

Social Tablecloths...
...as an Artistic Method

Echo

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Prints

Introduction

– Social Tablecloths (Echoooooo Prints)

Social Tablecloths (Echoooooo Prints) is an artistic method that turns a simple, everyday object — the tablecloth — into a living archive of collective memory. The process unfolds in workshops and communal gatherings where participants are invited to bring found or discarded objects and use them to leave traces on fabric. Alongside the imprint, each person shares a short story about their chosen item, embedding both material and narrative presence into the cloth.

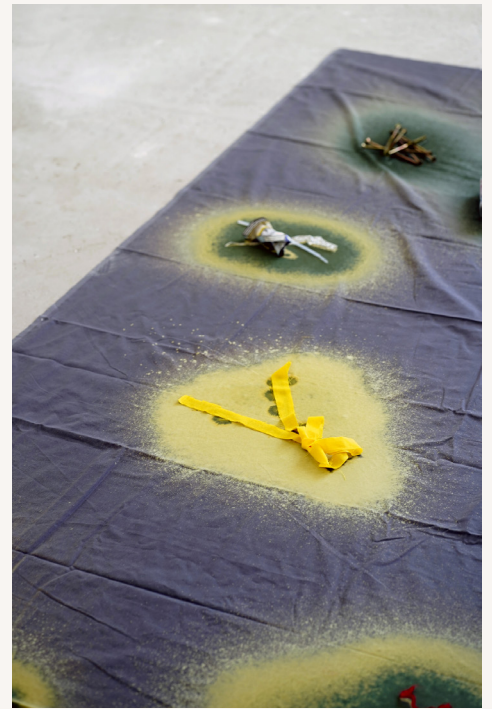
Once completed, the tablecloth does not remain in a gallery but returns to everyday life. It is used again for meals, conversations, and encounters, accumulating new layers of meaning over time. In this way, the textile becomes a performative medium: not a static artifact but an evolving witness of community, memory, and shared experience.

Artistic method

The Process

Each Social Tablecloth emerges through a collective workshop. Participants place objects on fabric — spoons, leaves, buttons, fragments of textile, or other found items — and imprint their shapes using bleaching or paint. Hands, gestures, and improvised patterns become part of the composition.

The act of bleaching is both technical and symbolic. It reveals what was hidden in the fabric, bringing shapes and forms into visibility. Every imprint becomes a trace of presence — a mark that records the moment of encounter.



Trace

These marks can be understood as what Walter Benjamin described as traces: fragile signs of presence that point toward what is absent.

A handprint, the outline of a spoon, or the shadow of a leaf does not simply depict an object. It carries the memory of the moment in which it appeared and of the person who placed it there. The fabric becomes a surface where presence and absence coexist.

Performative Encounter

The creation of the tablecloth is not only about producing an object but about creating a situation. During the workshop participants gather around the fabric, bring objects, share stories, and leave material signs of their presence. The tablecloth becomes a collective surface of inscription — a space where gestures, narratives, and encounters intersect.

A Living Object

After the workshop, the tablecloth returns to everyday life. It is used during shared meals, conversations, and gatherings. It moves between contexts and remains open to receiving new traces.

Because of this circulation, the cloth is not a fixed artifact but a living witness. Over time it accumulates layers of encounters and memories.

Performative Memory

Social Tablecloths embody what cultural theory describes as performative memory.

Memory does not exist only in archives or written records. It is also sustained through gestures, rituals, and shared situations. Each time the cloth returns to the table, its meaning is reactivated. Memory lives not only in the object itself but in the act of gathering around it.

Collective Memory

The project also relates to the sociological concept of collective memory, described by Maurice Halbwachs. Memory is never purely individual; it exists through relationships and shared practices.

The tablecloth becomes a material space where these shared memories can appear and coexist.

Testing the Method

Social Tablecloths are also being explored as a method that can be applied in different communal situations. One context currently being tested is grief and mourning. Participants are invited to bring small objects connected to a person or memory they carry with them. These objects are placed on the cloth and their shapes are imprinted while participants share the stories attached to them.

A Shared Object of Remembrance

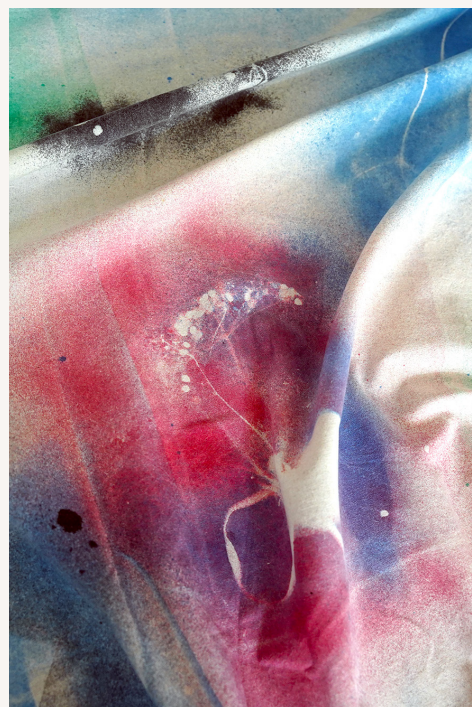
The resulting tablecloth becomes a shared object of remembrance — a surface where individual memories meet and become part of a collective narrative.

Later the cloth can continue to be used during gatherings or meals, allowing people to return to these imprints and reflect together on the stories embodied within it.

A Living Archive

In this way, the tablecloth becomes a material space of embodied memory: a fabric where traces of presence, absence, and shared experience remain visible.

It is a living archive — unfinished, mobile, and continuously rewritten by the gestures of those who gather around it.



How a Social Tablecloth Is Created?

The creation of a Social Tablecloth is both a workshop and a collective gesture. The process is simple and open, allowing participants to contribute through objects, gestures, and stories.

- Participants meet around a large piece of fabric that will become the tablecloth (**Gathering**). They are invited to bring found, personal, or discarded objects — small items that carry a memory, a meaning, or simply attract their attention.
- Objects are arranged on the fabric (**Placing Objects**). Participants experiment with different compositions, placing spoons, leaves, buttons, fragments of textile, tools, or other everyday items onto the cloth. Hands and bodies also become part of the process as people press their palms or arms against the surface.
- Using bleaching or paint, the shapes of the objects are transferred onto the fabric. The material reacts to the process and gradually reveals the outlines and shadows of what was placed on it. The cloth begins to fill with traces of gestures and objects (**Making the Imprints**).
- Alongside the imprint, participants are invited to share a short story about the object they brought or chose (**Sharing Stories**). These stories connect the material trace to personal memory, creating a layered relationship between object, gesture, and narrative.
- Once the workshop ends, the cloth does not remain a finished artwork. It returns to everyday use: it is placed on tables during meals, conversations, or gatherings (**Returning to the Table**). Over time it may receive new traces and stories, continuing to evolve as a living object.



Possible Contexts

Social Tablecloths are conceived as a flexible method that can be adapted to different communal situations. Because the process is simple and participatory, it can create spaces for encounter, reflection, and shared memory.

- Shared Meals. The most natural context is the table itself. During communal meals participants create a tablecloth together and later continue using it during future gatherings, allowing the fabric to accumulate new layers of presence.
- Workshops and Educational Settings. The method can be used in artistic or educational contexts to explore memory, materiality, and collective creativity. Participants engage with fabric, objects, and storytelling as a way of reflecting on everyday life and shared environments.
- Community Gatherings. In neighbourhoods, cultural centres, or public events, the tablecloth can function as a platform for meeting strangers and creating a shared artifact that reflects the diversity of experiences present in the group.
- Rituals of Remembrance. The process can also support situations of remembrance, grief, or commemoration. Participants bring objects connected to a person or memory they carry with them. By imprinting these objects on the cloth and sharing stories, the group creates a collective surface of remembrance.
- Travelling Encounters. Because the cloth remains usable and mobile, it can travel between different places and communities. Each new context adds further traces, turning the textile into a record of encounters across time and space.



Impact

This project bridges community memory and material science. It demonstrates how collective rituals such as eating together can become laboratories for sustainable design. By shifting to regenerative processes, Social Tablecloths proposes a way to embed ecological awareness directly into cultural practices of memory-making.



About

Noviki is a design and research studio founded by Katarzyna Nestorowicz and Marcin Nowicki, working across typography, publishing, and visual narratives. Their practice explores the intersection of design, language, and material culture — how interfaces, both digital and tactile, shape the ways we communicate and perceive. They approach design as a process of inquiry and dialogue, where form becomes a site of reflection, experimentation, and social imagination.

Outside the studio, Noviki initiate **Future Fragments**, a platform inspired by William Gibson's notion that "the future is already here — it's just not evenly distributed."

Future Fragments is a space for open discussions, lectures, and screenings that explore how contemporary technologies transform our culture, daily lives, and ways of imagining what lies ahead. Conceived as a dynamic platform, it reflects on the future as it unfolds around us — fragmented, uneven, and deeply embedded in local contexts. The series invites researchers, creators, and practitioners, as well as anyone seeking a deeper understanding of the changes emerging at the intersection of technology and culture.

Visit:

↳ futurefragments.online

↳ noviki.net











