

SON



THEN  
TRY  
THIS

**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 2025. Everything we make is open source, so it's all freely available to use and modify.**



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**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.**



## SMOGOFF

Our low-cost open source air pollution sensor project has been going for several years. This year we redesigned them to be easier for people to build, published full documentation on how to make them, and sent three out to community groups around the UK. One went to a clean air group in Manchester, another to a bike advocacy group in Worcester and the other to a parish council in Cornwall. Dr. Jo Garrett has been interviewing them to see how they got on with the sensors and how the data is being used, and that will help us improve the project in future.

### Read more

[thentrythis.org/projects/smogoff/](https://thentrythis.org/projects/smogoff/)



## NERGAL

Nergal is a new online citizen science game made with Dr. Matthew Silk and Nitara Wijayatilake at the University of Edinburgh. You play as a little creature exploring the world, making and breaking friendships, getting snacks, and hopefully avoiding an ominous disease... Data from the game helps the researchers understand how people's social networks and decisions change the way diseases spread through communities. This is something that can't easily be studied in real life, because people's decisions and social interactions are so complex that they are hard to track.

We also released a version made with and for people with little or no sight, so it can be played entirely through sound. Accessibility is sadly rarely considered in citizen science projects. We were invited to show the game at the Royal Society Summer Exhibition, and the Royal Society also used Nergal at their report launch on Disability & Technology.

### Read more & play:

[thentrythis.org/projects/nergal](https://thentrythis.org/projects/nergal)





## ORGANISED ATOMS

This year we returned to United Downs Raceway to run three workshops searching for crystals, identifying them, and using them as semiconductors in synth circuits to make sounds - all funded by the Royal Society of Chemistry. Together with our older cardboard synths, we took along our new wooden 'log' synth for making music from the shiny semiconductors we found.

Cornish artist Libita Sibungu and PhD researcher Rosanna Martin joined us too, exploring mine sites, looking for colourful minerals and finding new ways to use them. We also commissioned muralist Natasha Watson to design and paint a mural connecting the raceway to its past life as the Ale and Cakes mine, as a lovely legacy for the project.

### Read more

[thentrythis.org/projects/organised-atoms/](https://thentrythis.org/projects/organised-atoms/)









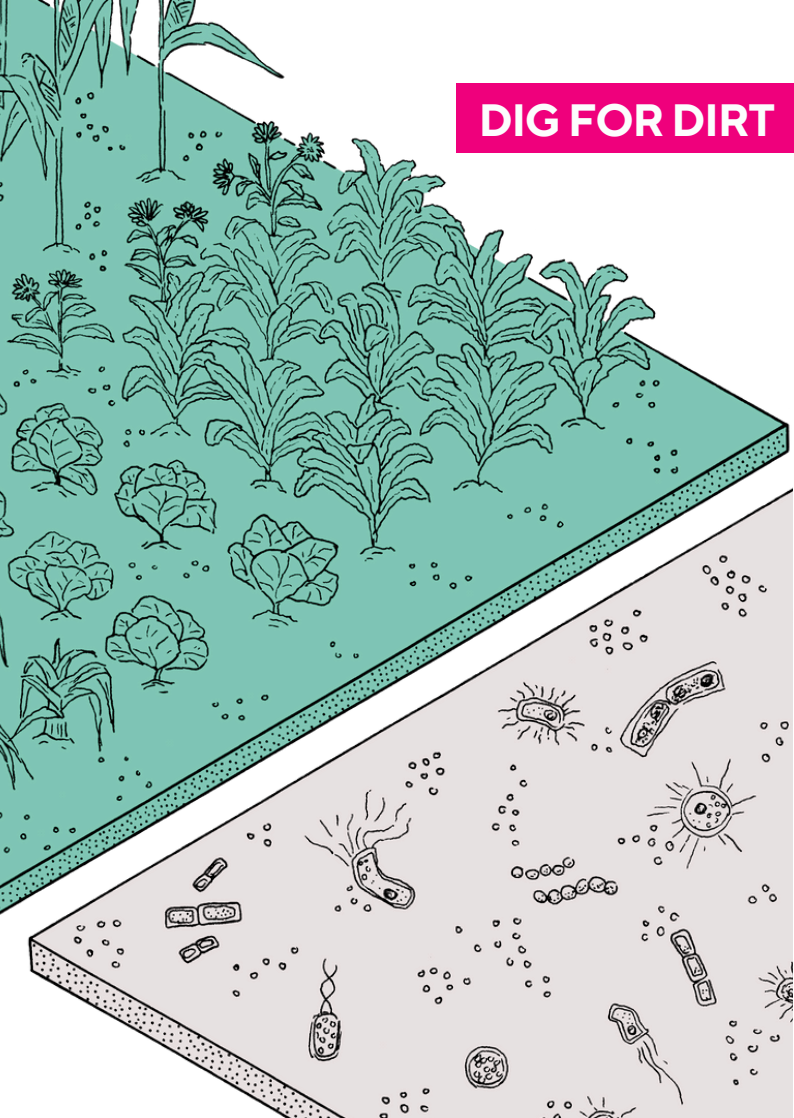
## ACCESSLAB - HEALTHY SOILS

AccessLab is one of our long term projects, and is all about broadening access to scientific research. In January 2025 we ran an AccessLab for Dr. Elze Hesse (University of Exeter) on the theme of 'Healthy Soils', funded by Elze's UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship. The workshop was fully booked nearly 2 months ahead, with a mix of farmers, artists and scientists.

We paired up pre-trained science researchers with our participants to pass on skills for how to find, access, and judge the reliability of scientific research. The participants came out having done research on the specific questions they brought, but also able to generalise the approach to other topics. Often for the first time, the researchers experienced how tricky it is to do research without extortionate journal subscriptions - they tend to emerge from these workshops as enthusiastic open access advocates.

**Read more** [thentrythis.org/events/accesslab](https://thentrythis.org/events/accesslab)





## DIG FOR DIRT

In the South West we have a problem with soil pollution from mine waste, which can affect the crops. Bacteria can clean up the soil so the plants take up less pollution, but we don't know a lot about how this works. In this new project with microbiologist Dr. Elze Hesse, we'll be asking growers (including gardeners, allotment holders, smallholders, and commercial farmers) to get involved by sending in soil samples. The results will help us understand how our treatment of soils affects the bacteria and their ability to clean up the soil pollution.

To begin with we're busy planning and setting up an online system for people to sign up, and then later to see their results from the project. Keep an eye out in 2026 if you'd like to take part and are based in the South West UK.

### Read more

[thentrythis.org/projects/dig-for-dirt/](https://thentrythis.org/projects/dig-for-dirt/)

# ALGORITHMIC PATTERN

Algorithmic Pattern is our UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship project, investigating patterns as culturally-embedded algorithms.

This year included exploring South Indian rhythms with percussionists B C Manjunath and Matt Davies, work with Kate Sicchio and Luke Iannini on choreographic notations, and running a course and conference with Sheffield Pattern Club.

The open source Strudel music software spawned by this project and led with Felix Roos and Jade Rowland grew as a vibrant, worldwide community.

Following a progress review, the funders have extended our project until 2029!

## Read more

[thentrythis.org/projects/alpaca](https://thentrythis.org/projects/alpaca)  
[algorithmicpattern.org](https://algorithmicpattern.org) and [strudel.cc](https://strudel.cc)







## ALPACA FESTIVAL

Our Alpaca Festival of Algorithmic Patterns in the Creative Arts brought together hundreds of people in Sheffield and online in October, to explore all kinds of heritage and contemporary patterns. The festival was organised with Ray Morrison, Lucy Cheesman and Hazel Ryan of Sheffield Pattern Club. It will return in Spring 2027, on an 18 month cycle.

**Explore the recap film, photos, proceedings and recordings**

[2025.algorithmicpattern.org](https://2025.algorithmicpattern.org)





## PLUGGABLE KNOTS & TABLET WEAVING

This year we have been trialling our Inca-inspired technology. We ran an event in Sheffield's Winter Garden with Paola Torres Núñez del Prado, as part of the Alpaca Festival. People could plug together different rope knots based on Andean khipu knotted records, varying how they were combined in order to control the movements of small woven robots. We have also started a new collaboration this year with Charlotte Megroureche and Ricardo Nemirovsky. This involved learning a 3000 year old algorithm (used to make the weaving on the left), and running a workshop in Manchester for students learning to be maths teachers - seeing how physical manipulation of threads can aid understanding of patterns, combinations and algorithms.

### **Read more**

[thentrythis.org/projects/alpaca/](https://thentrythis.org/projects/alpaca/)





## AUTHORIAL ILLUSTRATION

As professional development, one of our directors is now in the final year of a part-time Masters course at Falmouth University, in 'Illustration - Authorial Practice'. Authorial illustration is about illuminating topics through illustration and storytelling. The results are already starting to appear in our studio projects.

The last year has yielded an exhibition on the communication of climate and environmental topics, an exploration of astrophysics and grief, an upcoming publication on 'illustrating complexity', and lots of new print skills including acid etchings on CNC-cut zinc plates, traditional wood engravings, embossing, Riso printing, and a possibly unhealthy obsession with paper.

### Read more

[thentrythis.org/notes/2025/04/30/manifesto-exhibition-communicating-our-changing-world/](https://thentrythis.org/notes/2025/04/30/manifesto-exhibition-communicating-our-changing-world/)



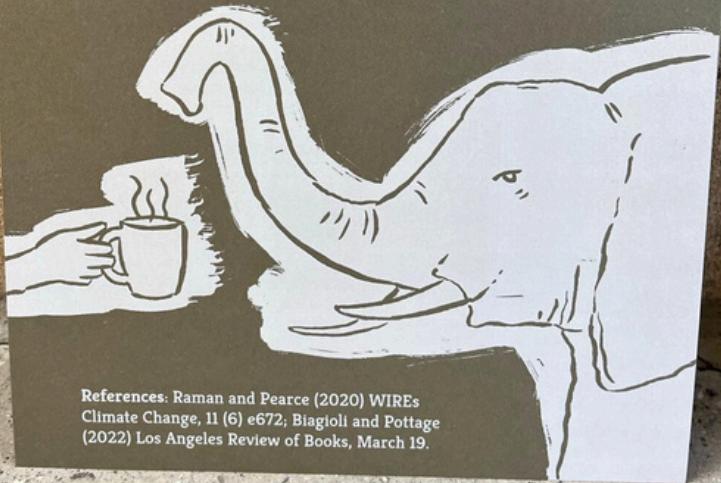


# welcome the elephant into the room

Our climate and ecosystems are in bad shape, and hiding from it won't help. Underplaying this breaks trust, creating space for conspiracies to brew. The difficulty comes from presenting the gravity without demoralising people to the point of inaction. Always show possible paths forward.

Talk to the scientists first-hand, ask about how they feel and how they've changed their lives. Talk to others working on the front-lines of these issues, and to those most affected.

Be aware of the controversies and powerful vested interests, and approach them head on.



References: Raman and Pearce (2020) WIREs  
Climate Change, 11 (6) e672; Biagioli and Pottage  
(2022) Los Angeles Review of Books, March 19.

4.6 billion years ago. A star dies,  
ing gases in a dust cloud. Most of  
smic matter gathers towards the  
with the rest forming a spinning  
rounding it. This becomes our  
our solar system, our home.







## COCOON RESIDENCIES

We've been getting ready to launch some new residencies! This time the residents will be working with us and evolutionary biology researcher Dr. Ben Longdon (University of Exeter), based at our studio in Cornwall. The theme will be moths and the viruses that affect them, as part of Ben's research project funded by the Natural Environment Research Council.

In the past our residents have included an illustrator, chef, climate activist, designer, sound artist, ceramicist, occupational therapist, and others. We absolutely love running these, and often end up working with our residents longer term.

The residencies will be paid, and the plan is to open for applications in spring 2026 - keep an eye on our website if you'd like to know more.



## NEW STUDIO

It was a bit of a disruptive year of moving about, finally leaving our studio at Jubilee Warehouse after being there for a whole decade.

We were incredibly lucky to get a spot at Potager Garden near Constantine in Cornwall. It's a great fit for us as they run various regular sessions for different community groups, there's a huge workshop full of equipment we can use, and lots of space for running outdoor events. It's a very beautiful and relaxing space to be in. Come say hi if you're in the area!



## OTHER ACTIVITIES

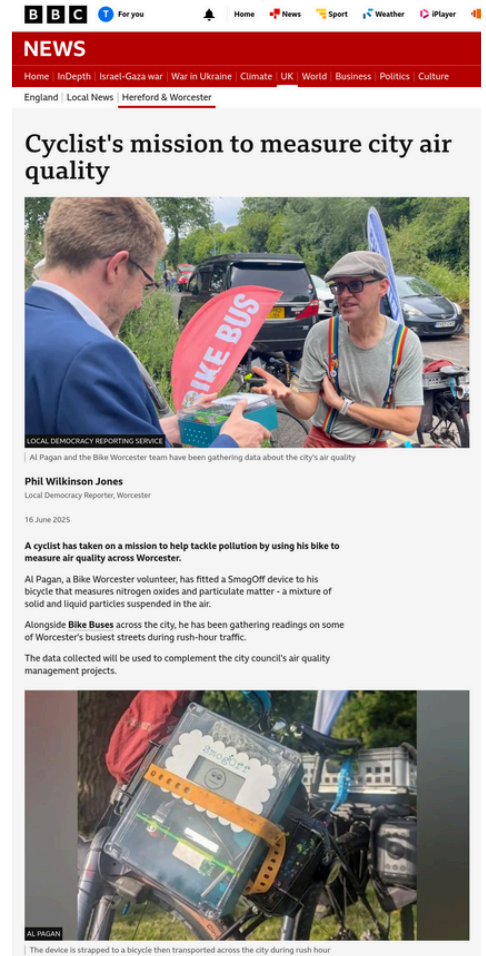
SmogOff made an appearance on the BBC news, thanks to Al Pagen from Bike Worcester.

We've been helping Falmouth Art Gallery with data evaluation to understand their visitors better - the start of a process for finding and encouraging excluded audiences.

Our cardboard crystal synth gig and microscope tour of Cornish crystals at Constant in Brussels formed part of their 'Zero volts' critical minerals event. We also did 'live coded' algorithmic music performances in Dundee, Barcelona, Berlin and London, and curated a set of performances with Iklectik at No Bounds festival Sheffield.

We continued running monthly meetups with our sibling organisation Pattern Club Sheffield, covering lacemaking, konnakol and live coding.

We're consulting on a project led by Catarina Fontoura at Falmouth University, on ant sociality and ecological art.



## PUBLICATIONS

Paola Torres Nuñez del Prado , Alex McLean, Dave Griffiths. 2024. 'Tangible, textile, tactile: Interactive Khipu Interfaces for Algorithmic Pattern'. Politics of the Machines: Lifelikeness & beyond, Aachen 2024 (POM 2024) [10.14236/ewic/POM24.42](https://10.14236/ewic/POM24.42)

Laura Devendorf, Alex McLean, Vernelle A. A. Noel, Iván Paz, Anu Reddy, and Elizabeth Wilson. 2025. 'What Is Algorithmic Pattern? Reflections on a Salon.' xCoAx Dundee. [10.34626/2025\\_XCOAX\\_007](https://10.34626/2025_XCOAX_007)

Kate Sicchio, Alex McLean, Luke Iannini. 2025. Algorithmic Alphabets for Patterns of Movement. ICLC2025, Barcelona. [10.5281/zenodo.15526836](https://10.5281/zenodo.15526836)

Justin Pickard, Dave Griffiths. 2025 'Backwards to the Ground: Counter-Technologies and Geological Time'. FoAM Anarchive. [anarchive.foam.cc/silver/backwards\\_to\\_the\\_ground](https://anarchive.foam.cc/silver/backwards_to_the_ground)

## TEACHING

University of the Arts, London with Evan Raskob, introducing students on the course to Then Try This, open source and the non-profit sector.

Critical Programming at the Institute For Music And Media of the Robert Schumann School of Music and Media in Düsseldorf.

Workshops including Wickersley and Thrybergh schools in Rotherham, the Music x Code summer school in Peckham.

Guest lectures at the Universities of Sheffield and Liverpool Hope, and the Phoenix arts centre Leicester.







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 (and do!) host UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships.
- Commissions - we take on commissions for software, hardware, exhibitions etc.
- Teaching - we provide guest teaching for universities all around the world.
- Other types of project bids - we also lead and collaborate on projects aren't research based (e.g. for arts or social funding), and can support you to write your bid.

**Some buzzwords for things we can help with:** Citizen science, community technology, participatory science, game design, decision support tools, software, hardware, data visualisation, illustration, design, public engagement, research impact, civic involvement, open science/data, appropriate technology.

## **Funders**

UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships  
University of Exeter Civic University Agreements fund  
The Royal Society  
Impetus (Horizon Europe)  
Natural Environment Research Council  
Ecological Citizens' Network  
Royal Society of Chemistry

## **Collaborating/Commissioning Organisations**

Iklectik  
No Bounds Festival  
Music in the Round  
University of Edinburgh  
iSightCornwall  
University of Exeter  
Falmouth Art Gallery  
Falmouth University  
Bike Worcester  
Clean Air Whalley Range  
Lanner Parish Council  
United Downs Raceway

## **PhD supervisee**

Paola Torres Núñez del Prado

## **Collaborators**

Lucy Cheesman	Charlotte Brand
Ray Morrison	Jo Garrett
Hazel Ryan	Matthew Silk
Seiko Kinoshita	Nitara Wijayatilake
Rosa Cisneros	Ben Longdon
Antonio Roberts	Catarina Fontoura
Rian Treanor	Haydn Uren
Felix Roos	Stuart Crowle
Jade Rowland	Beatrix Love
Lizzie Wilson	Jahred Love
Laura Devendorf	James Smithson
Vernelle A. A. Noel	Bethan Perry
Iván Paz	Sophie Butcher
Anu Reddy	Dom Hall
Julian Rohrerhuber	Lauren Rudkin
Luke Iannini	Carole Theobald
Kate Sicchio	Rosi Jolly
Wataru Uegaki	Libita Sibungu
B C Manjunath	Natasha Watson
Matt Davies	Rosanna Martin
Elze Hesse	Ioana Vreme Moser
Jon Bennie	Rosalind Shaw

## WHAT'S NEXT?

In early 2026 we'll be launching the Cocoon residency open call, and a new residency call for the Algorithmic Pattern project. We'll be getting the Dig for Dirt citizen science project ready for growers to participate, and taking Nergal to the Edinburgh Science Festival. In the summer it'll be time for the final show for the Authorial Illustration MA.

There will be more pattern explorations including in Bharatanatyam dance, and we'll be helping Sheffield Pattern Club become its own non-profit organisation. Also look out for little synths emerging from offcuts of granite from the Organised Atoms project.

One of the joys of this strange job is having such a broad range of people and ideas come through our door, so a huge thank you to everyone we've worked with in 2025, and we can't wait to meet new faces in 2026!





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