



Annual Review - December 2023

<https://thentrythis.org/>
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Then Try This is a non-profit research, design and development organisation, for environmental and social purpose. This review covers the work from our studio in 2023. Everything we make is open source, so it's all freely available to use and modify.



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[mastodon.thentrythis.org](https://mastodon.thentrythis.org/@thentrythis)
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[@then_try_this](https://www.instagram.com/then_try_this)

**We are working towards
a world with equitable
access to knowledge,
where thoughtful tools
and interventions help us
play with complexity and
make better decisions,
and environmental and
social issues are centred
and addressed with
careful urgency.**

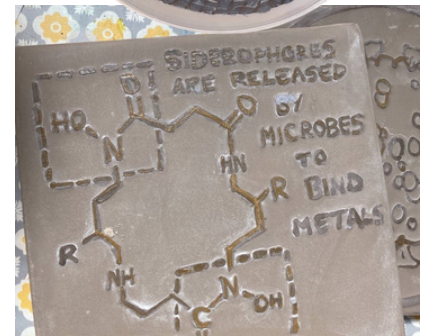
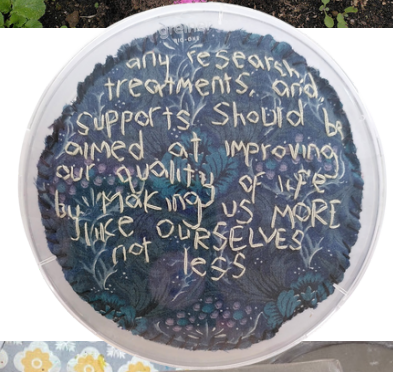
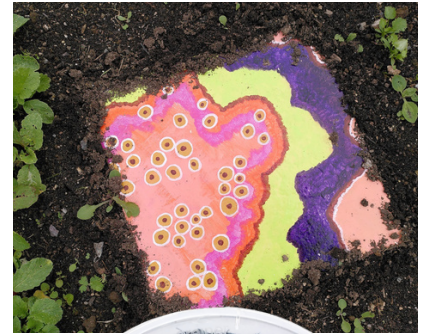
SOCIAL MICROBES

Microbes display social behaviours that benefit their communities as well as themselves. We had the joy of developing, curating and supporting three residencies this year for Dr. Elze Hesse as part of her UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship, on the theme of Social Microbes. We put out an open call and from lots of amazing applicants, picked dancer/climate activist Francesca Willow, textile artist/occupational health therapist Hattie Porter, and research software developer/maker Tiff Leek. Each resident spent time with a different guest host organisation (Soul Farm, the Fish Factory, and Wheal Martyn), visited Elze in her microbiology lab, and worked with us in the studio, researching and creating around the theme.

Their work included an outdoor ceramic relief mural for people with visual impairments, a choreographed dance and bright painted installations around a farm, fabric printed with microscope images of their own microbiome, and hand stitched quotes in Petri dishes from autistic participants on their thoughts on microbiome research.

Read more and see the residents' work

<https://thentrythis.org/projects/social-microbes/>



NERGAL



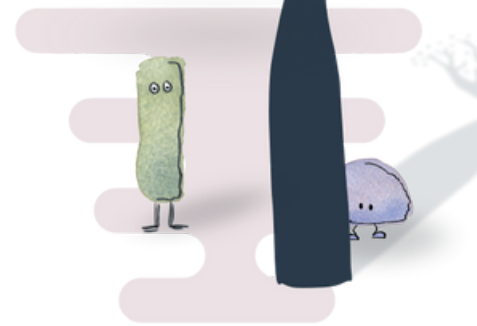
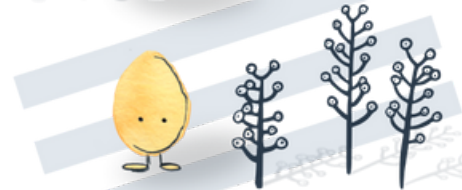
We're working with Dr. Matt Silk and Nitara Wijayatilake at the University of Edinburgh to make a new game, called Nergal (after a Mesopotamian god of disease), to help understand how social decisions change the way diseases spread around communities.

Most simulations of how diseases spread assume that people make perfect decisions, which definitely isn't the case. But - it's really hard to track individual people's decisions in a real life epidemic situation. By making a game world we're trying to reach a sweet spot between a simulation and the real world. In a game, people can make their imperfect decisions without any risk of actually getting sick, and we can track every decision made and all the impacts.

The project is at a very early stage, working on the design and getting the epidemiological and social network models working. Keep an eye out for progress in 2024!

Read more

<https://thentrythis.org/projects/citizen-science-for-epidemiology/>



CRICKET TALES



Some of us are morning people, others like evenings better. Are insects the same as us?
Help find out by playing this game!

PLAY!

ABOUT THE PROJECT



University
of Exeter



Natural
Environment
Research Council

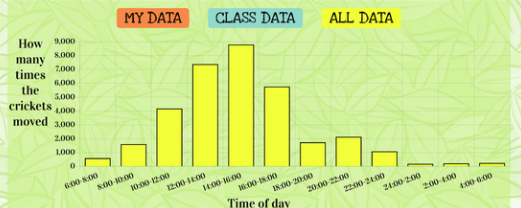
Watch scientist Professor Tom Tregenza explain Cricket Tales



Hello and welcome to Cricket Tales.



RESEARCH RESULTS : MOVEMENT



MOVEMENT

EATING

SINGING

MY CRICKET

PLAY AGAIN

QUIT

CRICKET TALES

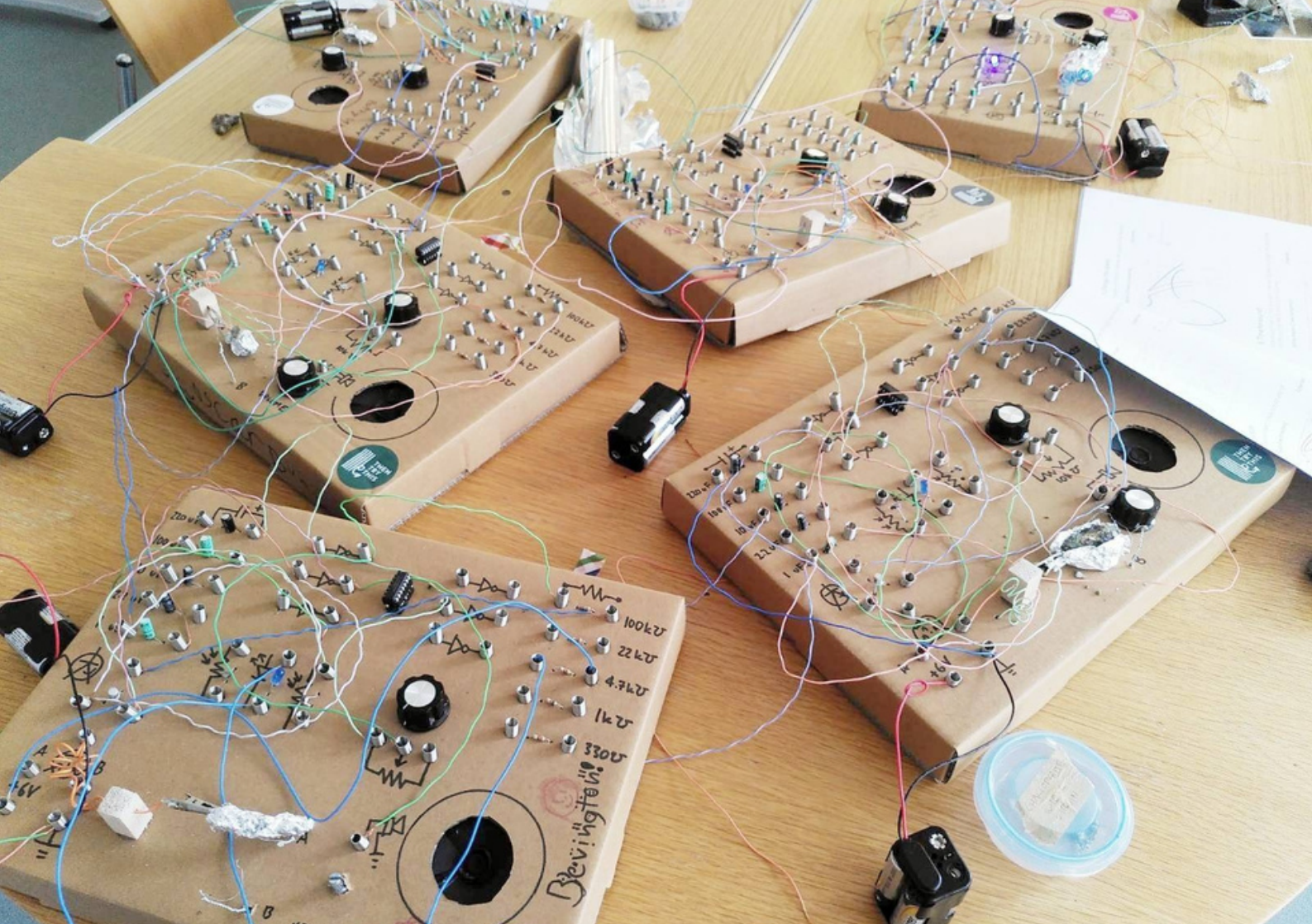
In a secret field in Spain, hundreds of cricket burrows are monitored using CCTV. Cricket Tales allows players to tag events from the videos, contributing directly to research on insect personalities. This tells us how flexible the crickets' lifestyles are, and how insects might cope as our climate changes.

Cricket Tales was made with Prof. Tom Tregenza at the University of Exeter, funded by the Natural Environment Research Council. It's been installed for several years at the Eden Project and is available online. This year we've re-developed it for schools, aimed at the Key Stage 3 curriculum including graphs and variation. It's been tested in schools around Cornwall by Janine Bisson who has also made a full, free lesson plan to go with it.

Read more and get the teaching materials

<https://thentrythis.org/projects/crickets/>

<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/-12870684>



ORGANISED ATOMS

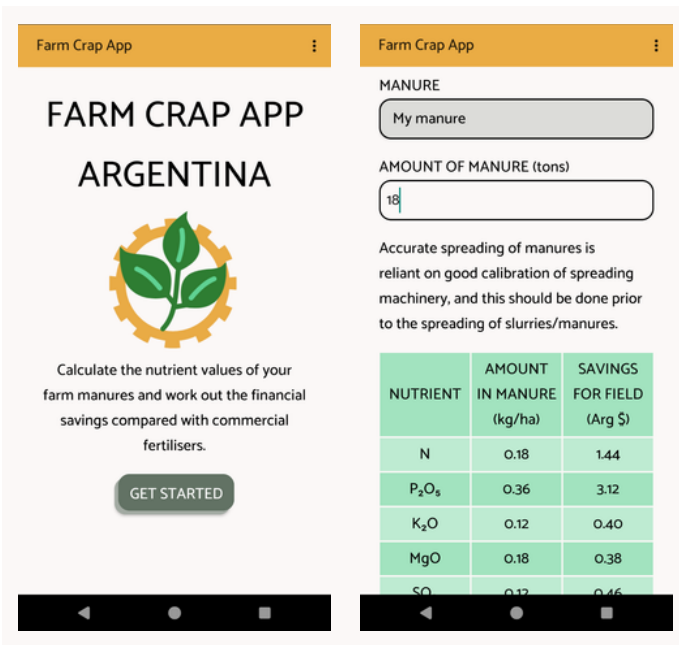
A field trip, workshop and open lab with Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change in Redruth, commissioned for the Flamm Festival run by Creative Kernow.

We started at Poldice mine near Gwennap, walking & talking about Cornish mining and collecting crystals from the waste piles surrounding one of the shafts on the site. The following week we turned them into electronic components we could use in our Cardboard Crystal Synthesisers. Many natural minerals found in Cornwall have semiconducting properties that provided unpredictability for our electronic sounds. This project was about approaching technology starting with the earth, in order to be able to discuss conflict minerals, our unstable supply chains and surprising historical gender roles in mining, via the Bal Maidens.

Read more and build a cardboard synth

<https://thentrythis.org/projects/organised-atoms/>





CRAP APP ARGENTINA

A long time ago we made the Farm Crap App for farmers to work out the nutrient value of their farm manure so they could stop buying commercial fertilisers but still report nutrients spread to the Government as required. It won the Soil Association Innovation Award and was recommended to farmers by the Government.

This year we've been working with Dr. Robert Dunn at Rothamsted Research to make a simplified version, in Spanish and English, for farmers in Argentina - all free and open source, as usual. Farmers can add their field info, manure data and calculate the nutrients and cost savings for their farm.

Read more

<https://thentrythis.org/projects/farm-crap-app-argentina/>

MEADOW MATCH

We've lost 97% of our wildflower meadows in living memory and those that remain are important sites for biodiversity and carbon storage so it's vital that we find those existing sites and help to create more. Meadow Match is a project to match up land owners with wild flower meadows that seed can be harvested from, with potential recipient sites where more meadows could be created.

The project is run by the Wildflower Collective CIC, alongside lots of their collaborators. The matching process is complicated, with a lot of ecological and land management variables that need to align. At the moment this is all being done manually, which is hard to scale. We've been working with Dr. Grace Twiston-Davies and Dr. Rosalind Shaw to figure out how to build a system to handle all their data reliably, and partially automate the matching process. It's early stages so far, but we now have a full system plan and wireframes ready to go.

Read more

<https://thentrythis.org/projects/meadow-match/>



ALGORITHMIC PATTERN

This Future Leaders Fellowship project is funded by the UKRI, supporting our first research fellow Alex McLean in looking at heritage patterns to inform new creative technologies.

The second year of this 4-7 year project included making hand-drawn and textile interfaces, robot dance patterns, new live coding technology, and running an online “algorithmic pattern salon” with over 300 signups that brought pattern makers together, with international speakers from countries including Estonia, Germany, Chile, Italy and Mexico.

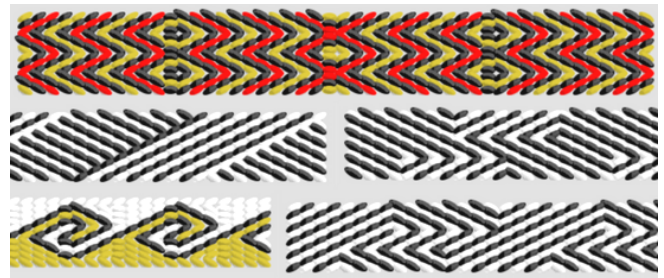
Read more

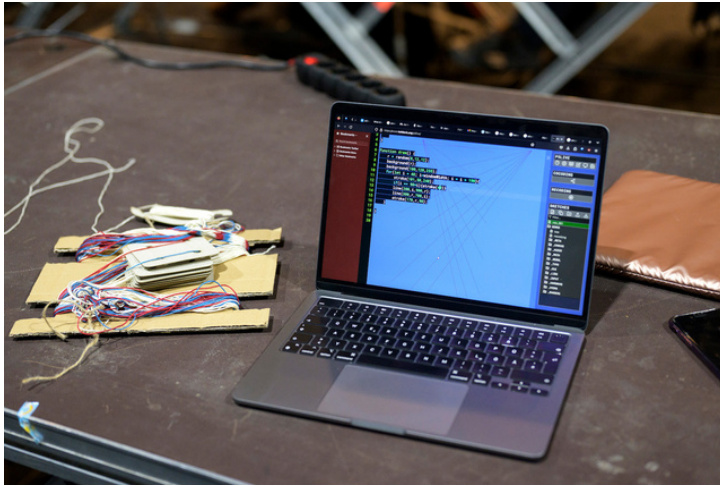
<https://thentrythis.org/projects/alpaca/>

See also

[Strudel - live coding patterns on the web:](https://strudel.cc/)

<https://strudel.cc/>





PATTERN CLUB

There are deep cultural and social aspects to how patterns are made and shared, so it has been great collaborating on running Sheffield Pattern Club with Ray Morrison and Lucy Cheesman.

Together we've run workshops on patterns in braiding, blackwork embroidery, e-textiles, algorithmic music, and music improvisation, as well as live events showcasing pattern-based music and dance performance.

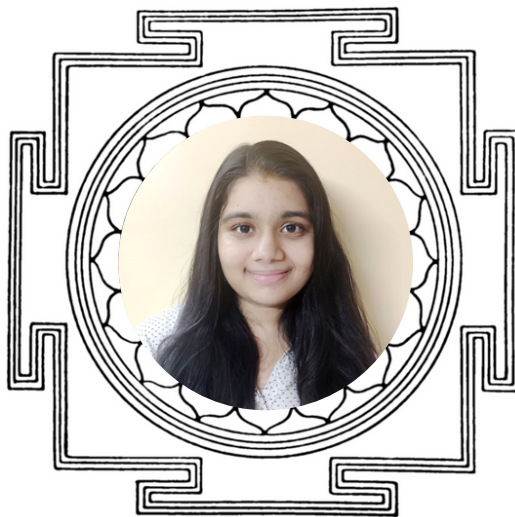
If you're interested in starting your own pattern club get in touch - we are happy to see one has already popped up in London!

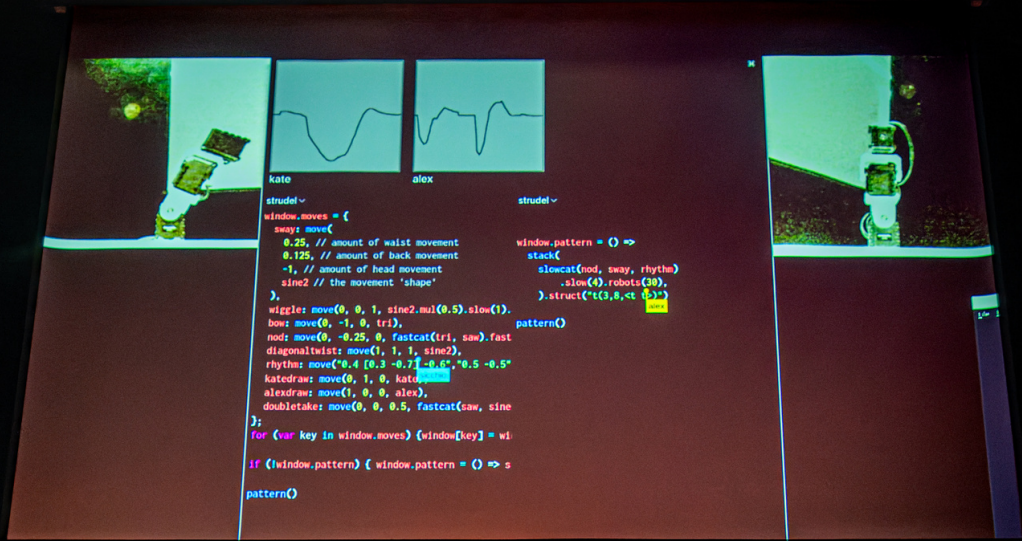
Read more

<https://patternclub.org/>



We hosted some lovely researchers and practitioners for residencies as part of the Algorithmic Pattern project. Antonio Roberts dreamed about live coding interfaces, Paola Torres Núñez del Prado taught us Andean Informatics, and in collaboration with Digital Gardens festival, V Buckenham made letter patterns, and I Nakhala explored live coding vocal loops. We also hosted Saachi Kaup in exploring live coding mandala patterns, supported by the Haskell Foundation.





```
strudel~
window.moves = {
  sways: moves {
    0.25, // amount of waist movement
    0.125, // amount of back movement
    -1, // amount of head movement
    sine2 // the movement 'shape'
  },
  wiggle: move(0, 0, 1, sine2.mul(0.5).slow(1)),
  bow: move(0, -1, 0, tri),
  nod: move(0, -0.25, 0, fastcat(tri, saw).fast),
  diagonaltwist: move(1, 1, sine2),
  rhythus: move(0.4 [0.3 -0.7] -0.6, 0.5 -0.5),
  katedraw: move(0, 1, 0, kato),
  alexdraw: move(1, 0, 0, alex),
  doubletake: move(0, 0, 0.5, fastcat(saw, sine)
);
for (var key in window.moves) window[key] = wi
if (!window.pattern) { window.pattern = () => s
pattern()
}
```



FUNDING PANEL WORK

One of our directors was taken on as a panel chair for the new UKRI cross research council responsive mode pilot scheme, for two years. This is the first properly interdisciplinary research funding from the UK Government, and the first time they're trying grant review using a trained and paid cohort of reviewers and panels, including people from outside universities like us. So, we're really happy to be able to support them in this experiment, and we're sure we'll learn lots from it too.

Read about the scheme

<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/ukri-cross-research-council-responsive-mode-pilot-scheme/>

ACCESSLAB TRAINING

AccessLab is one of our flagship projects, a workshop format to broaden access to scientific evidence through pairing scientific researchers with people who are seeking reliable information for their work or personal lives. Our focus is on developing skills for finding scientific information and judging its reliability. This year we've been supporting Dr. Bobby May and Annah McCurry at the University of St. Andrews to run their own AccessLab on the topic of violence and aggression, and we're really happy they had fabulous feedback from their participants!

Read more

<https://thentrythis.org/projects/accesslab/>

WORKSHOPS & TEACHING

We explored notations for robotics and dance with Kate Sicchio during a Patterns, Movement & Live Coding workshop in Richmond (US), Sheffield and Penryn (UK).

We've also been teaching students on the Electronic Music, Computing and Technology course at Goldsmiths, University of London with Dr. Eleonora Oreggia, and at the Institute for Music and Media in Düsseldorf in Germany with Prof. Julian Rohrer.

We showed participants how to weave with tablets as a way to learn about algorithmic patterns at the Adela festival in Ljubljana in Slovenia with Luka Frelj, Ivan Paz and Lizzie Wilson.



PUBLICATIONS

Griffiths A, Griffiths D. The development of decision support tools for climate and environmental action (a mini handbook). doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10022085

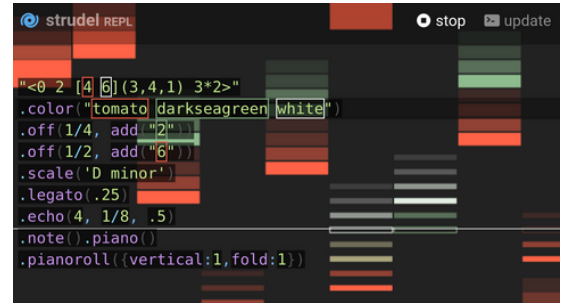
McLean A, Rohrhuber J, Weiser R. The Meaning of Live. International Conference on Live Coding 2023 (ILC). doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7843567

Griffiths D, Wilson E, Paz I, McLean A, et al. Patterns in Deep Time. Conference on Computation, Communication, Aesthetics & X (xCoAx). doi.org/10.34626/xcoax.2023.11th.277

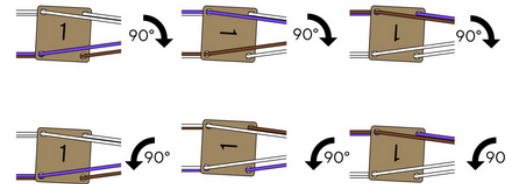
Wilson E, Schubert D, Satomi M, McLean A, Gonzalez J. "MosAlck: Staging Contemporary AI Performance - Connecting Live Coding, E-Textiles and Movement. International Conference on Live Coding 2023. doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7843540

Roos F, McLean A. Strudel: Live Coding Patterns on the Web. International Conference on Live Coding 2023. doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7842142

McLean A. Pattern and Groove in Live Coding. Groove Workshop. doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10377710



```
strudel REPL stop update
"<0 2 [4 6] (3,4,1) 3*2>"
.color("tomato darkseagreen white")
.off(1/4, add "2")
.off(1/2, add "6")
.scale('D minor')
.legato(.25)
.echo(4, 1/8, .5)
.note().piano()
.pianoroll({vertical:1,fold:1})
```





DAVE GRIFFITHS

Director



AMBER GRIFFITHS

Director



ALEX McLEAN

Research Fellow



JULIETA ARANCIO

Non-Executive Director



JANE SUTHERLAND

Non-Executive Director



KAREN ANDERSON

Non-Executive Director



WANT TO WORK TOGETHER?

If you have a project you'd like us to collaborate on or help you with, just get in touch and we'll see what we can do. We're open to a wide variety of projects, and we can work in lots of different ways:

- Research projects - we lead, collaborate, and help with grant applications.
- Fellowships - we can be the host organisation for a Future Leaders Fellowship.
- Commissions - we often do commissions, like software, hardware, exhibitions...
- Teaching - we regularly do guest teaching for universities all around the world.
- Other project bids - we can lead or collaborate on projects that aren't research based, for example for Arts Council and National Lottery calls, and can support you to write your bid.

Funders

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)
UK Department of Health and Social Care
Royal Society
UK Shared Prosperity Fund
European Structural and Investment Funds
Cornwall Council
Arts Council England

Collaborating/Commissioning Organisations

University of Edinburgh
University of Exeter
University of St. Andrews
Soul Farm
Wheal Martyn
Fish Factory
Cornwall Council
Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change
Creative Kernow
Rothamsted Research
The Wildflower Collective CIC
& Maggie Makes
Dynamicland
Ljudmila
Haskell Foundation
Axolot / TOPLAP Barcelona

Collaborators

Elze Hesse
Matt Silk
Nitara Wijayatilake
Tom Tregenza
Janine Bisson
Robert Dunn
Grace Twiston-Davies
Rosalind Shaw
Katherine Roberts
Dr. Bobby May
Annah McCurry
Luka Frelih
Iván Paz
Lizzie Wilson
Paola Torres Núñez del Prado
Julian Rohrerhuber
Eleonora Oreggia
Luke Iannini

Kate Sicchio
Lucy Cheesman
Ray Morrison
Mika Satomi
Laura Devendorf
Vernelle A. A. Noel
Anuradha Reddy
Felix Roos

Residents

Hattie Porter
Tiff Leek
Francesca Willow
Antonio Roberts
V Buckenham
I Nakhla
Saachi Kaup



The standout thing from 2023 has been working with some of the most thoughtful and brilliant people we've ever met. Their energy, grounding, and understanding of the level of change we're facing brings a stark contrast to the old ways, and has filled us with hope.

Next year we're looking forward to welcoming and getting to know our next Algorithmic Pattern residents, and seeing what bewildering new projects come through our door! Keep an eye out for the Farm Crap App and Nergal game, which will both be released in 2024.





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