

GOLDSMITHS Research Online

Design

Boucher, Andy, Gaver, William, Law, Andy, Bowers, John, Pennington, Sarah
and Walker, Brendan

The History Tablecloth (Overview)

You may cite this version as: Boucher, Andy, Gaver, William, Law, Andy, Bowers, John, Pennington, Sarah and Walker, Brendan, 2004. The History Tablecloth (Overview). [Design]: Goldsmiths Research Online.

Available at: <http://eprints.gold.ac.uk/5527/>

This document is the author's final manuscript version of the journal article, incorporating any revisions agreed during peer review. Some differences between this version and the publisher's version remain. **You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.**

Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners.

History Table Cloth

The History Tablecloth is designed to cover a kitchen or dining room table. When objects are left on the table, the cloth starts to glow beneath them, creating a halo that expands very slowly. When items are removed, the glow fades quickly.

The Tablecloth is made using electroluminescent material printed onto a flexible substrate. It is essentially a very large, low-resolution display. But the grid of display elements takes the form of a lace-like pattern fitted for domestic use.

By signalling how long things have been left upon it, the Tablecloth highlights the flow of objects over surfaces in the home. Being able to see this hidden dimension of the home might be thought-provoking, or simply enjoyable – people might be reminded to tidy up more often, or become reluctant to move things lest they disrupt the patterns they form. However, the Tablecloth doesn't dictate peoples' reactions, it provides a situation for them to interpret.

We gave the Table Cloth to a couple who lived with it for about a month. They became very fond of it, both for its appearance and the way it responded to events. Occasional inaccuracies made the experience more engaging: "it's like a cat", they explained to a dinner party question. It reacts to you, but you can't tell what it will do.



Deploying the History Tablecloth in the home of a volunteer.



The History Tablecloth in use.

Equator was a six-year (2001-2007) Interdisciplinary Research Collaboration, funded by the Engineering and Physical Research Council (EPSRC), that brought together researchers from eight British institutions and a variety of disciplines.

