

Coming To The Table

The Long Table is a format for discussion that uses the setting of a domestic dinner table as a means to generate public conversation. Conceived in 2003 by Lois Weaver in response to the divided nature of conventional panel discussions, the Long Table allows voices to be heard equally, disrupting hierarchical notions of 'expertise.' It was inspired by Maureen Gorris's film *Antonia's Line*, the central image of which is a dinner table getting longer and longer to accommodate a growing family of outsiders, eccentrics and friends – until finally it has to be moved outside. Since then, the Table has been set at institutions and festivals worldwide, and invited hundreds of people to sit and share their views on myriad topics. The Long Table is an opensource format; you are welcome to use it as a means of generating discussion on any subject you choose.

Setting The Table

A space, light focused on the Table, microphones

The Long Table is also a performance; people can participate by sitting at the Table, in the light, and using microphones, spectate by watching and listening from the outside, and move between these roles as and when they choose.

A long table, twelve chairs

Approximately two banqueting tables in length: any longer, or with any more participants, and you will struggle to maintain a single conversation.

Surrounding chairs for spectators

Well-spaced and easily accessible, to allow for the free-flowing choreography of coming and going from the Table.

White tablecloth, marker pens

Everyone at the Table can write their own comments and notes, to help document the conversation. The cloth provides a physical record of the event.

A hostess, and etiquette

The Table will moderate itself, and there is no need for anyone to 'tie up loose ends' at the end; however, a hostess can ensure everyone follows the etiquette, and close the conversation at the set time.