

Video Window

The Video Window is a simple device, in both concept and execution. A video camera mounted high above the home provides a new vista within – and that's it. Originally developed by one of the team, Bill Gaver, for his own home, the system is currently housed with volunteers. Will they find it appealing? Will it become a meaningful part of their daily lives?

The Video Window consists of a Sony CCD camera mounted on a ten-metre fishing poll which is attached to the roof of one's house. The camera is linked to a display device indoors, which is always on.

Bill first designed a version of the system for his own home. In fact, he designed several versions. It was a hobby of sorts: refining the design in his spare time, with only himself and his wife to please. When we decided to install the system in a volunteer's home, we discovered that pleasing other people is more demanding, because makeshift arrangements (in which technology hobbyists tend to delight) can seem intrusive or even destructive. To avoid structural damage to the volunteer's house, we had to strap the pole to balcony, and then feed the cable, via drainage pipes, through a hole once used for a TV aerial cable.

We spent some time choosing a good view for the camera. With the pole extended all the way, the camera was just able to view the sea – something that the householders could only see by peering through the dormer window on the top floor of the house. The evening breeze made the camera sway to and fro, causing the image on the screen to sway gently, as if seen from the prow of a boat.



Installing the Video Window in Celia's house in Sussex, 16 June 2006.



The Video Window display in the home.



A shot from the live video stream.