimental environment to support the development of this training programme and the artists delivering it.

In contrast to the majority of other Open Labs, this Lab took place over 4 days, in two different venues and across two weeks. On the 24th and 26th February Clean break worked in the Skylight Centre in Highbury and Islington. On the 03rd and 04th March Clean Break worked in the Pit Theatre in the Barbican Centre. 5 artists attended this Lab. These weekends were intended for artists working in theatre, with women with experience of the criminal justice system.

Similar to the majority of Open Labs there was no assigned 'leader'. Anna Hermann, the Head of Education at Clean Break, drove the organisation of this event. Participants were requested to contribute the following;

We would like all participants to spend some time thinking through their theatre making toolkit and about the exercises and activities that they use in their theatre making and their creative training work. How do you build a group? How do you explore issues? How do you ensure the space is safe and how do you take risks? How do you bring out participants creativity? How do you manage challenges? Think about exercises that work well and why. Think about exercises that you like and those you don't like and why.

The question for ArtWorks London is, can the Open Lab environment support the development of a training programme designed for a specific context?

2 EVALUATION

2.1 Introduction

We received 5 responses, a 100% response rate. Our methodological approach was quantitative, we received 5 responses to a survey which sought to explore how successful the Open Lab environment is in supporting the development of a context specific training programme. Our survey design provided the opportunity for a qualitative response in the form of open questions.

2.2 Process

Respondents were generally very positive about the process with 100% of respondents stating that they definitely found the experience enjoyable, special and different from other events, and 100% of respondents probably or definitely found the project well conceived.

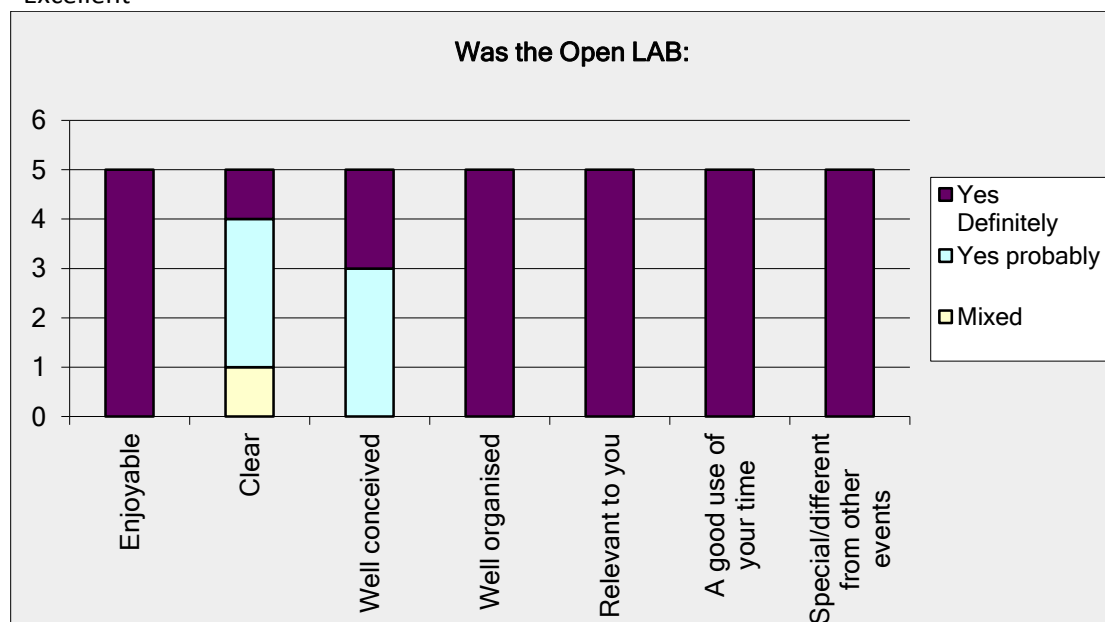
The cross arts professional development opportunity was perceived as enjoyable, well organised, well conceived, a good use of their time, relevant to them and special/different from other events.

Further comments;

"Quite a particular unfamiliar and free experiential way of working - 4 whole days to experiment!"

"Spontaneous"

"Excellent"

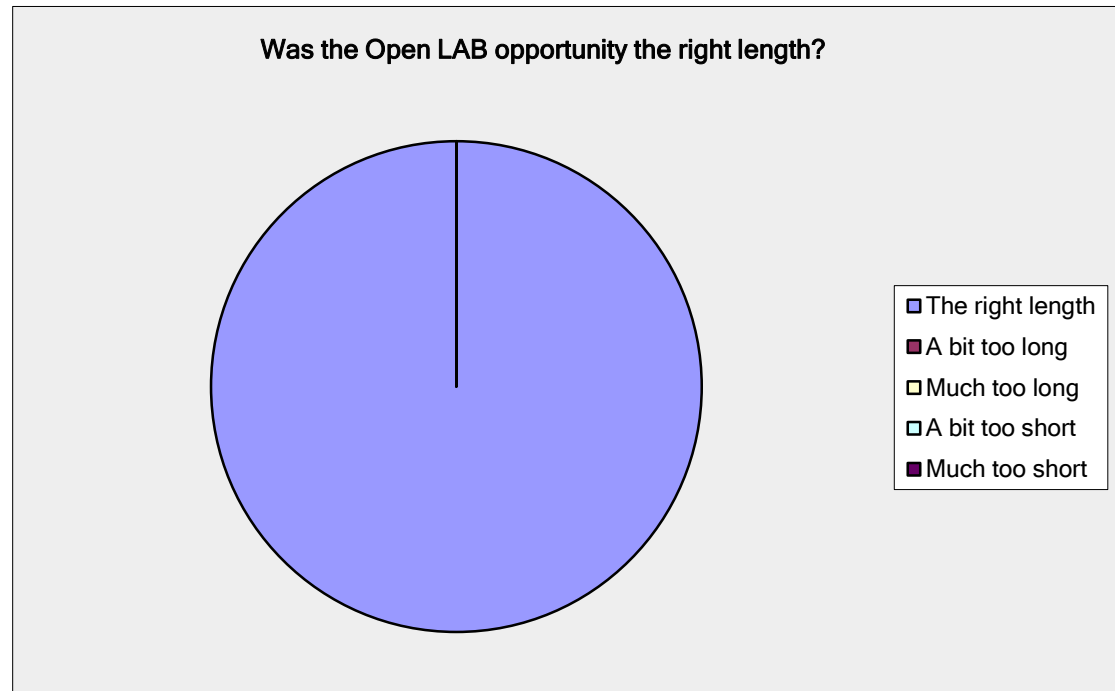


Respondents were incredibly positive about the length of the Open Lab experience with 100% of respondents citing that the seminar was at the right length. It is important to note that the Open Lab was unusually split over two weeks and was 4 days as opposed to 5 days. This decision was made due to the availability of the artists. In this case the flexibility of the Open Lab model was successful.

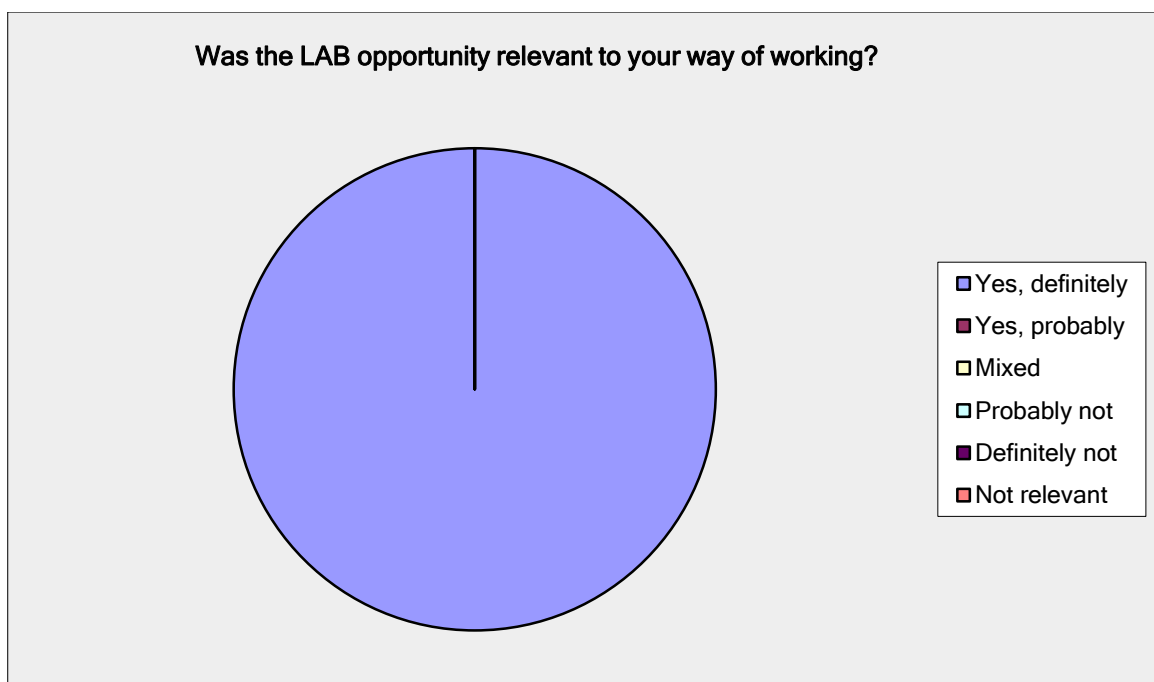
Further comments confirmed this statistic;

“Yes perfect”

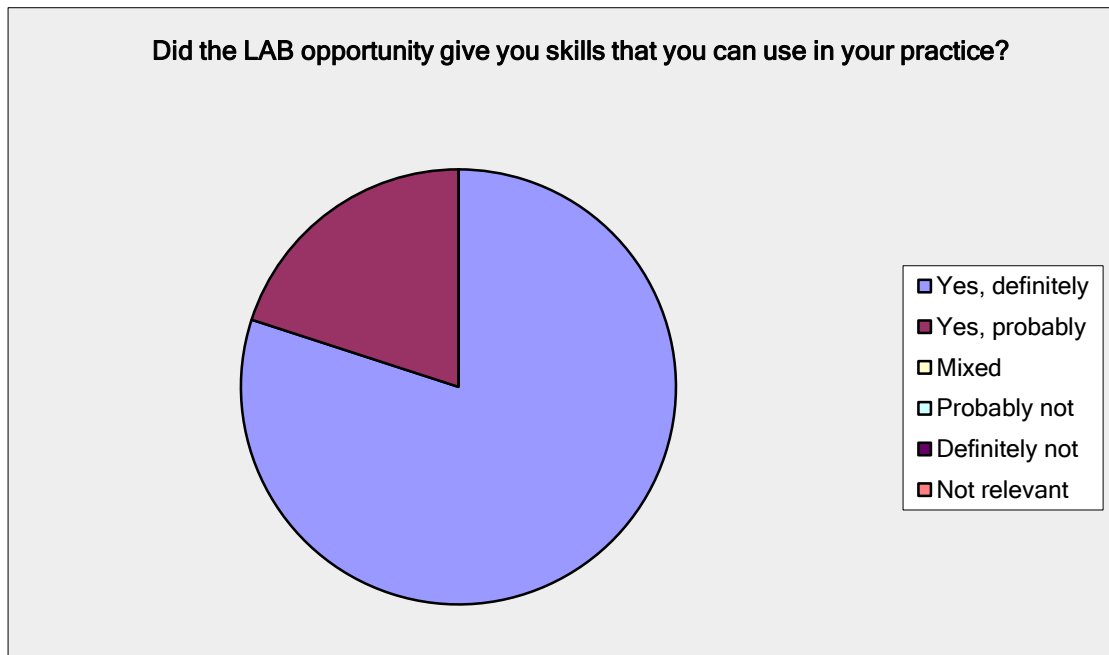
“I think 4 days for Lab was right, but perhaps too long for each individual.”



100% of respondents said the Open Lab experience was definitely relevant to their way of working.



100% of respondents said that the Open Lab definitely or probably gave them skills to use in their practice.

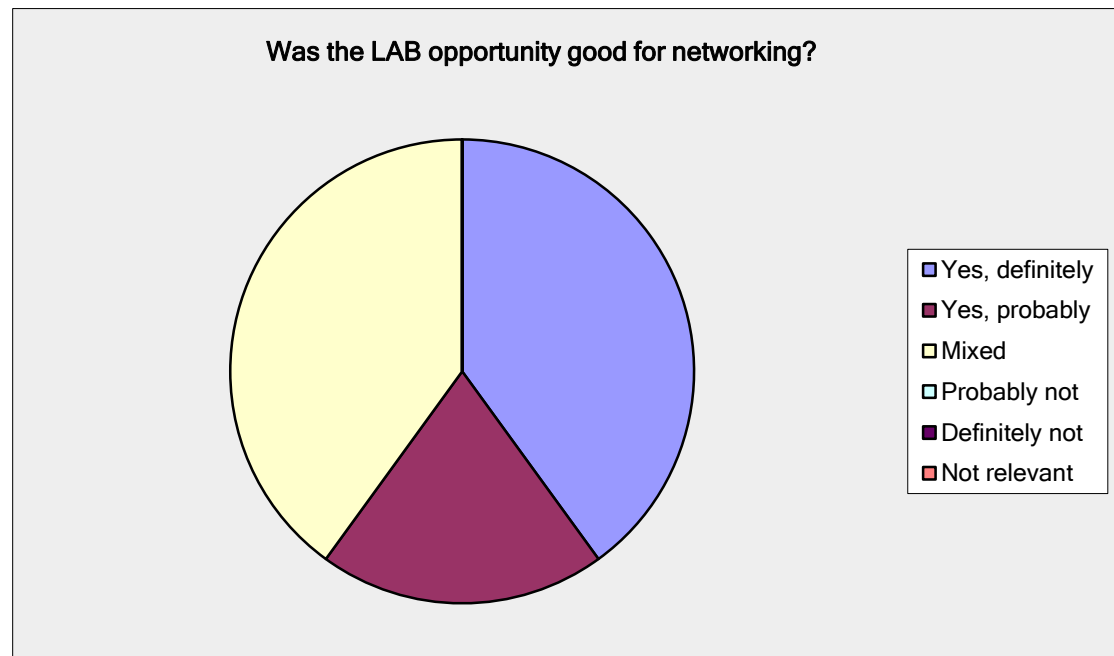


100% of respondents said they definitely or probably had enough chance to contribute their views.

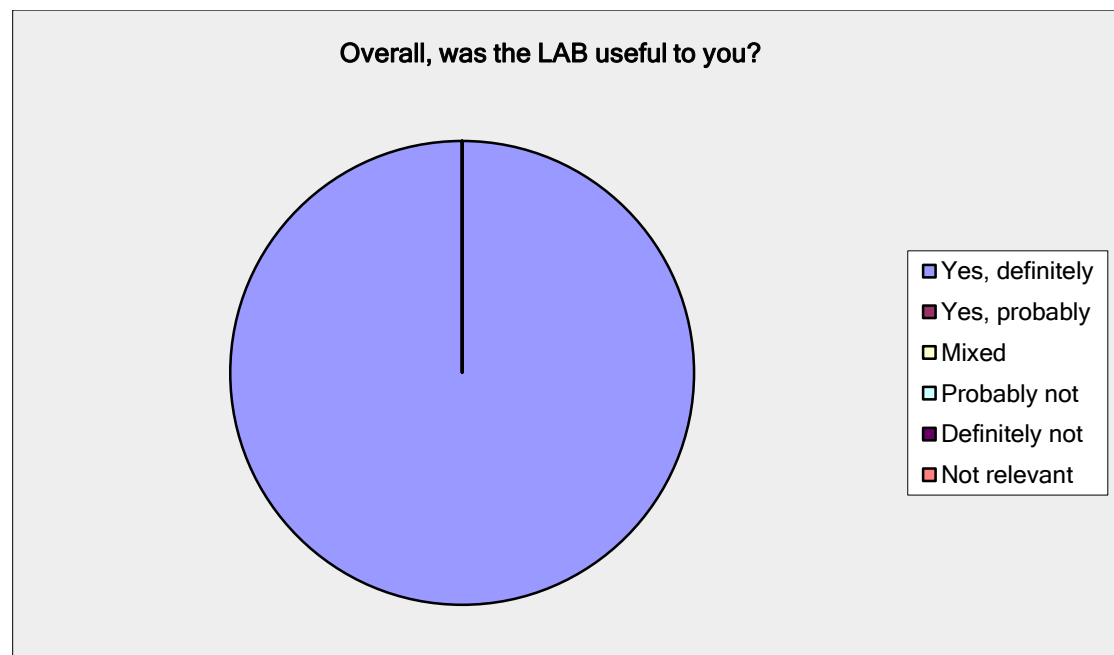


2.3 Outcomes

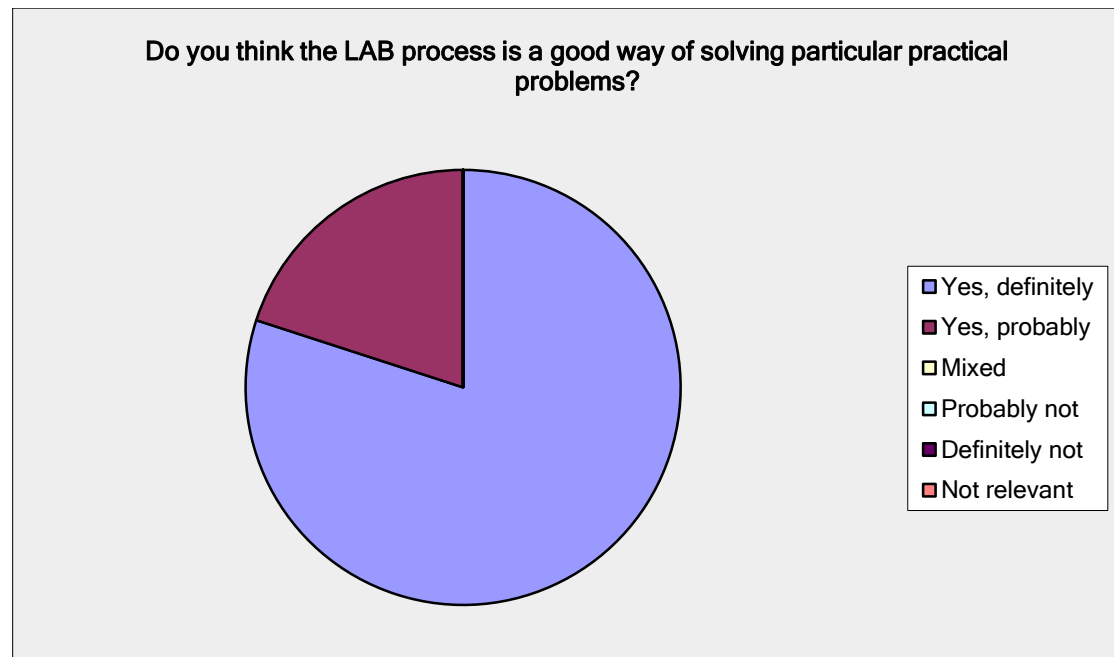
60% of respondents said the cross arts professional development opportunity was good for networking. It is important to note that the majority of the participants of this Open Lab knew each other prior to this experience, which could be one explanation for this mixed response.



100% of respondents said the Open Lab opportunity was definitely useful to them.



100% of respondents said that they thought the Open Lab was definitely or probably a good way of solving particular practical problems.



80% of respondents said that the Open Lab resulted in breakthrough thinking for their group. The new insights cited by respondents, to support this statistic include;

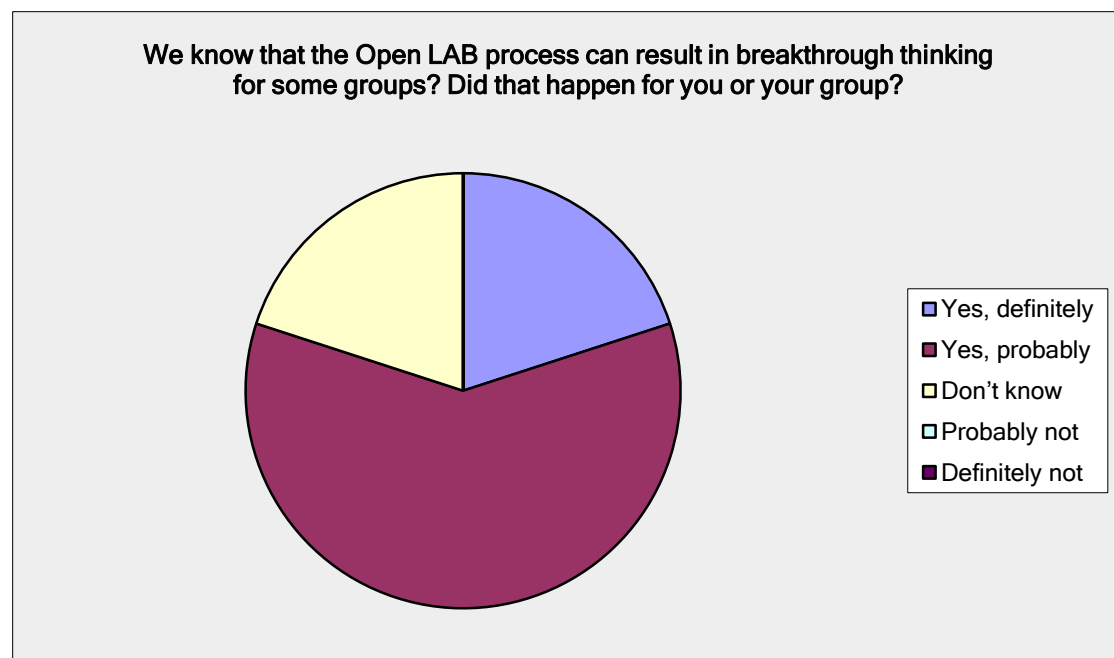
“Use Clean Break plays as the container for the training to occur.”

“Developing a new exercise. Importance of exploration in Clean Break training”

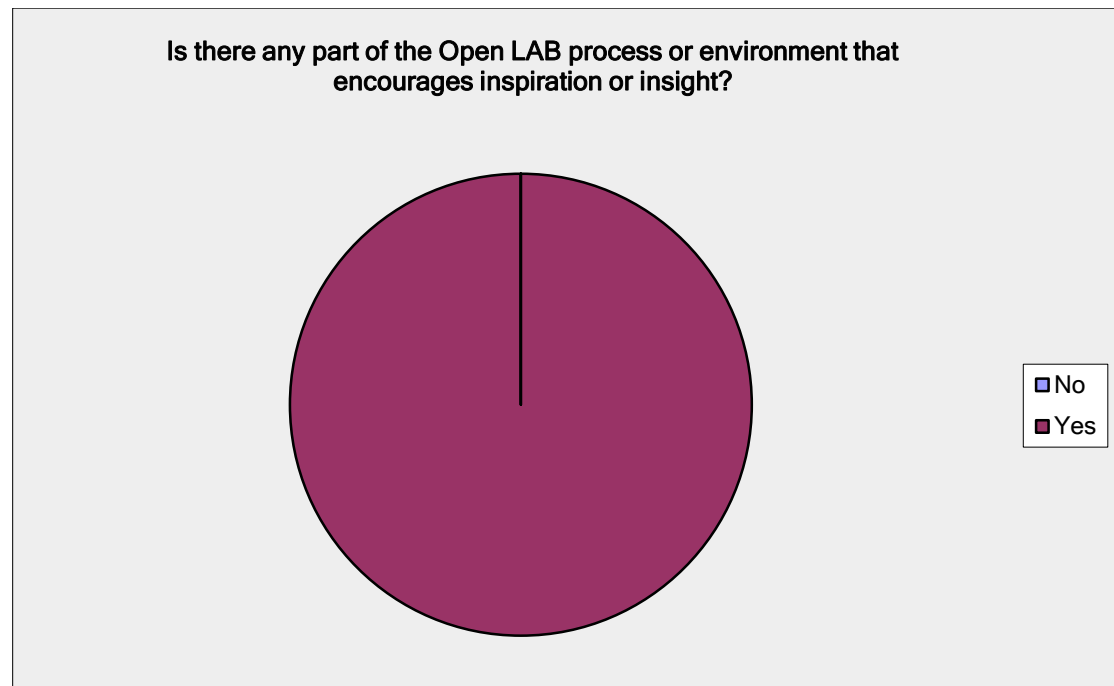
“Not planning, working experimentally”

“Balance between control and chaos - need for greater depth”

“Not sure yet...”



100% of respondents said that the Open Lab environment encouraged insight and inspirations.



Respondents were asked to comment on why they felt this environment encouraged insight and inspiration;

“Invitation to experiment, freedom to explore - process not outcome focused - shared facilitation.”

“Dominique [the lab assistant] was really helpful!”

“Having the space to think”

“Open forum. Opportunity to reflect.”

“Being away from normal work environment. Having no targets or objectives. Time to work creatively with other artists.”

2.4 Overall views

Respondents were asked about the strengths of the Open Lab experience. These strengths were perceived to be time allowed to think and work with others away from a normal working environment, the space to explore and be creative and the support of the Lab assistant.

Comments supporting this statement;

“Freedom - shared ownership and space away from the office - whole days. People selected to participate and the Lab assistant.”

“Sharing practice. It was great to have the skylight space as a contrast to the Pit.”

“The space away from the office environment to explore creatively.”

“Space to be creative and spontaneous”

“Sharing of Ideas. Being in a new space. Using 2 different spaces. A break between the 2, 2 day sessions. Being active.”

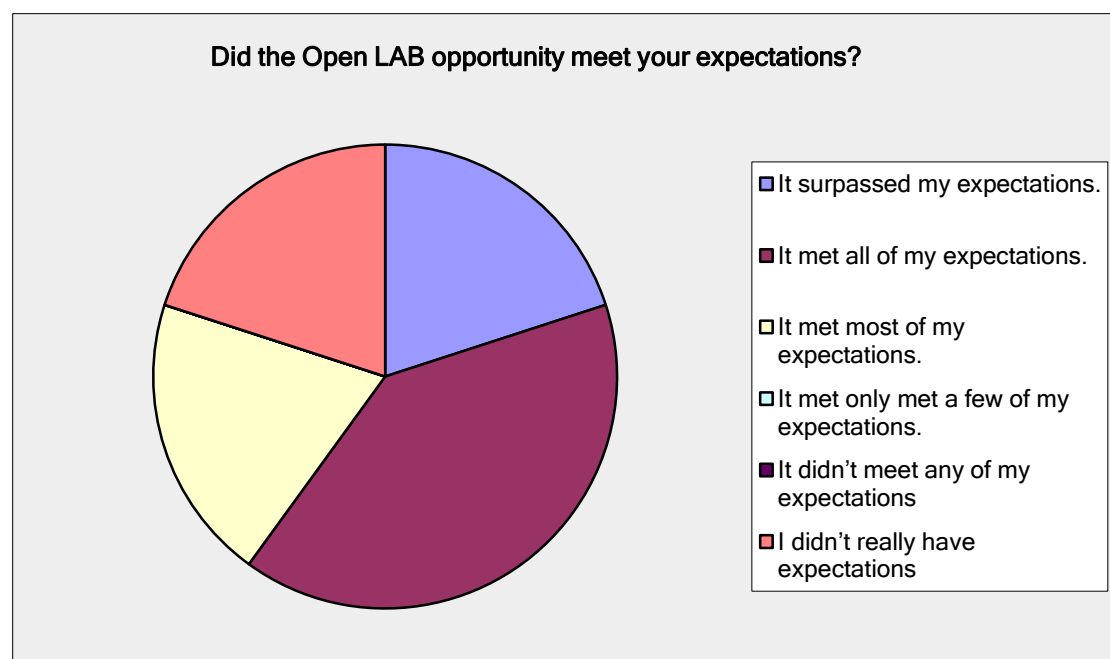
Respondents were also asked about the weaknesses of the cross arts professional development opportunity. Several respondents said they couldn’t think of any weaknesses. The main comments were about the Pit Theatre. This is interesting as this was the second venue used in week 2. The venue in week 1 was the Skylight Centre which is very light and spacious.

Comments supporting this statement;

“The pit was quite claustrophobic”

“The Pit was a bit dark!”

Respondents were asked if this professional development opportunity met their expectations. 20% of respondents said that this experience surpassed their expectations. A further 60% of respondents said it met all or most of their expectations. 20% of respondents cited that they didn’t really have any expectations.



2.5 The future

Respondents were asked if there any particular issues they think should be considered when using the Open LAB environment to explore participatory practice. The comments mainly related to space, and its effect on the creative process.

“If the needs of a training project have the same requirements as a participatory practice project. The skylight centre has a great space as well as the Pit and actually enriched the experience.”

“You need a space with light”

2.6 Conclusion

The Clean Break Open Lab was an important and valuable contribution to ArtWorks London in exploring the potential of this environment in the development of training for artists working in participatory settings. The main strength of this opportunity was attributed to the open and experimental environment, and the time and space allowed to think and collaborate. This Open Lab has flexed the Lab model and proves that Labs can work for this purpose and within a more flexible and sporadic timeframe. In the future more consideration is needed about the space attached to the Lab, as this impacts on the creative process just as the people in the room do.

3 APPENDIX: INVITATION

CLEAN BREAK PIT LAB

February 24th / 26th / March 3-4th 2014

“Things we think about but don’t feel brave enough to do”

FUNDED BY ARTWORKS LONDON

Thank you for agreeing to take part in Clean Break’s PIT Lab. This document aims to give you the following information to enable you to be well prepared for the time we are going to spend together:

1. **What is a Pit Lab**
2. **What does Clean Break want to get out of the Pit Lab?**
3. **What is Clean Break’s leadership training programme**
4. **What do you need to do to prepare**
5. **Practical details**

1. What is a Pit Lab

A Pit Lab is a creative, immersive experience designed to reflect on and resolve specific practice-based problems using provocation and experimentation.

'The fact that we can come here as a hub of creativity is priceless. [...] This is the first time we have genuinely been able to play and experiment, knowing that this is seed planting for a larger piece we want to develop.'

The Lotos Collective – LAB participant

The Pit Lab gives artists the space to experiment in a working theatrical space without the expectation of a final product. The focus is on practitioners who:

- Have a participatory idea or question
- Want to try something that scares them
- Can be curious and brave and want to explore a process with new collaborators

It’s not a place to rehearse it’s a laboratory to experiment in. This is the first time that the Pit Lab has been used to interrogate training rather than participative or artistic practice. It is useful for the Barbican/Guildhall in testing the value and transferability of the model to training. It also relates to a wider ArtWorks discussion about the boundaries between participative practice and teaching or training.

2. What does Clean Break want to get out of the Pit Lab?

Clean Break would like to use the Pit Lab experiment with its Leadership Training Programme. The two main content areas are:

- Helping to create exercises to understand the experiences of women with experience of the criminal justice system.
- Helping to create exercises to understand Clean Break's theatre making practice with women with experience of the criminal justice system.

Some questions and ideas that Clean Break would like to explore at the Pit Lab are:

- Our practice can vary dependent on who is delivering it. Some principles underpin all that we do including (i) we are women only, (ii) we use fiction and character not personal experiences of trauma to create work and explore issues, (iii) we see the women as asset based not deficit based, (iv) we champion a non-judgemental approach. However, these principles are expressed differently by different practitioners. In light of this, what is the essence of Clean Break's theatre making practice?
- How creative can Clean Break make the training practice? Can it draw on theatre practice and effects?
- How much do/should trainers bring in of themselves? Are there any contradictions in being professional and also authentic? If yes, how do individuals and the organisation resolve them?
- How does Clean Break create a package of training that is not a package? i.e. not formulaic, boring or inflexible?
- How can Clean Break test and refine the ideas, practice and communication of its Leadership Training Programme without adopting a formulaic approach? It is important that the Programme is exciting and personally relevant for practitioners/trainers and this will help to ensure authenticity from the perspective of trainees.
- How can Clean Break embody its essence (essence= what you believe but also what you do) in the ideas and practice of its training? At the moment, some of the exercises have been used over a long period of time, and some originated outside the organisation.
- We would like to arrive at a point at the end of the four days where we have:
 - a clearer articulation of what defines Clean Break's practice
 - created new and refined existing exercises which will be potential content for our training programme.
- We want everyone to participate equally in the Lab with no one person taking responsibility for leading the days, and with everyone sharing responsibility for helping to answer the questions outlined above.
- What is Clean Break's leadership training programme

For two decades Clean Break has been responding to requests for bespoke training focused on a range of specialist areas for different professionals, including Youth Offending Teams, educationalists, mental health and criminal justice staff. These have included training on:

- Young women and the arts in the youth justice system
- Working creatively with vulnerable women
- Theatre practice in prisons and community settings
- Women and anger and self development.

During the period 2003-5, Clean Break was a member of the National Training Consortium for Artists in the Criminal Justice System, led by the Anne Peaker Centre (now closed). This consortium brought together the expertise of many of the key organisations working in the field of arts and criminal justice and developed accredited training courses for new and

existing practitioners. Clean Break contributed its expertise to the development of a good practice methodology underpinning the courses, as well as developing course content and delivery. Since the demise of the consortium we have continued to deliver training as and when requested. Prior to and since the demise of the consortium we have delivered training to BA and MA Applied Theatre students at Central School of Speech and Drama and at Goldsmiths University. More recently we have delivered a series of training sessions for Camden police examining the complex needs of women offenders. This was independently evaluated and was deemed to be 'of significant value' by frontline staff.

Our ambition now is to consolidate this body of practice and offer a specially designed training package which aims to up-skill those working with vulnerable women across the cultural, voluntary and statutory sectors. We will use a variety of participatory methodologies, offering four specialist courses:

- **Speak Out** will centre around a short piece of original theatre performed by Clean Break graduates followed by a tailored workshop exploring the issues presented in the pieces and using engaging and interactive theatre-based learning techniques such as hot-seating, role-play and forum theatre. The course will be targeted at CJS, drug/alcohol agencies and support services, bringing individuals together to share experiences.
- **Telling our Stories: (i) theatre making and (ii) theatre writing with vulnerable women:** delivered by experienced theatre artists, these two courses will be creative, teaching participants the skills and techniques in delivering theatre based activities. The participants themselves will create plays and theatre writing techniques, building their confidence and identifying the resources needed to replicate their learning within their own services. The courses will target artists, educationalists, multi-disciplinary teams and group workers. We will aim to deliver each course twice during the pilot phase.
- **Meeting women's needs holistically: the Clean Break Approach:** will use theatre techniques to build understanding of the experiences of vulnerable women and skills necessary for working effectively with these experiences including: improved ability to identify and recognise complex needs; and learning how to respond to and deal with different behaviours. The course will be targeted at CJS, probation, drug/alcohol agencies and other support services.

We have selected two programmes to focus on during the Pit Lab. These are:

- **Telling our Stories: (i) theatre making**
- **Meeting women's needs: the Clean Break Approach**

3. What do you need to do to prepare

We would like all participants to spend some time thinking through their theatre making toolkit and about the exercises and activities that they use in their theatre making and their creative training work. How do you build a group? How do you explore issues? How do you ensure the space is safe and how do you take risks? How do you bring out participants creativity? How do you manage challenges? Think about exercises that work well and why. Think about exercises that you like and those you don't like and why.

We would like all participants to come to the Lab with

- One exercise that you are very confident of, which is relevant to Clean Break's focus, which you are happy to run.
- One exercise that you would like to experiment with and trial in this space.
- Games that link well to themes of women and criminal justice
- Energisers to keep us all going!

We would also like you to think about what resources you would like to be at the Pit Lab to help us with this process. We will already have flipchart, markers, pens, papers, cushions, balls, costumes and props. If there is something else specific you would like there to be, please let us know as soon as possible: no later than Wednesday 19th February.

4. Practical details

a) Dates and times

Monday 24th February 10.30am – 4.30pm

Wednesday 26th February, 10.30am – 4.30pm

Monday 3rd March, 10.30am – 5pm

Tuesday 4th March, 9.30am – 4.30pm

(30 minute lunch break on all days)

b) Venues

For Monday 24th and Wednesday 26th February

Cranial Sacral Therapy Educational Trust

The Skylight Centre

49 Corsica Street

London N5 1JT

(Nearest tube Highbury and Islington)

<http://www.cranio.co.uk/craniosacral-therapy-venue-hire.shtml>

For Monday 3rd and Tuesday 4th March

Barbican Centre

Silk Street,

London, EC2Y 8DS

<http://www.barbican.org.uk/visitor-information/getting-here>

c) Participants

Anna Herrmann, Head of Education and strategic lead on leadership work at Clean Break

Imogen Ashby, Head of Engagement at Clean Break

Vishni Velada Billson, Assistant Head of Education at Clean Break (not attending on Wed 26th February)

Becca Manley, freelance theatre practitioner

Mojisola Adebayo, freelance theatre practitioner (not attending on Wed 26th February)

Central School of Speech and Drama MA student: (to be confirmed) Note taker and participant observer

Barbican Pit Lab assistant

Thank you for reading this and we look forward to spending four creative and experimental days together. We really appreciate you contributing your time and expertise to helping develop our work in this way.

Anna Herrmann

10/2/2014