

PUTTING THE TABLE ON THE TABLE

Hi all! So let's follow through on the thing we said we were going to do – and have everyone drop TWO PAGES (or two minutes) and ONE GOOD CITATION on or relating to TABLES (materially, theoretically, metaphorically, etc.) into this doc, so we can begin to assemble some collective references as we continue to feel our way toward a final project!

-DGB & CW

Here, I'll start [DGB here]:

Read against themselves as I am suggesting, the volumes of the boundary arbitration cease to be a hill of primary documents waiting for a historian and become a monumental literary document, the impossible novel George Perec might have written had he been born in Berbice. Read this way, the boundary documents are not so much waiting for historians as waiting for *readers*, for those able to read them not simply as a meditation on the shortcomings of a certain set of Western ideas about boundaries and territory, but as a vast subversion of imperialism itself. Such a reading could go further, for if the text of the boundary arbitration, and the arbitrary resolutions it produced, raises any question at all, it is the question of what it means to “possess” land where one does not “dwell.” Every page of the tens of thousands dramatizes the intractable paradoxes and entanglements of the attempt to “divide” and “hold” land by means of *representations* of the place rather than by *participation* or *engagement* with it, by reliance on *mimetic* artifacts rather than local and dynamic *methexis*.


The volumes were designed to lie on a negotiating table, not on the ground, and Paul Carter suggests that in looking for a path along which we might move to “overcome our obsession with exclusive ownership” and diffuse the postcolonial neuroses of that obsession, “we could do worse than begin by reflecting on the mechanism of the negotiating table and the model of communication it implies.” He continues: “What does this polished, horizontal surface hoisted off the ground signify? What history of violence does its pretense of smoothness, its equalization of places, conceal?”²⁵ The volumes meant to lie on that table reflect the perspective of those who refuse to walk the land, who believe that places can be made flat and still and therefore be possessed. This perspective means that the boundary documents present multiple sallies against a central paradox: how to *fix* territory by means of *mobile* passages; how to freeze the *peripeteia* of human interactions with the land into stable boundaries and discrete regions. The dominant European anxiety about the “wandering state” is inscribed on every page.

Schomburgk wrote, mockingly, that the Brazilian boundary pale could not have roots if it had been placed there by human hands. This is true of a pale and false of a tree. Human beings can plant trees, but they take much longer to raise than a branded pike. They also have deeper roots. Orchards, in this sense, stake claims. In the end, the closest reading of the boundary documents shows that there is no way to “grasp” land separate from human interactions with it, that there is no “natural” way to divide the territory, because the very idea of “nature” defined by our absence—

25. Carter, *Lie of the Land*, 365.

Regrets on the self-citation here, but we start from what we know. This is a page from my first book, *Masters of All They Surveyed* (2001), a study of the geographical sciences in relation to colonial/imperial projecting in the long nineteenth century.

So that is my one page, and here is my additional ONE MINUTE:

 Judy Chicago: The Dinner Party

A super short presentation by artist/activist Judy Chicago, on her era-defining installation work, *The Dinner Party* (1974-1979).

And my reference:

[Anthony Grafton, "Table Manner: The Disposition of the Last Supper." *Cabinet* 38 \(Summer, 2010\).](#)

CW: Here is a video of iconic dinner scenes in films, which features many conspicuous tables.

<https://youtu.be/jbNHRmBJMP4?si=BbbHeka8SNnVOv21>

And a [poem](#) by NaBeela Washington:

Why Do We Set the Table?

At what temperature does blood
begin to boil? Thicken into a
roux, slip between bits of
basil, minced garlic,
orecchiette;

Permeate chunks of spicy kielbasa,
bind a dash of salt, pepper, bubbles
roiling forth, then dissipating,
heat lowered to a hush;

Congeval from the shock of cool
clay dishes as a small mound
is delicately plated with a
large plastic spoon;

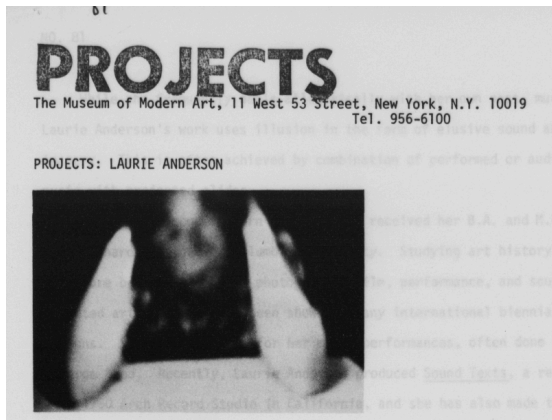
Spurt steam, burning both
nostrils, as we lean in to say
grace, my father's seat empty,
placemat bare.

GS: Laurie Anderson exhibit on the table (as that which makes us cyborg):

Handphone Table (text and images taken from two descriptions, [here](#) and [here](#))



In Handphone Table, visitors are invited to perceive sounds through the bones of their arms. Laurie Anderson wired up a normal table in such a way that, when visitors placed their elbows in the depressions on the tabletop and covered their ears with their hands, they could hear sound through their bodies. Technically, this effect is created by conducting amplified audiotape sounds that have been transformed into impulses to four screws that are embedded in the hollows of the tabletop. The hollows thus act as loudspeakers. The bones in our bodies, for their part, have a porous structure that makes them good conductors of sound. With Handphone Table, Anderson creates an intimate version of her idea of space-related music that should be felt as well as heard. The work was inspired by an experience the artist had when she rested her head on her hands while using an electric typewriter. (Manuela Ammer)



Laurie Anderson is an artist who electronically manipulates sound to create music with visual and aural dimensions. On view in The Museum of Modern Art's PROJECTS gallery September 15 to October 29, the PROJECTS: LAURIE ANDERSON installation, called the Handphone Table, consists of a simple five-foot-long wooden table with a concealed sound system heard only by becoming actively involved with the work. This exhibition is directed by Barbara London, Curatorial Assistant.

The viewer hears Laurie Anderson's Handphone Table only while seated, elbows making contact with particular points of the table top and hands covering the ears. The viewer's arms serve as conductors for the otherwise inaudible sound, which consists of vocal tones at one end of the table and instrumental music at the other. As a self-contained structure made with untraditional materials, the work is representative of contemporary interest in perceptual alternatives in art.

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While she frequently deals allegorically with her own past, much of Laurie Anderson's work uses illusion in the form of elusive sound and fleeting imagery. This is often achieved by combination of performed or audiotaped music with projected slides.

Laurie Anderson was born in 1947, and received her B.A. and M.F.A. from Barnard College and Columbia University. Studying art history and sculpture before turning to photography, film, performance, and sound-oriented art, her work has been shown in many international biennial exhibitions. She is also known for her music performances, often done with a large band. Recently, Laurie Anderson produced Sound Texts, a record, with 1750 Arch Record Studio in California, and she has also made two books, October 1972 and Notebook, published last year by the Collation Center.

This exhibition is made possible through the generous support of the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C. The Museum's exhibition program is partially funded through the New York State Council on the Arts.

(MoMA, August 1978)

And article on the examination table, among other medical furniture:

Carlino P. The Art and Science of Examination Furniture. *Modern American History*. 2019;2(2):237-247. doi:10.1017/mah.2019.7

SW:

My two minutes: BTS's performance of their song "Dionysus" at the 2019 Melon Music Awards ceremony. It is a piece of classical reception and the choreography revolves around tables. The whole performance is worth analyzing but the juiciest part imo starts from the dance break (around 7:24 in the video). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujhnbGeHPJ8>

My reference: chapter one of Bertrand Russell's *Problems of Philosophy* (1912). In this chapter, he uses the example of a table to consider whether physical reality exists separately from our perception. A digital edition of the text is available here: <https://www.ditext.com/russell/rus1.html>.

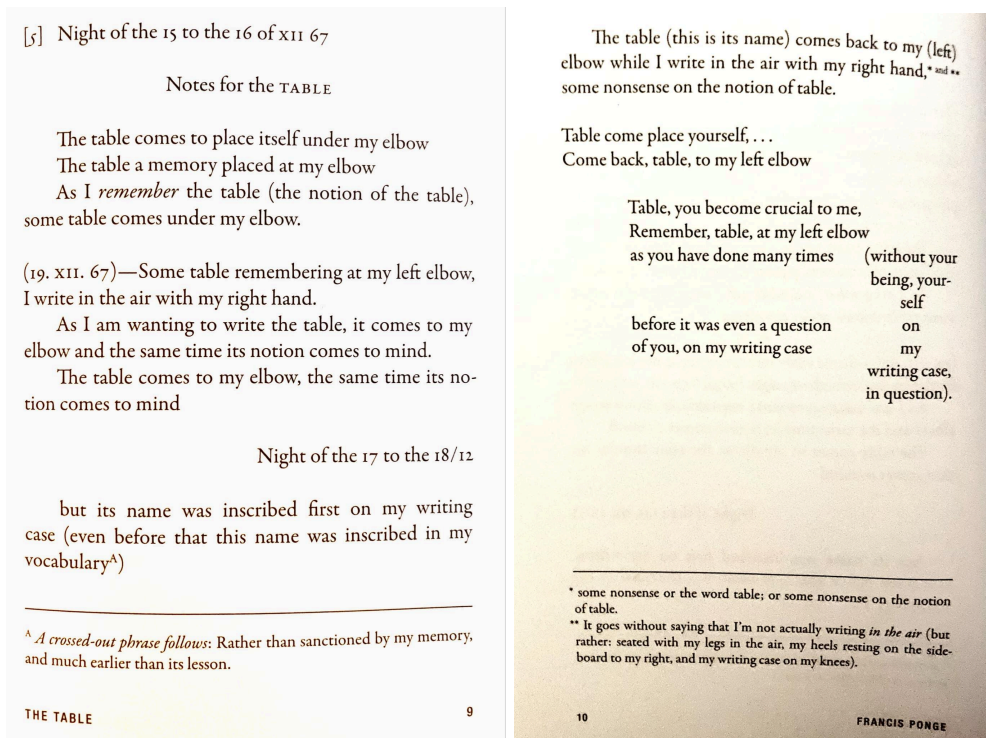
CMP

One table, a statement, a department..

By Crystal Pite and with the Royal Ballet Company, in between dance and drama:

▶ The Statement extract (Crystal Pite; The Royal Ballet)

My reference is [La Table \(The Table\)](#), an essay by the French poet Francis Ponge (1973). Here two pages translated by Colombina Zamponi:



AK:

A short excerpt from the critic Leo Steinberg's lecture "Other Criteria" on the "flatbed picture plane":
excerpt [here](#) and full lecture text [here](#).

And a short clip from Peter Fischli and David Weiss's [The Way Things Go](#) (1987), which treats the tabletop (among other surfaces) as a site for modeling, experimentation, and play.

I also want to make a plug for the [Keller Center Makerspace](#), which has a newly renovated and impressively re-equipped wood shop, open to all Princeton students, faculty, and staff. They require certification in order to use the shop, which means completing a [short Canvas course](#) and attending an hour-long in-person training session. They'll train you on their machines and consult on projects to help you make a plan to fabricate whatever it is you'd like to build. Sharing this in case there's interest in some kind of making/practice-based component of this project.

Edit: Since other folks have given us Buñuel to watch, I can't resist adding this [dinner table scene](#) from *The Phantom of Liberty* (1974).

SY:

I wanted to share a short video (linked below) introducing you to the cultural phenomenon of Buffalo Bills fans throwing themselves into folding tables.

📺 The Ultimate Buffalo Bills Table Breaking Video Compilation From 1st Playoff Tailgate Since 1999

On a more serious note, here are two short pieces to start the conversation:

- 1) A short blog post, "[Turning Tables](#)" by [Brook Henkel](#) (2009) that puts Marx's concept of the commodity fetish and reference to 'dancing tables' in conversation with Justinus Kerner's book about the history, then [Perhaps the World Ends Here | The Poetry Foundation](#), and practice of table-turning. // [PDF here](#)
- 2) "[Perhaps the World Ends Here](#)" by Joy Harjo (1994) // [PDF here](#)

The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live.

The gifts of earth are brought and prepared, set on the table. So it has been since creation, and it will go on.

We chase chickens or dogs away from it. Babies teethe at the corners. They scrape their knees under it. It is here that children are given instructions on what it means to be human. We make men at it, we make women.

At this table we gossip, recall enemies and the ghosts of lovers.

Our dreams drink coffee with us as they put their arms around our children. They laugh with us at our poor falling-down selves and as we put ourselves back together once again at the table.

This table has been a house in the rain, an umbrella in the sun.

Wars have begun and ended at this table. It is a place to hide in the shadow of terror. A place to celebrate the terrible victory.

We have given birth on this table, and have prepared our parents for burial here.

At this table we sing with joy, with sorrow. We pray of suffering and remorse. We give thanks.

Perhaps the world will end at the kitchen table, while we are laughing and crying, eating of the last sweet bite.

One longer article for the bibliography that discusses tables (taxonomies) in education:

Shulman, Lee S. "Making differences: A table of learning." *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 34, no. 6 (2002): 36-44. // [PDF here](#)

LSJ

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|-----------|--|
| Citations | <p>Kelsey, Robin, Katori Hall, Salamishah Tillet, Dawoud Bey, and Jennifer Blessing. "Around the Kitchen Table." <i>Aperture</i>, no. 223 (2016): 52–56.
http://www.jstor.org/stable/43825323.
This text explores Carrie Mae Weems' Kitchen Table series from 1990</p> <p>Rio, Malcolm. "Drag Hinge: Realness as an Urban Geography." <i>Queer.Archive.Work</i>, Issue #3: Urgentcraft (September 2019); 1-12.
This text opens with a diagram by Marlon Bailey, "Ballroom's Spatial Organization," which begins with an annotation of the DJ table with the panel of judges next to it, highlighting the spatial presence of tables within ballroom architecture.</p> |
| Text | <p>Smith, Barbara. "A Press of Our Own Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press." <i>Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies</i> 10, no. 3 (1989): 11–13. https://doi.org/10.2307/3346433.</p> |

A Press of Our Own Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press

Barbara Smith

If any one had asked in 1980 whether books by women of color could sell or whether a press that published only work by and about women of color could survive, the logical answer would have been "no," especially if the person who answered the question was part of the commercial publishing establishment. Even less than a decade ago, writing by American Indian, African American, Latina, and Asian American women was barely noticed by literary and academic establishments, let alone by the general reading public.

Since the early 1970s, however, a small but devoted group of feminist activists, teachers, and writers, many of them Black women, have been working to make visible the writing, culture, and history of women of color. It was their work, not Madison Avenue's, that laid the political and ideological groundwork for Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press and also for the current eighties renaissance of writing by Black and other women of color.

Starting a press for women of color in 1980 may have defied logic, but it was one of those acts of courage that characterize Third World women's lives. In October 1980, Audre Lorde said to me during a phone conversation, "We really need to do something about publishing." I enthusiastically agreed and got together a group of interested women to meet in Boston on Halloween weekend, when Audre and other women from New York were in town to do a Black women's poetry reading. It was at that meeting that Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press was born. We did not arrive at a name or announce our existence until a year later, but at that initial meeting we did decide to publish all women of color, although there were only women of African American and African Caribbean descent in the room. This was one of our bravest steps; most people

of color have chosen to work in their separate groups when they do media or other projects. We were saying that as women, feminists, and lesbians of color we had experiences and work to do in common, although we also had our differences.

A year later we were officially founded. We chose our name because the kitchen is the center of the home, the place where women in particular work and communicate with each other. We also wanted to convey the fact that we are a kitchen table, grass roots operation, begun and kept alive by women who cannot rely on inheritances or other benefits of class privilege to do the work we need to do.

Why were we so strongly motivated to attempt the impossible? An early slogan of the women in print movement was "freedom of the press belongs to those who own the press." This is even truer for multiply disenfranchised women of color, who have minimal access to power, including the power of media, except what we wrest from an unwilling system. On the most basic level, Kitchen Table Press began because of our need for autonomy, our need to determine independently both the content and the conditions of our work and to control the words and images that were produced about us. As feminist and lesbian of color writers, we knew that we had no options for getting published except at the mercy or whim of others—in either commercial or alternative publishing, since both are white dominated.

The late seventies and early eighties were the era of the "special issue," the response of some white feminist journals and periodicals to increasing numbers of women of color raising the issue of racism in the women's movement. Although our working relationships with white women were not universally problematic, too often we were required to fight with the white

Barbara Smith is a Black feminist writer and activist who has been committed to the movement of women of color since 1973. She has written numerous essays, articles, and reviews that have appeared in a variety of periodicals, including Ms., The Black Scholar, The Radical Teacher, Conditions, Callaloo, and The Village Voice. She has edited three major anthologies on African American women, including Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology (Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983), and is also the coauthor, with Elly Bulkin and Minnie Bruce Pratt, of Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism (Firebrand, 1984). She is currently completing a collection of her own short stories.

FRONTIERS Vol. X, No. 3 © 1989 Barbara Smith

SD

Citation: *El ángel exterminador [The Exterminating Angel]* directed by Luis Buñuel, Producciones Gustavo Alatríste and Estudios Churubusco, 1962.

- A group of high-society friends are invited to a mansion for dinner and find themselves inexplicably unable to leave

- The table plays a leading role here, first as the setting for what seems like a banal bourgeois dinner party, later in a more surrealist sense (there is a famous scene involving a sheep standing on the dinner table)
- <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/202099102008666189/>

Text: Ben de Bruyn, “Author Homes in Coffee Table Books: Half Reading, Literary Decor, and the Good Life,” in Jennifer Harris and Hilary Iris Lowe, *From Page to Place: American Literary Tourism and the Afterlives of Authors* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2017): p. 184-185

- I also want to draw our attention to the idea of the “table of contents”

autobiographical and regional dimensions of literary works, the elision of the commercial dimensions of writing and reading, and so on.⁶ Although these issues reemerge in what follows, my primary focus is on the specific questions raised by literary tourism in the context of early twenty-first-century coffee table books: questions about reading and nonreading, literature and lifestyle, authenticity and its commodification.

Before turning to these books, however, we should consider an important methodological question: How do you read a coffee table book? To put things even more succinctly: *Do you read a coffee table book?* Although, in what follows, I analyze the words as well as the images inside these books, it may be argued that such a procedure goes against the ways in which they are actually used. For, the objection might go, is it not more accurate to say that we only look at the photographs or even the cover of such books? Are they not furniture rather than literature? Do those who *have* such books actually *read* them, or are they indeed prime examples, as reputation has it, of unread books and the peculiar phenomenon of “nonreading”? As Leah Price has pointed out in a study of Victorian print culture, the deep-rooted preference for spiritual texts over superficial books has steered many literary critics away from situations in which books (and other print artifacts) are not read but used in different ways, namely, to wrap food, wipe excrement, hit children, hide from unwelcome gazes, or strike up a conversation with the as yet unconverted. Investigating these forms of “nonreading” inevitably leads one to consider coffee table books, as this reflection indicates: “Is it legitimate to hide behind the newspaper, use an encyclopedia as a doorstop, turn a newspaper into fish wrapping, match the binding of your bible to your dress, fill a study wall with hollowed-out books, *decorate a living-room table with intact ones that you have no intention of opening?*”⁷ If many people spontaneously answer no to this last question, she continues, that is because “the logic that exalts reading copies while mocking coffee-table volumes shares its structure with contrasts between showy and serviceable clothing, or even between food addressed to the palate and that designed to please the eye.”⁸

Price’s argument about nonreading and its cultural representations is thought-provoking, and her study provides a useful template for further research on the literary and nonliterary uses of books.⁹ Yet the binary distinction between reading and nonreading implies that her book provides few clues about how we “read”—browse, peruse, dip into, skim?—coffee table books. What does it mean to use books that call for something less than rapt reading but something more than thoughtless skimming? In a humorous little book that nevertheless raises serious questions, Pierre Bayard has reflected on various kinds of “nonreading” as well, noting that we often skim instead of read books: “Rather than read in an orderly fashion, the reader takes a

stroll through the work, sometimes beginning at the end.” As he points out, such behavior unsettles the difference between reading and nonreading: “In which category do we place the behavior of those who have spent a certain amount of time on a book—hours, even—without reading it completely?”¹⁰ Although Bayard is mainly thinking of novels, this problem is even more acute in the case of coffee table books. Maybe a better term for our activity in this case would be something like “half-reading,” a term, moreover, that may be fruitful in thinking about literary tourism as well. For another way of “half-reading,” a literary oeuvre, of course, consists in visiting the houses of writers or other sites associated with their work.¹¹ Like the coffee table books discussed in this chapter, such houses create the impression that a partial encounter with a literary oeuvre suffices to understand its import or at least its place in cultural history.

Even though I do not offer a detailed theory of half-reading, I nevertheless want to preface my analysis by drawing attention to three features of coffee table book reading. In my view, these books are made and used in ways that encourage three effects with regard to their contents: trivialization, aestheticization, and homogenization. By talking about their trivialization effect, I do not mean to say that coffee table books are trivial; rather, I mean that including a certain topic in such books inevitably recategorizes it as a subject for leisurely and noncommittal conversation rather than specialized or animated debate. These books are made to be browsed and put down again by owners and guests alike without readers feeling that they have missed anything vital or that their personal sensibilities have been challenged, let alone offended. Eschewing scientific, religious, or political debates as well as narrative tension, these books are, in contrast to objects of great urgency, highly “put-downable.” This trivialization should not be equated with simple popularization, moreover, for whatever subject is included in the pages of a coffee table book thereby also acquires (the semblance of) additional value and beauty. This aestheticization effect is established not only by its stylish cover and glossy images (which may be beautiful or stylish in various ways) but also by its format. A coffee table book may sit on a lowly table rather than a pedestal, but its size, weight, and hardcover format spell out that it is not, like the paperback, a cheap and accessible mass market product. Like the nineteenth-century annual, you might say, it has upper-class connotations.¹²

And since these books are designed to be opened and browsed at will, their contents should finally also be relatively homogeneous. That is, readers should encounter approximately the same content at whatever point they happen to open the book in question. In books like *American Writers at Home* and *A Journey through Literary America*, different pages obviously yield information on different authors, houses, and regions, but for the purposes

HH:

Luis Buñuel, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972) ((really the entire thing— does this count as a citation?))

- Another Buñuel and rather similar to the above—class commentary, surrealism, dinner parties etc. A group of friends attempt to dine together and are repeatedly interrupted.

And this final scene from *Stalker* (1979):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNiVFCWMrgI&ab_channel=TheRimy

- Maybe this only resonates if you've seen the whole film?

As another citation, I was thinking of choosing something on still life. Here is something I offer as a preliminary suggestion, but I might keep looking:

- Bryson, Norman. "Chardin and the Text of Still Life." *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (1989): 227–52.

CB -

Citation | Karen Barad, ["Posthuman Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,"](#) *Signs* 28, no. 3 (Spring 2003): 801–31.

Text | Ariella Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London and Brooklyn, New York: Verso, 2019).

Where and Who Are the Archive's Laborers?

Miraculously, even though the archive's *raison d'être* is to be a public institution, laborers and users, without whom the archive would be like a

black box or a grave, are absent from its various definitions and accounts. They are made superfluous to its essence, and more importantly, their disappearance is unnoticed and is certainly not considered to be theoretically or politically scandalous. Indifference to the disappearance of the archive's laborers or users is another trait of imperialism. Even scholars, the assiduous workers of the archives, are among its superfluous population, and symptomatically enough they often take an active and deliberate role in performing their own disappearance, removing the traces of their presence from the archive, while posing the archive as an external object for their consultation and reflection, trying to capture its hidden mechanisms of power and trying to conceive its essence. *Aufhebung*, in the Hegelian sense of the term, "provides us," writes Cassar, "with an itinerary for theorizing the modality of the archive."¹⁸ The "modality of the archive," it is implied here, can be captured only once archive users are removed and the archive emerges, clear of people, as the thing in itself. As a shorthand for the mechanism of the archive, *Aufhebung* is a concept that sanctions time, space, and a body politic from a sovereign point of view. It is a unifocal-perspective concept, that is, one that erases the multiple experiences of users and subsumes them under a single cohesive perspective. It is a concept that pretends to be indispensable for orienting oneself in the common world, a concept that is supposed to be accessed and used by everyone in the same way. Using such a single-perspective concept to reflect upon and orient oneself within the archive, one inadvertently partakes in the effort of protecting the archive from citizens' unruly manners, inaccurate uses, and careless treatment of documents always more precious than them. This keeps the archive as close as possible to its sovereign conception: modes of acting and interacting are not conceived as part of what the archive is. Given that the imperial condition is maintained through the regime of the archive, it is neither uncommon nor unlikely that even people for whom the archive emblemizes dispossession continue to refer to it and try to find recourse in the sovereign conception of its mode of functioning, the very mode responsible for rendering their experience, exploitation, and aspirations irrelevant or ancillary. This is what imperial institutionalization seeks to achieve.

Abstracting people to the point of their evaporation from the scenes in which they are active is often the case with dictionarylike definitions

of public institutions, something that professionals or experts, whose presence is more likely to be considered relevant, usually take for granted. The archive is envisaged as driven by the invisible hands of abstract guardians, independently of the actions of people whose lives were atomized into collectible records. This aspect of “acting by itself” in the pursuit of its document-preserving mission helps to create the impression that the archive was always there, that it is always already about the past enshrined in documents, and that the negation it sanctions—preservation and cancellation—is its poetic quality.

In a series of photographs taken in the *Archives Nationales* in Paris, the photographer Patrick Tourneboeuf moves with his camera from one hall to another in the old and new buildings, as if in the pursuit of *the* archive, its essence. His photographs capture the archives’ different halls as spaces devoid of human presence (see [Fig. 3.4](#)). The position from which the photographer took these photos might have been affected by the physical and spatial arrangement of the archive’s rooms, but the recurrence throughout the entire series of the same abstracted image of the archive is the aim of the project. In only one photograph is a human figure recorded, seated at a large **table** while consulting documents. The long exposure made the figure blurred, completely out of focus; the photographer, so it seems, didn’t focus on her but, as it were, on the archive *itself*—cabinets, shelves, folders, documents. The superfluous presence of the sitting figure makes it ephemeral—a “spectre,” Derridians would say, an appellation that again erases, in a different way, the human presence—overshadowed by the solid and durable archive.¹⁹



Fig. 3.4

SS

For my two minutes: “Musique de table” by Thierry de Mey, performed by the RePercussion Trio
(specifically 1:30-3:30) - [YouTube Musique de Table by Thierry de Mey](#)

Plus an image of the first page of the score



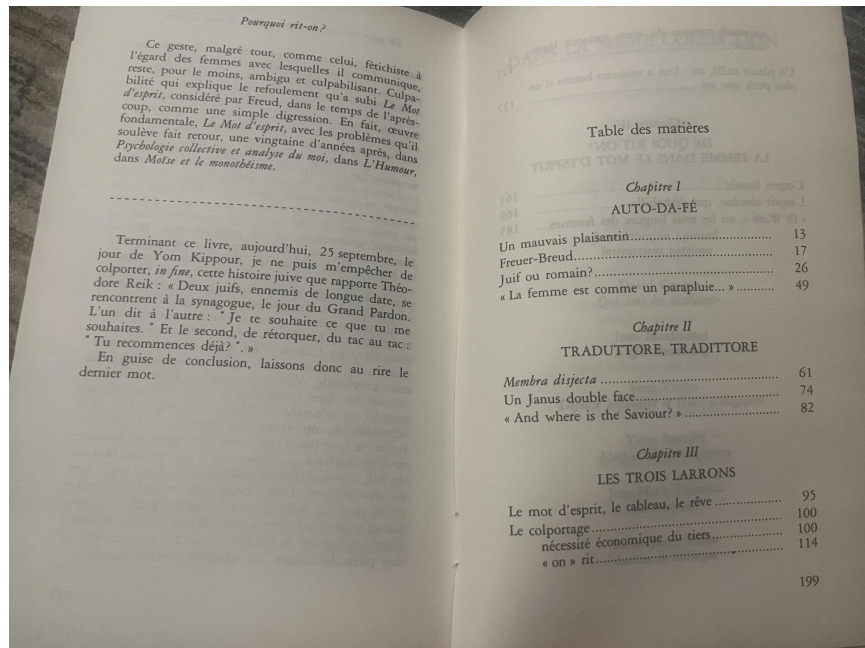
Citation: "Dinner Theatre: A Road Trip" by Stacy Wolfe
<https://academic.oup.com/book/36463/chapter/321044855?login=true>

AT:

An essay from Montaigne, *De l'institution des enfans*, or *Of the Institution and Education of Children*. Excerpted from the Florio translation, which you can find [here](#).

I would faine have *Paluel* or *Pompey*, these two excellent dauncers of our time, with all their nimblenesse, teach any man to doe their loftie tricks and high capers, only with seeing them done, and without stirring out of his place, as some Pedanticall fellowes would instruct our minds without moving or putting it in practice. And glad would I be to find one that would teach us how to manage a horse, to tosse a pike, to shoot-off a peece, to play upon the lute, or to warble with the voice, without any exercise, as these kind of men would teach us to judge, and how to speake well, without any exercise of speaking or judging. In which kind of life, or as I may terme it, Prentiship, what action or object soever presents it-selfe into our eies, may serve us in stead of a sufficient booke. A prettie pranke of a boy, a knavish tricke of a page, a foolish part of a lackey, an idle tale or any discourse else, spoken either in jest or earnest, at the table or in companie, are even as new subjects for us to worke upon: for furtherance whereof commerce or common societie among men, visiting of forraine countries, and observing of strange fashions, are verie necessary, not only to be able (after the manner of our yong gallants of *France*) to report how many the Church of *Santa Rotonda* is in length or breadth, or what rich garments the curtezan *Signora Livia* weareth and the worth of her hosen: or as some do, nicely to dispute how much longer or broader the face of *Nero* is, which they have seene in some old ruines of *Italie*, than that which is made for him in other old monuments else-where.

Below is a French table of contents (*table des matières*). I've always found it curious that the table of contents in a French book is usually—but not systematically—in the back of the book, whereas you'll normally find the table of contents in English-language books toward the front of the book. I'm making the (possibly erroneous) assumption that it has at least something to do with tradition here. It's not something that I've thought intensely about, but it might be interesting to think about the traditions behind how books are formatted in various places.



MM

Harun Farocki Interface

<https://vimeo.com/1019038714?share=copy>

Password: documentary



Original title Schnittstelle **Director, scriptwriter, commentary** Harun Farocki **Cinematographer** Ingo Kratisch **Second cinematographer** Leo Borchard **Editor** Max Reimann **Sound** Klaus Klingler **Assistant** Jan Ralske **Cast / narrator** Harun Farocki **Production** Musée Moderne d'art de Villeneuve d' Ascq, Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, Berlin **Producer** Harun Farocki **Format** video-BetaSp (double projection), col., 1:1,37, 23 min. (Loop), Germany 1995 **German premiere** 08. 11. 1995, Duisburg (Duisburger Filmwoche) **First broadcast** 25. 06. 1995, 3sat **note** Single-channel-version-available

Harun Farocki was commissioned by the Lille Museum of Modern Art to produce a video 'about his work'. His creation was an installation for two screens that was presented within the scope for the 1995 exhibition *The World of Photography*. The work *Schnittstelle* developed out of that installation. Reflecting on Farocki's own documentary work, it examines the question of what it means to work with existing images rather than producing one's own, new images. The title plays on the double meaning of 'Schnitt', referring both to Farocki's workplace, the editing table, as well as the 'human-machine interface', where a person operates a computer using a keyboard and a mouse.

The Table of Indian Partition

https://www.flickr.com/photos/nagesh_kamath/3848646883

Historical fact - this table was used to draw up the rules which governed this unfortunate partition. The table is in the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies (Viceroy Lodge of those days) in Shimla.

Evans, Robin. *Translations From Drawing to Building and Other Essays*. London: Architectural Association, 1997. pp. 153-188

<https://arch2281sp14.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/robin-evans-1997-translations-from-drawing-to-building.pdf>

GROUP 2

the project is :

everyone destroys a table - paul virilio-esquq working backwards from thinking the table in the debris of what is left ?

the operating table

operating the table

what kind of process transformation moves through the table

Thank you grace! Laurie anderson - listening through the music table

sound fractured altered

engagement and non-engagement

is the table necessarily benevolent space - stifling / antagonising

what does the table communicate, or how it structures communication

photogram, and table transfer medium - relationship between bodies and scaling

attributes of a table - a non- table table / uncanny

- flatness - modifications and alterations effect the table-function and people's relation, and awareness of their relationality
- standing up - height
- geometry / shape
- integrity of surface / stable
- position - surroundings / singularity or individuality
- division of space or connecting
- stickiness / or smoothness surface quality
- probability of table
- paradigm or affective history of the table

material substantiation of these tabled concerns - if that be photographically or otherwise,

an accompanying an non-obviously connected record of that thinking through -

table manual - if you do this thing, if this object disappears from the table

to retain a table-like atmosphere

ways of doing table

go do table

[AK starts here:]

Hey everyone. In our brainstorm last class we talked a bit about a final project built around the creation of a tabletop-sized photogram. I'm dropping a more fleshed-out (but still very rough) proposal for that project here.

A photogram is a camera-less photograph made by placing an object or objects directly onto a light-sensitive surface—usually a sheet of photographic paper—and exposing the assemblage of object and light-sensitive paper to light. The paper will darken when exposed to light, so the areas of the paper left uncovered will turn dark, while the areas covered by the object(s) placed on top of it will remain light. What you end up with once you develop and fix the image is a tonally reversed silhouette of your arrangement of objects, at more or less one-to-one scale. They'll register as white or light-toned masses against a dark background. Solid objects will appear completely white, but because the paper will darken in proportion to how much light it receives, translucent objects or parts of an object not directly in contact with the paper will produce mid-tones.

What if we created a tabletop-sized photogram that we exposed over the course of our last session together? This would be a collectively produced object that would visually index our acts of "putting on the table." Practically, the simplest way to do this would be to use large sheets or rolls of paper coated with cyanotype chemistry. Cyanotype is a photographic process that dates back to the nineteenth century and was widely used into the twentieth to reproduce technical drawings and plans; it's the source of the term "blueprint," because cyanotype prints are deep blue in color. It's still a popular process in introductory photography classes because it's cheap, [available online](#), and easy to work with—to develop and fix cyanotype prints, all you have to do is wash them with water.

So what would it look like to make a table's-eye-view photogram? Cyanotype chemistry is sensitive to UV light, so in order to control the exposure, we'd need to black out the windows in our seminar room and install blacklights overhead (the Vis Arts department might have stand lights we could borrow for this purpose). By using artificial light, we could calibrate the exposure time by modulating the position and intensity of the lights, meaning that we could theoretically make a photogram that would take an hour, two hours, or the duration of our seminar meeting to expose all the way. We'd flip on the UV lights, cover the surface of our table in a sheet or sheets of cyanotype paper, and do our seminar while the photogram exposed. Objects that sat on the table for the length of the exposure would appear clear and bright, while those placed there later would leave fainter traces. Someone's hand passing over the table for a second wouldn't register at all, but a hand rested in the same place on the table for long enough would. Our laptop and tablet screens, if we brought them to the table with us, would cast their own UV glare and would probably create pools of darker, more heavily exposed paper around their white silhouettes. Whatever we decided to actually *do* at the table, there would be a baseline of weird dramaturgy to the whole thing, because we'd be holding seminar in the dark, under blacklights.

As a form, I think the photogram has some powerful conceptual and poetic affordances. Sunaina described really beautifully in our brainstorm last class the way that the blank white silhouettes that objects produce in a photogram testify as much to opacity, absence, and aporia as to pure visibility. (Taking the example of the colonial geographers that Graham shared above, if the table that they laid their maps out upon had been sensitized to light, all that would have registered on its surface would have been a bunch of white squares devoid of cartographic information. If those maps transformed terrain into controllable territory by rendering it maximally

visualizable, a photogram, by contrast, frustrates visualization as much as it facilitates it.) In that way, the photogram could offer a medium through which to think together about the failures or limitations of “putting on the table”—the ways in which what we put on the table fails to mean, withholds its meaning, or signifies incompletely. The photogram is almost as tactile as it is visual, depending as it does on the manual manipulation of objects and on their direct contact with the paper surface; working in that modality might also be a way for us to approach questions surrounding hapticity and handwork and their relationship to knowledge production, which have come up in our discussions at various points. The durational aspect of the long exposure—the fact that how or whether objects appear in the image depends on how long they remain “on the table”—could offer a way to think about the table less as a fixed or stable object and more as a medium of exchange, a component of a dynamic process unfolding in time. And the one-to-one scale of the photogram might be a way in to thinking about the scaling function that the table performs. (The table is an object whose scale is by necessity keyed to the size of the human body, and so any object that finds its way onto a table must exist in intimate scalar proximity to the body, whether that object is a model of an atom or a map of an empire.)

If we did decide to make our final project a seminar built around the collective making of a tabletop photogram, we’d need to decide how to structure that seminar and what to actually do with it. One possibility would be to just have a discussion as normal and let the photogram simply record the traces of our laptops, cords, notebooks, and bodies. Another would be to come up with an artificial system to visually notate some otherwise ephemeral aspect of our discussion (a simple, maybe boring, example would be to string a single piece of twine or yarn from one person to the next as we spoke in discussion). We could come up with a set of protocols for actions or placements of objects that would highlight or exacerbate aspects of the form or materiality of the table itself and the ways it structures our interactions (we spent some time in Group 2 starting to think this through—see Moad’s notes above). Or we could conduct a silent dialogue carried out only through the physical placement of objects on the table surface. Or (and this is closest to Group 1’s idea for a chalkboard table and Group 3’s idea for a decoupage tabletop) we could annotate the surface of the photogram, treating it as a space in which to record and develop a discussion. If we wanted to incorporate text, we could write (or draw) in Sharpie on small sheets of transparent acetate and place them on the table, or we could even cover the entire surface of the photographic paper with large sheets of a transparent material like glass or Plexiglas and write or draw directly onto them. (We could also work with pre-printed transparencies with images and text.) We’d also need to decide whether we wanted to document or reflect on our seminar in any other way (Record sound or video? Each write short texts?).

I’m including a few texts if people are curious: a really good [essay surveying cameraless photography](#) by the historian of photography Geoffrey Batchen, a [short text on the photogram](#) by modernist artist and photographer László Moholy-Nagy, and a [short LIFE magazine article](#) and [longer Artforum article](#) on Robert Rauschenberg and Susan Weil’s large-scale cyanotype photograms.

There are also a group of hand-painted photograms by Judith Nangala Crispin in the exhibition *[Under a Southern Star: Identity and Environment in Australian Photography](#)*, currently on view at Princeton University Art Museum's temporary space on Hulfish. (Thanks to Christy for mentioning this!)

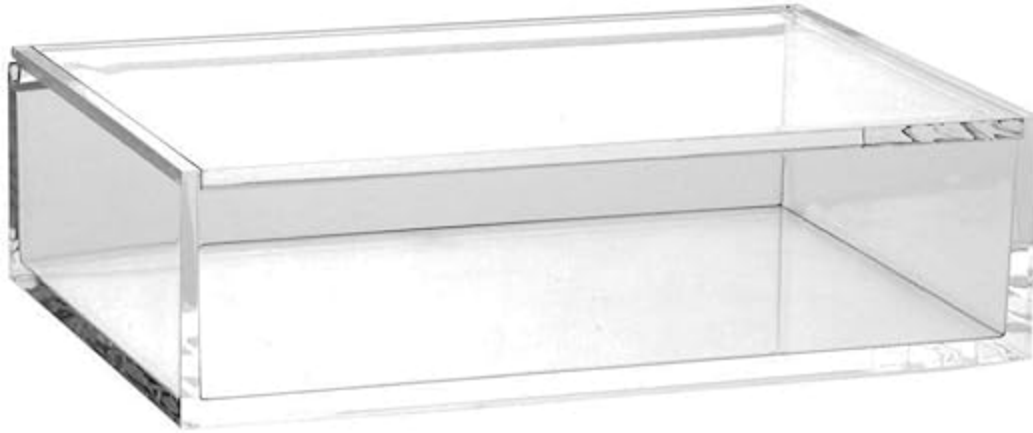
And here's a [slideshow of a few photograms from across the history of photography](#).

[CW]

The idea of what is unsaid having some kind of place in the final project feels right to me: What was left unsaid because we didn't have time, because of certain dynamics in the room, because of the individual or collective mood, self-censorship, etc.

At some point, I pitched the idea of the unsaid ideas being written or printed out and put into the drawers of a physical table we make. However, now I think there is a way to combine several ideas that have come up (including that one) into the final project. The photogram idea has to do with the surface of the table, its flatness, etc. So what if the photogram was the experiment for that element of the table (its flat surface) and we use other elements of the table to accommodate other of the ideas that were pitched. For example, what if the legs of the table – I'm envisioning thick-ish legs – were coated in chalk paint to work with that part of the permanence/fleetingness aspect of our ideas. We could do some writing on the legs and seal it for permanence. Then, the top part of the table (upon which the photogram – or parts of it – could be affixed) could be made of clear plexiglass and filled with all of our unsaid ideas, which we would either write out by hand or print out and fold into origami so that in a sense, they yield only some of their meaning, in little geometric shards.

Here is the "body" of the table. It would be filled with our unvoiced ideas, folded into origami shapes. Fragments of the photogram would be affixed to the top. The legs would be thick columns covered in chalk paint, over which we'd write and then which we'd seal. Can explain in class if unclear!



[GS]

(not a novel idea, but trying to hold together a few of the strands that seemed more sticky in recent conversations?)

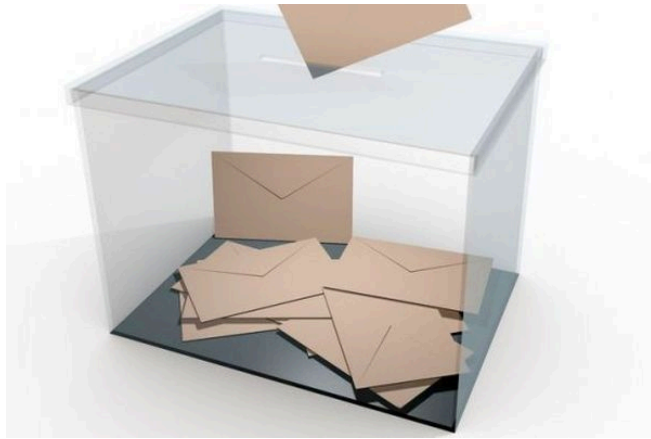
Looking through the book [Tennis](#), Peder Alexis Olsson, which Graham showed in class, it seems that this sort of format, as he noted, might provide a relatively straightforward way to combine a few of the directions the conversations have been pulling. The book, in addition to imagery, includes writing “on the rules, history and language of Tennis,” as well as an essay on lines.

Proposal: a similar collage of pages, combining the visual component Andrew’s incredible photogram proposal with a focus on the absences or silences that are created with the doing of the table. Each person might contribute (1) a brief (3-500w) writing around this theme – writing about the things, disciplines, voices, ways of being/knowing absent from or silenced by tables in various disciplinary moments or contexts. Tables as symbols of seminar, and thus of hegemonic academic ‘knowledge’ – thinking to past conversations about the ways of communication not valued at the table (Samantha’s example of musical performance), the disciplines or regional ways of thinking not given seats, the tables at which violence was planned, or instructions on how to table that expose the absences it creates. A potential second component or alternative to this might be (2) a similarly brief collage or block-out poem of text(s) from the table syllabus (maybe created in pairs or small groups?), again making meaning in the absences. Final conversation, at the photogram table and in the relative darkness, might be on the tabled texts from throughout the semester or generally on things the table, in its evoking of the disciplines, doesn’t allow for (aware that forcing all of these things into text and conversation is also disciplining them...).

[SD & CMP]

Table Summary:

A ballot table, or a ballot box with legs (Incorporating Christy’s idea)



- Last day of class: “performance”: reading of a little piece written in relation to the table, or to the class, or not. During the class we can read these pieces while doing the photogram and talking about them. At the end of the class, we can put the texts in the “ballot” table (we can also add other projects mentioned during the class: a brief manual for origami tables, a piece of chalk, a sheet of photogram paper, etc.)
- Everyone writes 1000 words prior to class that is considered a contribution to a manifesto on “tables”; this could also take the form of a physical manifesto/booklet on tables; and we stage a discussion around that in a seminar room; the table of the seminar room gets captured by the photogram
- Inevitably by the end of the class discussion, not everything everyone wrote about got discussed, we can fold those pieces up and put them in a ballot box in the middle of the table (or a ballot box with legs on it, simulating a table?)
- Ballot box signals in some way what the “act” of “table” *does* or synthesizes, with all that is not said contained below; so it produces a physical product but there is also much that isn’t physical contained within the box
- Also the question of all that isn’t said that isn’t even communicated properly in writing; interior consciousness...something about the vessel nature of the ballot box capturing that aspect
- Something “political” about the act of putting something in a ballot box?

A philosophical aside on tables...we think of “table” as part of the act of our commitment to interdisciplinarity in the class. When we decided to join this IHUM seminar from each of our individual disciplines, we convened around a table. The table served as a stage or mode of transmitting our ideas and perspectives. We could also think of it as a “synthesis” of those perspectives—but also as something that necessarily occluded, flattened, stylized, or even “tabled.” Our idea of a “ballot table” would account for and visualize that which is occluded. Our project will also productively engage with ideas of “flatness” vs. multi-dimensionality—the push in academia to “put things on the table” can have a flattening effect and we want to both signal to that and produce something that is three-dimensional, building out from our respective disciplines.

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[AK]

We collectively make a table-scale cyanotype photogram that is both medium for and document of a seminar “discussion” on a topic of our collective choosing. We would place paper coated with light-sensitive cyanotype chemistry on the surface of the seminar table and stage a dialogue through the placement of objects on it. After the seminar is over, we’d each write short texts, which would give us the chance to reflect on how it felt and what worked and what didn’t and to develop some of the ideas that have come up in our discussions on tables and tabling.

I already described the process and what I see its affordances to be earlier on in this doc, so I’ll use this space to propose a plan for doing the project. Basically, I’d propose that the class form three working groups:

- One would steer the content of the seminar—What would the topic be? (Could the idea proposed by group one to hold a seminar on tables that feature in histories of colonization be a place to start?) What would the reading list be? Could this working group assemble a core group of texts and then solicit more from the rest of the class?
- The second group would work on the protocol and choreography of the seminar—How would we conduct a seminar given the overarching parameter that the medium for our dialogue and the thing we're making is a tabletop photogram? What kind of processes of "putting on the table" would allow us to think and make collectively? What kinds of objects would we bring to the table and how would we place them? Would they be physical, dimensional things? Texts? Images? Would we draw? Annotate? Some combination of these, or all of the above? Would we speak or be silent? Sit or stand? Move around or stay put?
- And the third group would handle the technical aspects of the production of the photogram—How much cyanotype chemistry would we need? What size paper? How many sheets? How many UV bulbs of what strength would we need to time the exposure to last the duration of our seminar? How and where would we rinse and dry our prints after we'd exposed them?

MM CB

The table /tabling operation is a question of what the table can hold, what it can account for, and what it leaves behind.

The brief is to return to the attributes of what makes a table, so as to not take a table as self-evident physical thing or its conceptual gesture as always producing the same demand on intellectual inquiry. If we understand the 'putting on the table' as a conceptual gesture or intellectual habitus that is shared in the academy, it is also important to account for the different expectations and ethics that the gesture requires. The project attempts to question what "table" as a noun/verb can account for as well as what it disavows, occludes, or obscures as a locus of academic inquiry for *prefix-disciplinary* study.

The proposal is to produce a small collective publication on table/tabling.

Concretely - Each participant takes one table attribute or quality and composes a text (min 500 words, can be of any style or genre) and an 'operation'.

One operation can be that the entry in the book is folded, the page's literal crease mobilized to produce a reading experience that takes two sides of a sheet of paper as necessary to the encounter with the argument

Another operation could be a cut, the subtraction of parts of the paper and which impacts the surrounding works

Another operation might be a surface treatment, [that it is made with a texture that impacts the experience or wears on the adjacent pages.](#)

We can brainstorm other operations, but the idea is to mobilize [paper's already given multi-mediatic](#) nature in order to enact a study that joins the choreography of reading with the choreographic concept of 'putting on the table' as an interplay between deliberation and disappearance that the table/tabling operation cleaves.

Two assignments to add to our shared Google doc by Friday, Dec. 13:

Please write up 150-word instructions for the use of a table.

Please write your initials next to write one of these table properties and write a 300-word piece on it.

Flatness
Legs (CW)
Portability

Surface quality
Ritual/Ceremony
Hardness
Shape
Corners (SS)
Scale
Height
Width
Weight
Top/Under
Composure
Assembly
Stillness
Extendability (leaves)
History
Provenance (SY)
Condition
Location
Silence
Circumstances
Probability
Material
Utility
Shrinkability (foldable legs)
Affordances
Ergonomics
Legibility