

# LIVING TOOLS

**the value of malleability**



## ABOUT ME

**mark wonnacott a.k.a candle**  
they/them pronouns. based in  
bristol, uk

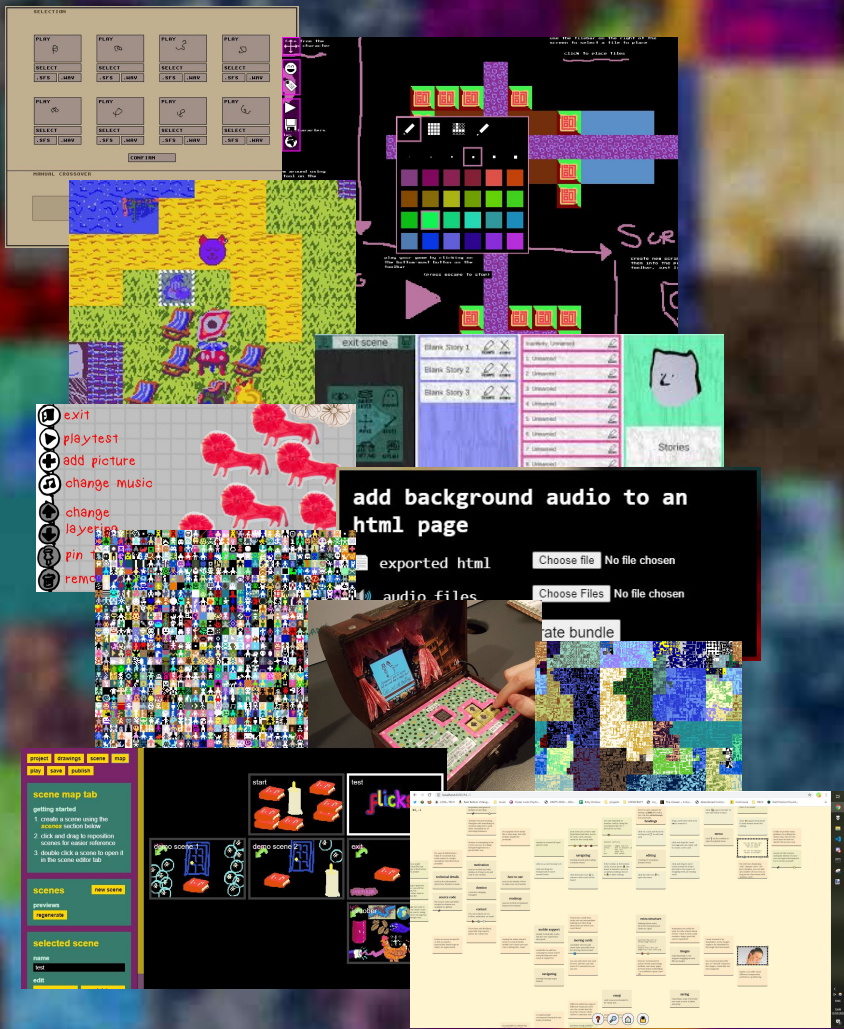
### **my work**

small tool maker, low tech  
enthusiast, programmer day job

@ragzouken

kool.tools

candle.itch.io

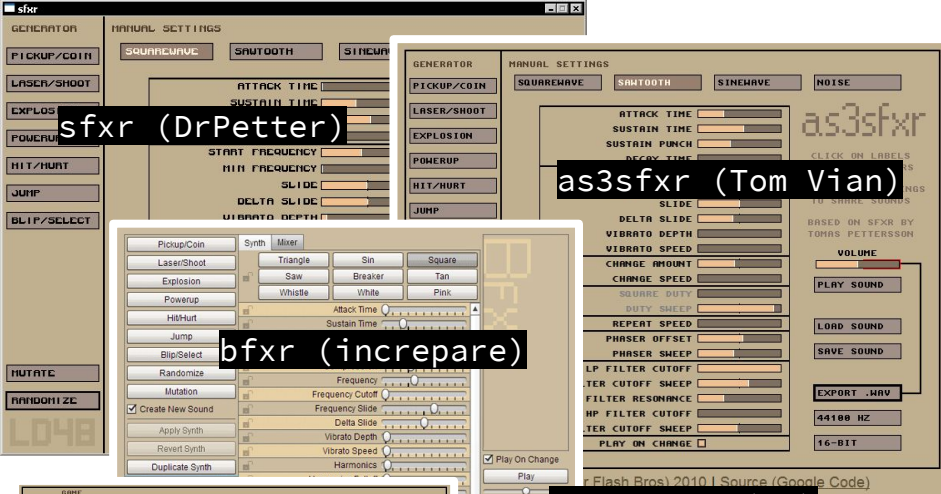


# THIS TALK

an overview of my own work making small creative tools, and the work of others i've built upon

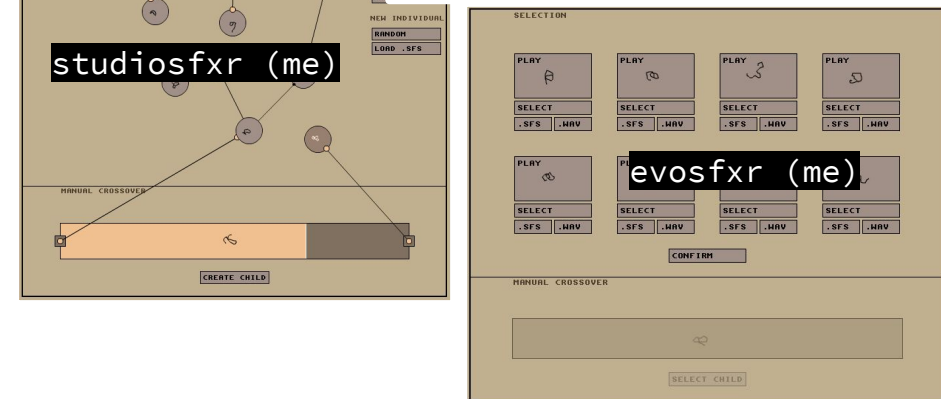
personal reflections on the successes of these tools

my current opinions on designing small creative tools based on these experiences



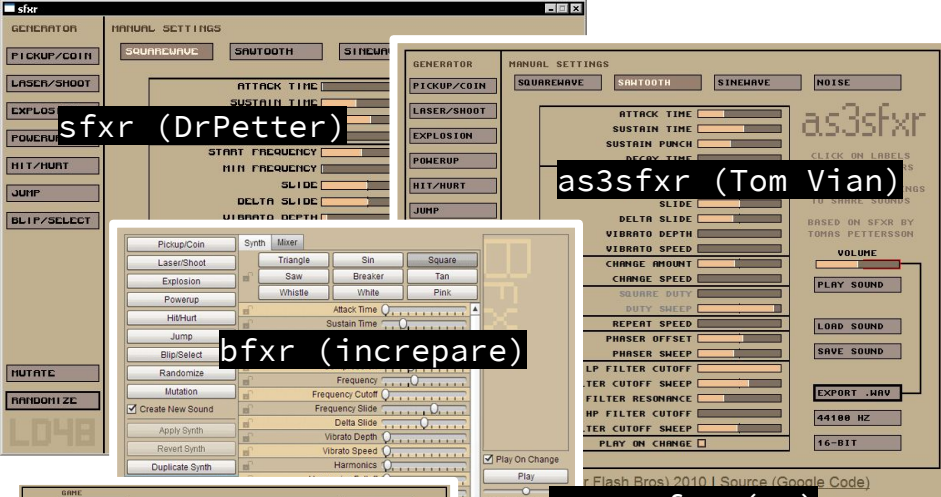
# SFXR AND FAMILY

**sfxr**, **as3sfxr**, **bfxr**  
 arcade sound effects generator, web  
 port, expanded version



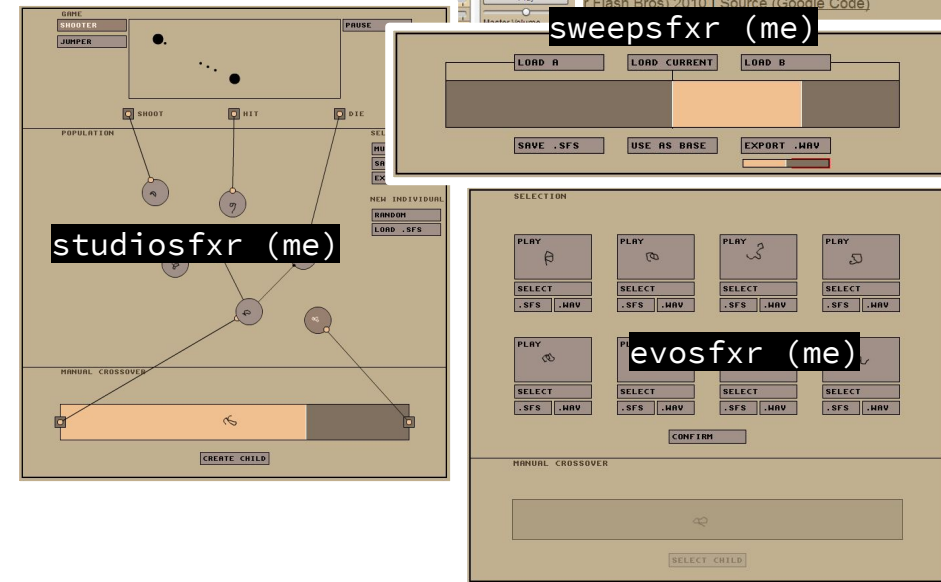
**sweepsfxr**, **evosfxr**, **studiosfxr**  
 my attempt at "three new ways to  
 use sfxr" motivated by the sliders  
 being overwhelming

studiosfxr as a way of creating a  
 set of sounds at once and hearing  
 them in context with a dummy game



# MY REFLECTIONS

sfxr is simple, self-contained allowed others to port, expand, remix, repackage (puzzlescript)

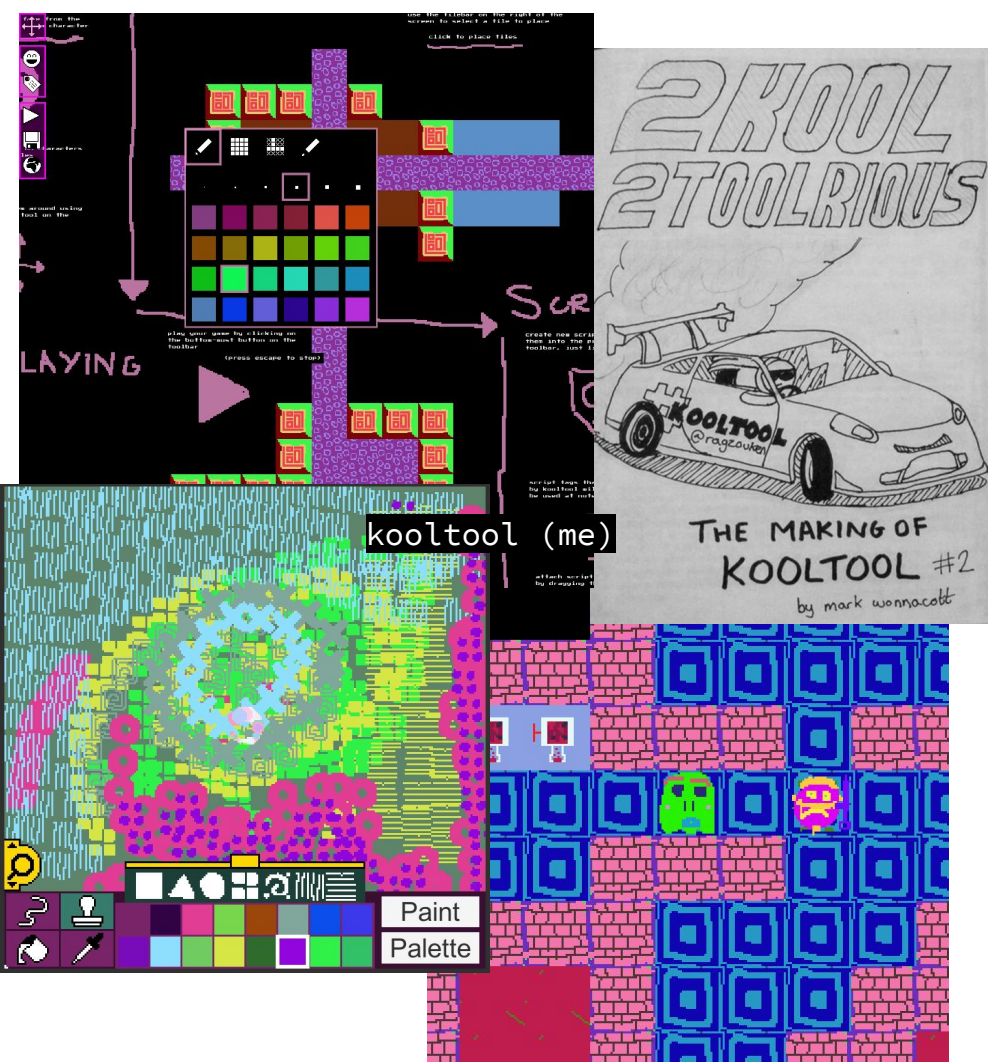


the users were already there bfxr, evosfxr obviously appeal to anyone using sfxr. the web port makes trying them zero effort

## valuable failure

my remixes didn't really satisfy my goals, but other people liked and used them. i learnt a thing or two





# KOOLTOOL

**experimental rpg maker**

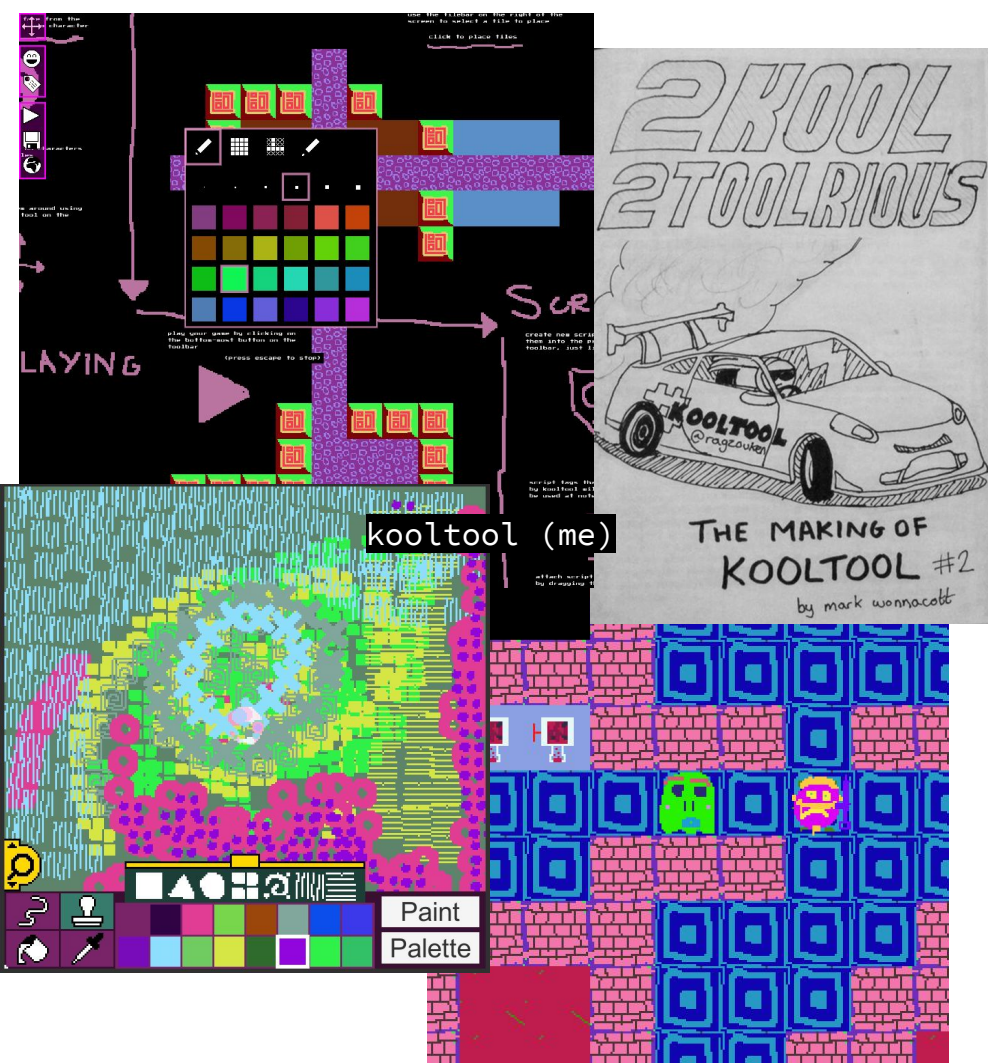
what i wish rpg maker was, how i'd like to use rpg maker to make worlds

**everything you need**

image editor, notes and sketching, playtest, music editor. export to standalone program

**everything in context**

a single infinite sheet of paper that all graphics, music, levels, notes, scripts exist within



## MY REFLECTIONS

**a glorious trainwreck?**

too big and too all-encompassing for me to ever have completed it and yet fascinating and exciting

**a locus for my practice**

chasing wild ideas, deep dives, exploring personal brand, learning broad skills

**playing ideas out**

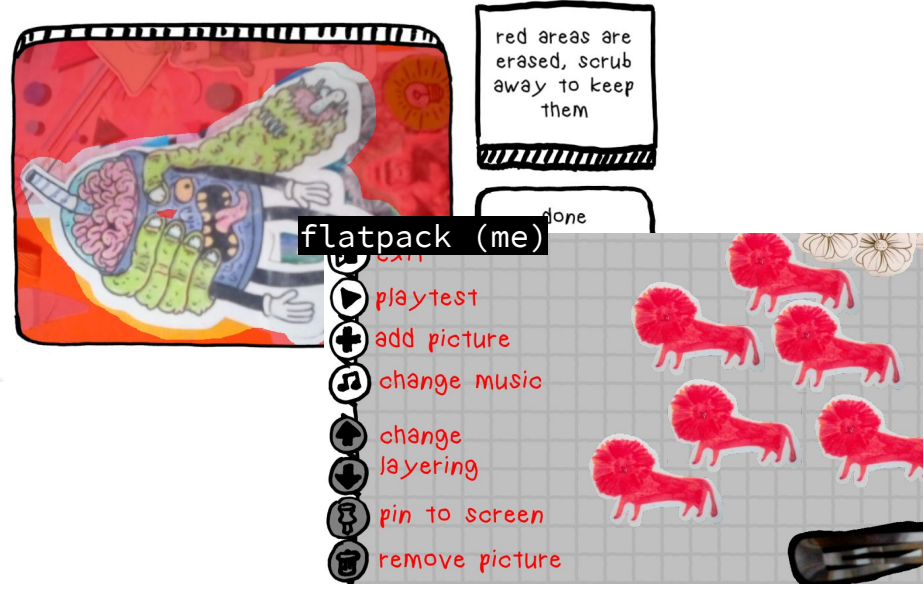
it didn't work out but it satisfied a lot of curiosity. some parts i still carry forward in my work today



# BEARABOUTS AND FLATPACK

## bearabouts

freelance project: touchscreen tool for making animated scenes from imported images. on-device



## flatgames

process for making games focussed on flat arrangements of hand drawn graphics

## flatpack

capture assets with camera and cut them out with touch. arrange them in a map to be explored. export to standalone webpage





# MY REFLECTIONS

**touchscreen is nice**

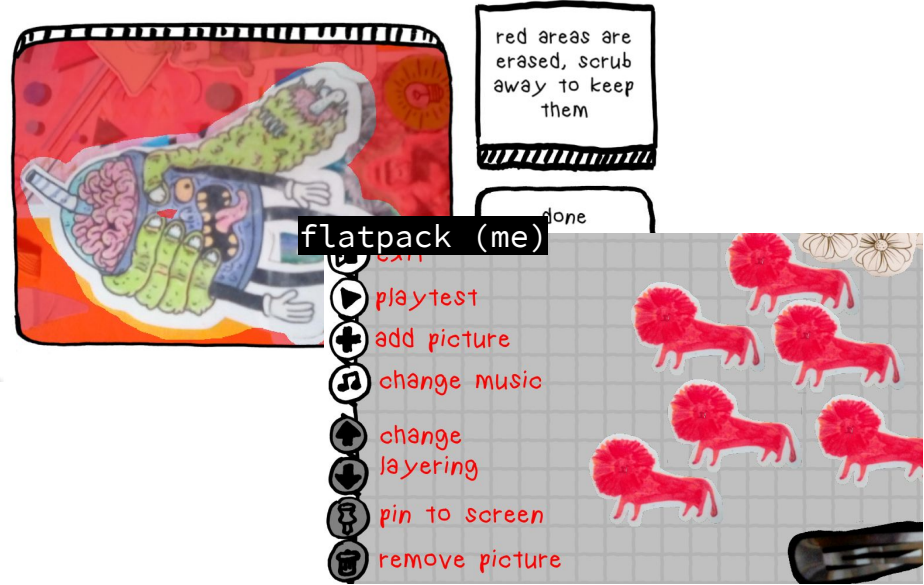
a tactile and direct means to arrange elements by hand

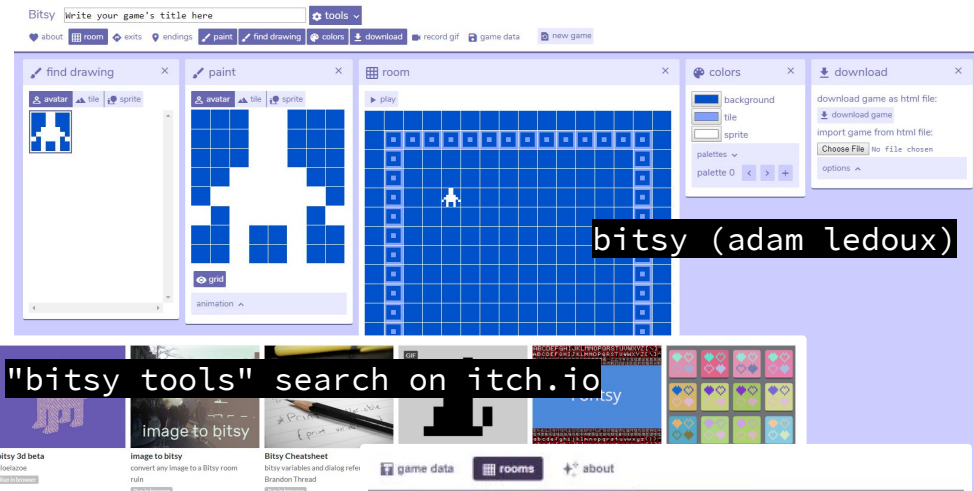
**mobile platform is awful**

distributing an app is not worth it (especially on iOS). stick to web

**recombining parts**

touch interface for collaging from bearabouts, drawing (image masks) from kooltool





# BITSY AND FRIENDS

## bitsy

web editor for creating lo-fi worlds and narratives. exports to standalone web page



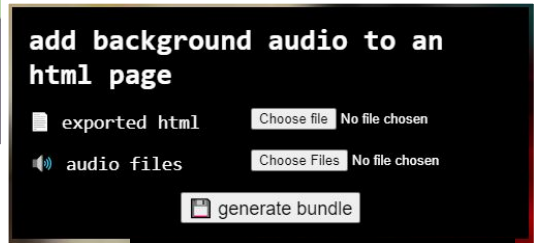
## tools

palette generators, image converters, font editors--extra functions there's no editor ui for



## hacks

custom playtime features that can be added after export e.g extra colours, more dialogue features etc





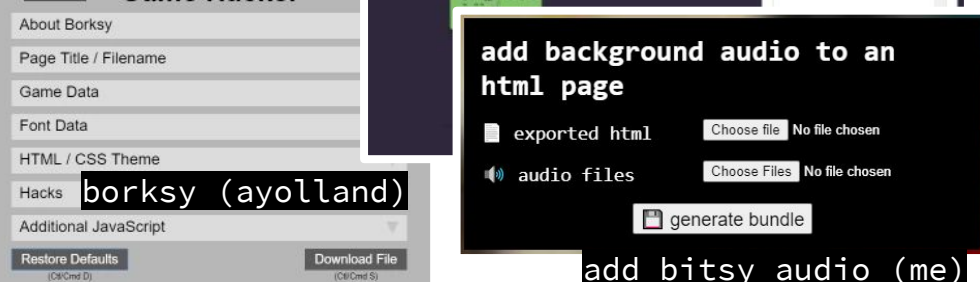
bitsy (adam ledoux)



"bitsy tools" search on itch.io



witchery (voec)



add background audio to an html page

add bitsy audio (me)

# MY REFLECTIONS

## web proliferation

the editor is only a hyperlink away. publishing a bitsy game is as simple as hosting a web page

## hackable

standalone web page with simple javascript, very clear how to modify and extend

## bitsy is a foundation

the tool and hack ecosystem are capable of addressing any perceived shortcoming of bitsy

	A	B	C	D	E
1	BOID	Published Title (2273)		Authors (1270)	URL
2	0FF04941	14/09/2016 When I get home		Adam Le Doux	<a href="https://ledoux.itch.io/wh">https://ledoux.itch.io/wh</a>
3	0C34497E	17/09/2016 September is halfway over		Adam Le Doux	<a href="https://ledoux.itch.io/sep">https://ledoux.itch.io/sep</a>
4	40E287D3	16/10/2016 In the middle of the night		Adam Le Doux	<a href="https://ledoux.itch.io/inn">https://ledoux.itch.io/inn</a>
5	78D18B28	16/10/2016 Creature Passing		Froach Club	<a href="https://froachclub.itch.io/cre">https://froachclub.itch.io/cre</a>
6	D87719A1	17/10/2016 Hex World		triplefox	<a href="https://triplefox.itch.io/hw">https://triplefox.itch.io/hw</a>
7	08E2B422	17/10/2016 ...			
8	C36E27E5	17/10/2016 Poem by Parts			
9	27DFC976	18/10/2016 Driving all Day, Night, and Evening			
10	807805CC	18/10/2016 Modern Living			
11	12E058CB	18/10/2016 Endless Ant			
12	87D1F822	20/10/2016 August Memories			
13	556C4C44	20/10/2016 Rise			
14	8058A61F	20/10/2016 Zen Garden, Portland, The Day Before My Wedding			
15	1995909E	21/10/2016 GHOSTDATE			
16	424928F1	23/10/2016 I HAD TO BE SURE			
17	6898A4E2	23/10/2016 HIS ONLY LOVE			
18	1488A220	25/10/2016 The Calm Before The Storm			
21	6688787D	27/10/2016 The Final Room			

bitsy omnibus (me)



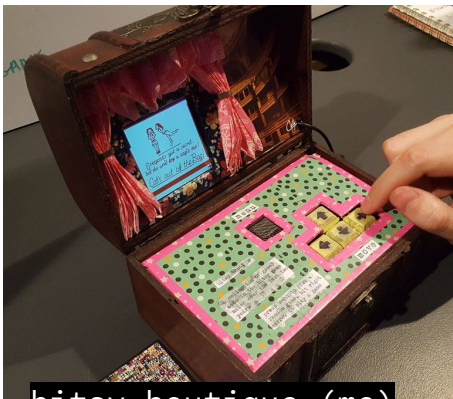
bitsy mosaic (me)

## ASIDE: BITSY CORPUS

bitsy omnibus, bitsy archive  
index of every single bitsy game i  
could track down and archive of the  
bitsy "gamedata"

mosaic, boutique, world  
tools to present bitsy games in  
various forms to showcase the  
corpus of bitsy games

all possible because of bitsy's  
cleanly exposed gamedata and the  
constrained format of a bitsy game



bitsy boutique (me)



world of bitsy (me)





## ASIDE: FLICKGAME, FLICKSY

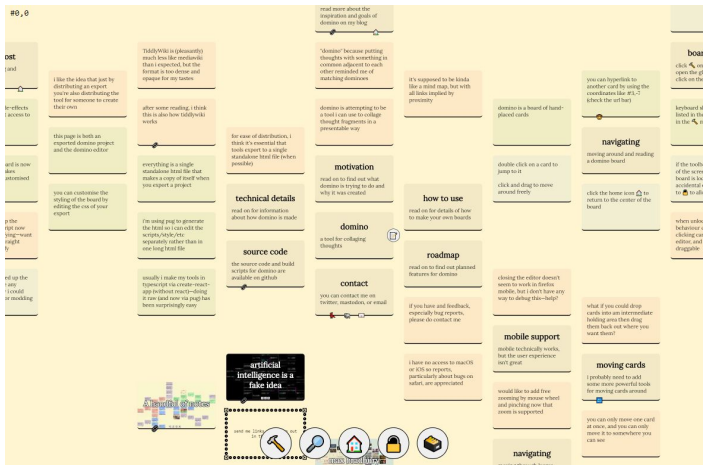
a remix of flickgame

expand flickgame with ideas from flatpack & bitsy

those common elements again  
drawing elements, composing them into scenes, interconnecting scenes, narrating user actions

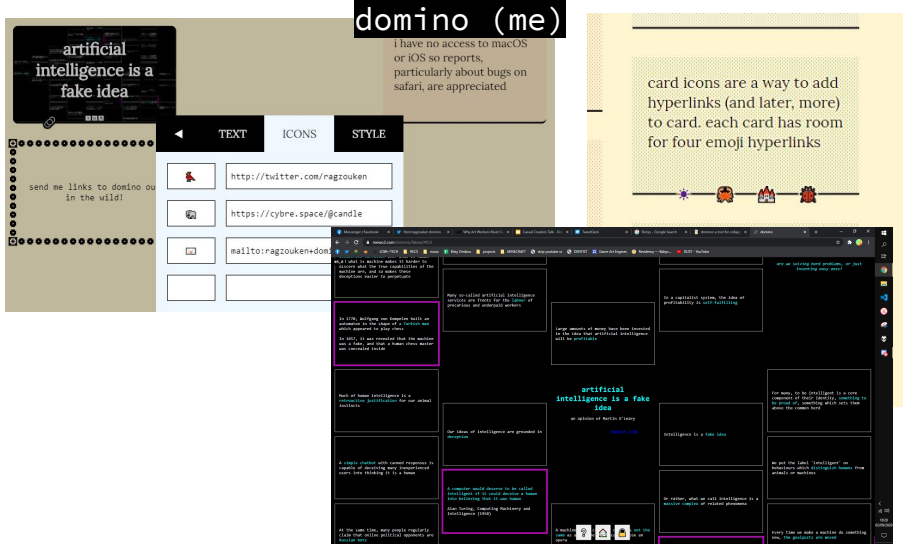
unhackable mess

the workflow i use garbles the code so it can only really be modified by source. only i can add features



# DOMINO

essay/presentation tool  
lay out thoughts as text snippets.  
exports a web page



personalisable  
includes an editor for the page's styling

remixability  
an exported domino page includes the editor tools. a reader can make and publish their own changes

#0, 0

not used

effects reverse

if I've seen domino

if you're going right

if you're going wrong

read more about the introduction and goals of domino on the blog

'domino' because putting thoughts with something in common adjacent to each other resembles one of our marketing documents

it's supposed to be kinda like a social tool. Not with all the bells and whistles of a social network

decisions is attempting to be a social tool one that leverage through programs in a generalizable way

for the use of dominoes, I think it's essential that each event is a single, actionable item (if often possible)

motivation read on to find out what domino is trying to do and why it was created

domino a tool for collaging thoughts

contact you can contact me on twitter, facebook, or email

source code the source code and build scripts for domino are available on github

technical details read on for information about how domino is made

how to use read on to find out planned features for domino

roadmap read on to find out planned features for domino

mobile support mobile technically works, but the user experience isn't great

moving cards probably need to add more more powerful tools for moving cards around

navigating

board click on any of the cards to open the board

board click on any of the cards to open the board

when cards are being edited, clicking on other cards will trigger a refresh

when cards are being edited, clicking on other cards will trigger a refresh

artificial intelligence is a fake idea

artificial intelligence is a fake idea

# A LIVING TOOL?

## a self-modifying tool?

domino boards contain the tools to edit and restyle the board. why not tools for adding editor features?

artificial intelligence is a fake idea

domino (me)

i have no access to macOS or iOS so reports, particularly about bugs on safari, are appreciated

card icons are a way to add hyperlinks (and later, more) to card. each card has room for four emoji hyperlinks

artificial intelligence is a fake idea

TEXT

ICONS

STYLE

send me links to domino or in the wild!

<http://twitter.com/ragzouken>

<https://cyber.space/@candle>

<mailto:ragzouken@domino>

## an evolving tool?

what if the editor could load another board and cherry pick user-added features from it?

the idea of a tool that facilitates its own continued modification to the extent it takes on a life of its own... this idea is so exciting



copyright Patrick Blanc

## CONCLUSION

### **tools can be malleable**

they can allow, facilitate, and even invite extension, remix, reinvention

### **lives of their own**

if the tool itself can be easily modified it can outlive your own enthusiasm for it

### **a sustainable commons?**

mass art and casual creation flourishing independent of monolithic software





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THANKS

**further reading**

this talk incorporates ideas from  
Em Reed's talk:

[Videogame Engines as Tools for  
Mass Art \(Em Reed\)](#)