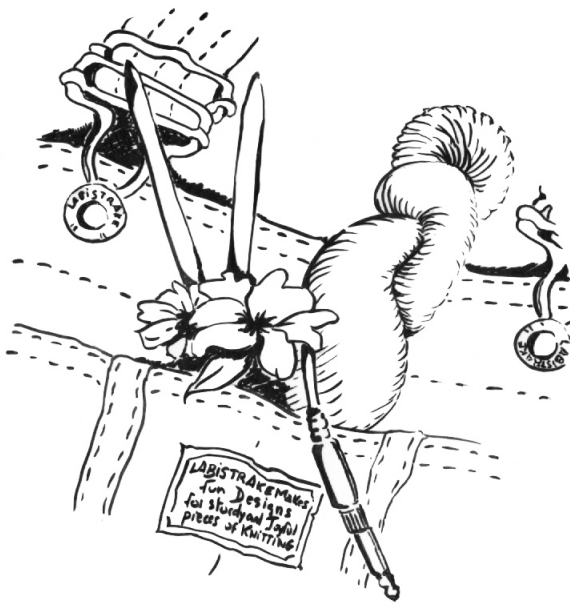


# Meet the Makers

## Felix & Muriel in Conversation

*Yarnadelic Remixes 0.1 is a project grounded in generosity, friendship, and the sharing and exchanging of ideas. That spirit of creative collaboration continues with you as you move our project forward on your own needles! We thought we'd start this eBook with the main medium of our collaboration: conversation. Settle in with your preferred beverage and join us as we recount the Yarnadelic Remixes 0.1 adventure so far!*

**Felix:** Hello Muriel! I'm so excited to speak with you today, and to share the spirit of our collaboration with all the **Yarnadelic Remixers** who have signed up for this club. It might seem like an odd starting point, but I wondered if we might speak about your logo for **Labistrake Makes**? I love it because it's so **YOU**, and **Yarnadelic Remixers** are going to see it many times in the coming weeks because it appears at the end of each of our project videos! It's got a headphone jack, a skein of yarn, a bunch of flowers... Could you tell us about how this image relates to your rich, creative practice?



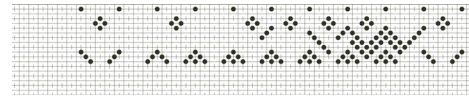
**Muriel:** Thank you very much Felix! When I published my first knitting pattern, [Knit Loud!](#) - inspired by one of the **Knitted Correspondence** postcards I shared with my friend Yumi on Instagram - I decided I needed a logo.



I wanted to represent the things from daily life that most inspired me through our two and half years of exchanging **Knitted Correspondence**: music, wool and nature. I picked a headphone jack, a skein of yarn and a bunch of flowers from amongst the tools and things I have to hand on an ordinary day to symbolise these endless sources of inspiration.

I took a photo and asked an old friend of mine to draw it for me. I positioned the items in the front bib pocket of my much-loved overalls because this is just the perfect outfit to put on; it says "I'm ready to have a wonderful and creative day!" I love working garments; they are sturdy, and made to last and to be intensively used - they have been designed for makers.





That's also how I think about the knitted pieces I make and design: useful, sturdy... but joyful and fun, too!



go slowly and deeply into my favourite sources of inspiration. As I wrote in the **Knitted Correspondence** chapter in your fantastic **Stranded Colourwork Playbook**, swatching for this correspondence made me more curious about, and sensitive to, my daily life. So quite naturally - as a musician - I thought about designing a musical postcard. You can see a lot of different shapes on a componium punch-card! At that point I didn't know anything about knitting punch-cards for knitting machines, but the componium punch-card grid strongly reminded me of the similar grid structure of a stranded colourwork chart. I think the componium inspired knitted postcard was the first instance in which I didn't design my postcard like a painting, following a rough sketch and playing with colour while knitting the design. Instead, I thought about it much more in terms of pattern and background colours in a knitted chart and how these correlate to punched holes/unpunched card in a componium punch-card.

**Felix:** I love that - it's so much more than a logo I think; kind of an introduction, visually, to you and your work. You mentioned the wonderful [Knitted Correspondence project](#), in which you and Yumi shared/exchanged postcards online regularly for many months. I loved what you each created in the course of working on that project and will always think about this one - **Yarnadelic Remixes 0.1** - starting when you posted your knitted postcard online featuring a music chart that you had knit as stranded colourwork. What gave you the idea to make a punch-card and then knit it as stranded colourwork?

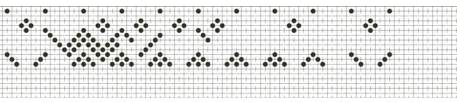


## The Knitted Postcard that Started Yarnadelic Remixes 0.1

**Muriel:** **Knitted Correspondence** (inspired by your **KNITSONIK System**) was a long-term creative activity that allowed me to

Then I fell into a rabbit hole of research into binary systems and punch-cards - from jacquard looms to early computational systems - and the under celebrated women who developed and used punch-cards for weaving, programming and early computer systems!





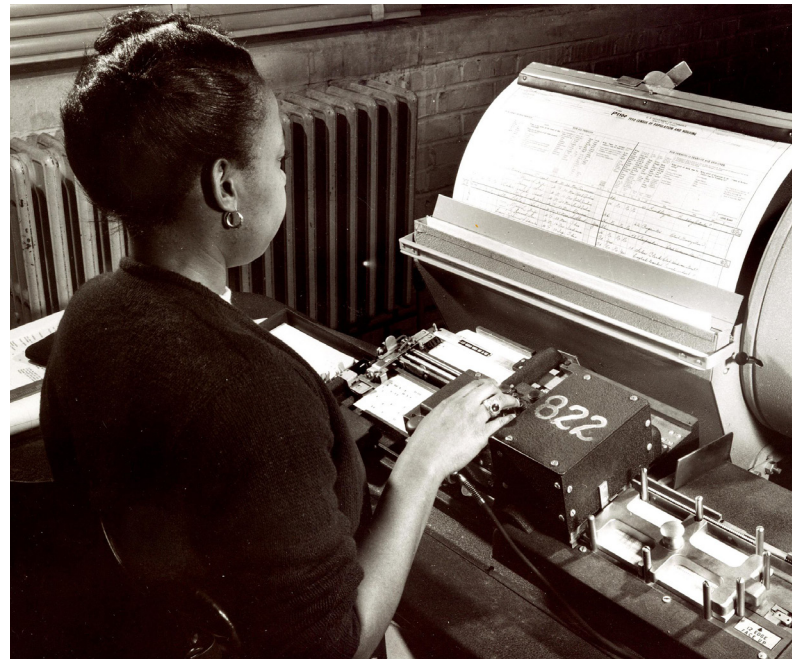
fabrications of fabrics, shuttles and looms, cotton and silk, canvas and paper, brushes and pens, typewriters, carriages, telephone wires, synthetic fibres, electrical filaments, silicon strands, fiber-optic cables, pixelated screens, telecom lines, the World Wide Web, the Net, and matrices to come.”

- Sadie Plant, **Zeros + Ones: Digital Women and the New Technoculture**

Felix: Absolutely! That reminds me so much of being an undergraduate at art school and reading Sadie Plant’s amazing tome, **Zeros + Ones: Digital Women and the New Technoculture** - it follows the trajectory through exactly what you describe: early weaving systems, the binaries of ones and zeros, computing and programming... and how all these pattern-based languages have largely fallen, historically, to women:

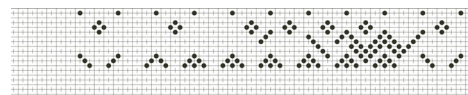
“In the newly automated factories and mills she worked on the looms and sewing machines; in the service of the great bureaucratic machines, she processed the words, kept the records, did the sums, and filed the accounts.”

“In and out of the punched holes of automated looms, up and down through the ages of spinning and weaving, back and forth through the

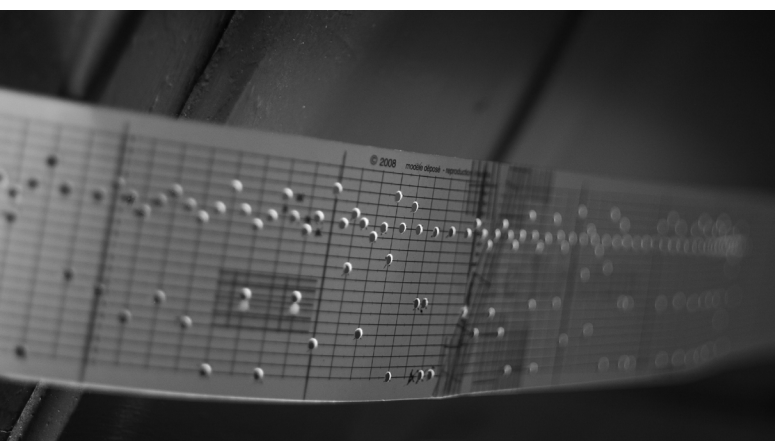


...Women + Punch-cards is an extremely deep rabbit hole: we could quickly get off track here (ahem)! But I love how our punch-cards have a relationship to so many other binary systems; that they are connected with the textiles we so dearly love, and the computational powers that enable us to collaborate internationally, and also to connect with other makers all over the world! It’s funny to think about now, how massively influential it was for me to read Sadie Plant twenty years ago.





I wanted to combine these two systems for creating patterns, and to compare their limitations and possibilities. When I started drawing my chart I had to bear in mind the limitations of the comptonium card. For example, you have to use arpeggios - for which holes travel across the card - rather than chords - for which holes stack up horizontally - to avoid getting the card getting stuck in the comptonium mechanism. You also need to leave enough space between two holes so that each one can be heard.



On the knitting side, as for any other stranded colourwork design, it's important to think about the floats. However, surprisingly, I discovered diagonal shapes share commonalities with both forms of media - stranded colourwork and comptonium punch-cards.

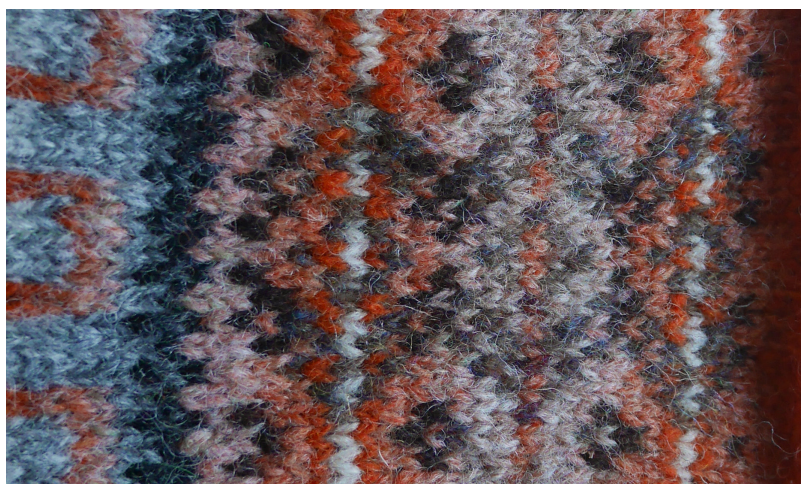
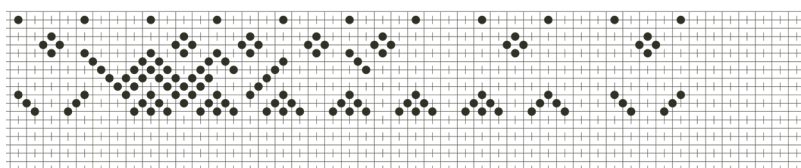
I mirrored the whole musical shape I drew onto my punch-card for my representative knitted motifs for both aesthetic and technical reasons. I chose to draw all the notes/stitches on the card, but not to punch them all. I thought this could give the listener/viewer a chance to discriminate between the different musical elements: a whole stranded colourwork motif can be sonically very busy!

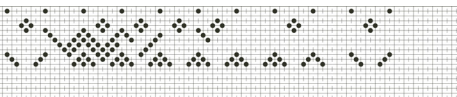
As I read your thoughts I find myself reflecting on how black and white knitting charts are also a kind of binary system too - the coloured in stitch means **PATTERN YARN**, the plain white background means **BACKGROUND YARN**. Just as you say... and on the comptonium punch-card, hole means **SOUND** and no hole means **NO SOUND!**

## Limitations

To speak about your postcard again - how did you go about turning the shapes on the punch-card into a knitting chart, or was it more the other way around - did you start with a knitting chart?

**Muriel:** Actually, it was more a back and forth game between knitting and music. I wanted to play simultaneously with composing for comptonium and observing the "rules" for stranded colourwork.





**Felix:** I loved how you mirrored the motifs so they are vertically symmetrical - it makes them feel like the more traditional OXO patterns of Fair Isle knitting, but it also speaks to how you can play the knitted postcard both ways up in the componium, i.e. when you play it one way round, it's the top half of your motif, when you play the other way around, it's the bottom half! I also love how the lines go up and down, and you can hear the pitch of the notes ascending and descending... Of course, anything you can see on the punch-card is what you will hear! However, to me, your choices feel quite deliberate - as though you were thinking about a way to introduce how the componium works through a simple set of shapes.

### Discovering the componium

Before your wonderful knitted postcard, I had seen a componium at university because **Kathy Hinde** - a wonderful artist with whom I studied - used them in a work titled [Music Box Migrations](#).

For that piece, **Kathy** took photos of birds in flight and on telegraph wires then punched holes where they appeared on the photos; you could then play the resulting punch-cards through the componium. I thought there was something really delightful about punching the holes and then hearing a sound - so immediate and visual and aural at once - but also I just love the sound with its associations with childhood music boxes (my first website was called **LittleSongbox!**).

**Muriel:** I remember you talking about this beautiful project by **Kathy Hinde!** It encapsulates all the fun you can have playing with a componium. Observing and noticing the details of the world around us; making analogies between similar visuals; using simple tools like a hole-punch and cards, and enjoying the delicate and funny sound of the componium! I love the association with childhood music boxes, too.

**Felix:** How did you first discover the componium and are there any art or music projects you have especially enjoyed that use this instrument?

**Muriel:** I think I first read about the componium while doing research about new kinds of musical instruments I could use with my students. As a musical educator, you always look for different ways to help children express and develop their musical creativity. The quality of the sound; the way you use your body to play the instrument; the material from which it is made... all these factors are very important.

The componium speaks to all these aspects, but it is also quite a magical thing. Although it is very limited (20 or 30 notes; one pling plong sound; no nuances... no dynamics or phrasing...) you can immediately identify the tune that it plays!

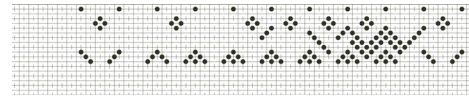
In some conservatoires it is used to teach children how to compose. In that way they can hear what they have imagined and learn to visualise intervals, rhythms and melodies through the very tactile and visual methods of punching cards and playing them on the componium.

I think you can see some of the magic of music boxes and componiums in [this little clip featuring the shop in which, fifteen years ago, my Mum bought me my 20 note componium](#).

It's **Anna Joliet's** tiny shop and sadly no longer exists. It stood in Paris at Le Palais Royal for more than thirty years and was a true music box emporium! I loved that shop. **Anna Joliet** talks about le petit componium (the instrument we have used for this project) at around 3 minutes 10 seconds in.

I remember how we were excited to discover the beautiful online gallery for [Soundweaving](#).





That work combines “The borderlands of folk art, design and music...”. In that piece, composer **Bálint Tárkány-Kovács** worked with MA textile student **Zsanett Szirmay** to map and develop music that draws on the traditional embroidery motifs of Transylvania and Hungary. It’s such a lovely combination of elements; the music box sounds, the lace origins of the sounds, and the lacy aesthetic of all the punched-cards!

I love **Wintergatan’s** way of exploring mechanical music, too, with the extraordinary [Marble Machine](#) and the tiny componium as well!

**Felix:** SHOUT OUT TO WINTERGATAN! His tutorial on how to programme a music box strip helped me so much - we should share it here in case any of the **Yarnadelic Remixers** (that’s you, dear reader!) want to have a go: [How To Program a Music Box - Hole Punch Tutorial - YouTube](#)

## Remixing the songs behind the Yarnadelic Yarn range for componium



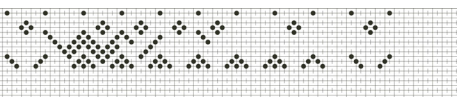
I think we both had the same idea when we saw the [Yarnadelic yarn range](#) launch: to do something with our componiums and that yarn! My memory is that we started out by trying to make componium versions of the songs that inspired the yarn range.

I think one of the things I realised quickly is that it’s actually really hard to make music box versions of pop songs. Our music boxes are so restrictive - even when we both upgraded to 30 notes instead of the original 20 notes boxes, there are still lots of compromises we have to make because we don’t have as many notes as a band of musicians! Also, you can’t have the holes too close together, so notes are missing in the componium versions; and the actual labour of making and testing the cards is so laborious. It takes a long time to punch out all the notes, and to carefully stick washi tape over mistakes! However, I like how difficult it is, in a way, because it forces you to listen many times to each song; and to be creative about how to interpret it within the confines of what is possible. What are your thoughts about that and what’s your memory of how we began this project?

**Muriel:** At the very beginning, I remember focusing on one song that, to me, sounded “simple”, **Woman Blue** by **Judy Roderick**. Just a voice and a guitar. I realised as soon as I tried to translate and fit it into the punch-card, it was much more difficult than I had first thought! At the time, you were working on your version of **Waltz** by **Fatima** and as soon as I listened to your first version I loved it!

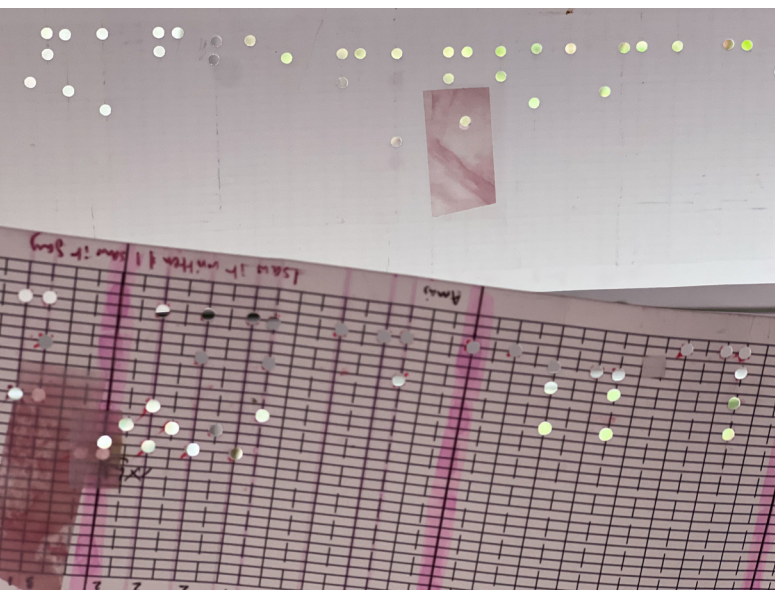
It was the same but different. Maybe with the componium, the trick is how to capture the essence of the song, since it can never be as richly nuanced as the fully instrumentalised original! The componium is a very simple and restrictive instrument but its limitations have pushed us to imagine all sorts of creative ways to translate songs from the **Yarnadelic** playlist...





## A Conversation: Meet the Makers

Right from the start I was quite obsessed by the repetitive shapes and motifs that I knew would appear during the translation process. Some of the songs already had repetitive musical motifs that could easily be isolated and used as knitted motifs, but we had to find and develop other ideas and methods for most of them. I agree with you: the challenge made all the fun!

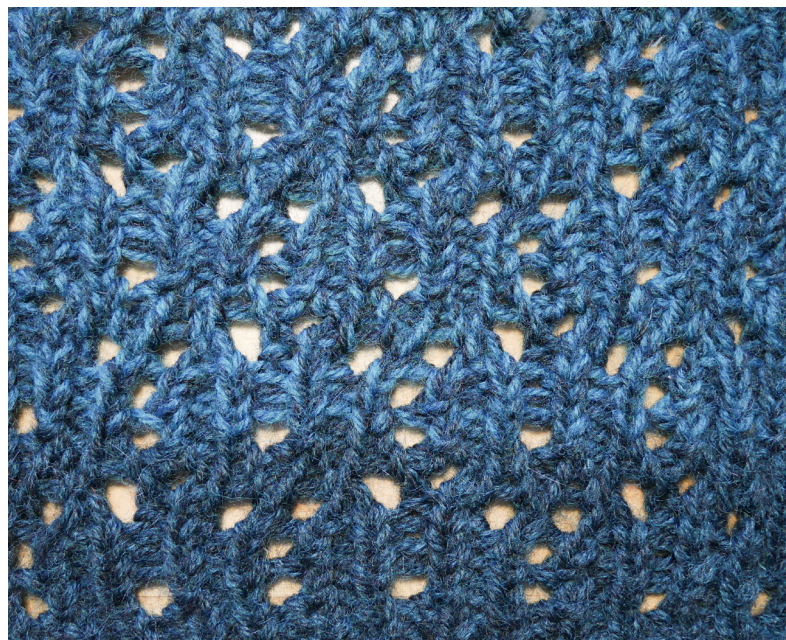


**Felix:** One huge surprise for me was realising that when you try to follow the shapes of music, many ideas won't work with stranded colourwork! The lovely space and distance around individual notes, and the wandering lines as they ascend and descend create shapes which, if literally translated (one stitch per one punched-hole on the punch-card) would lead to something that is a horrible rhythm to knit - very long gaps between stitches; unfeasibly long strands; impossible to memorise. Being too rigid about it means being true to the music, but not having too much fun in the actual knitting of it!

I came to learn, through this project, to find the shapes in music in a variety of ways, and to look for repeating shapes that suggested the original groove of the music, while also making a nice groove for the knitting! I also realised I'd need to look beyond stranded colourwork for solutions to the problem of how to represent musical shapes and patterns

in knitted fabrics. I surprised myself by learning double-knitting in order to strike a satisfying balance between a project that was fun to knit AND rooted in the music that inspired the yarn; did you have any similar experiences while working on this project?

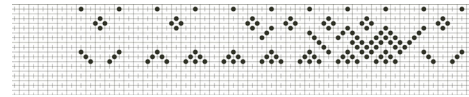
**Muriel:** I totally agree with you! After searching for a way to represent **Judy Roderick's** song for comptonium, my next step was to find knitting techniques to match the musical motif. While exploring the lace techniques (that were quite new to me!) my initial swatches were very busy and almost unreadable.



With your help I realised I needed to change the scale of my work and transform all these tiny holes on the punch-card into very big ones in order to provide knitting interest, and to allow the musical motifs I picked to be clearly visible in the final design.







**Felix:** Another surprise for me - on top of learning some new techniques - was realising how much there was to read and research around each song. Some of the best places I've gone to during this project have been those to which the songs led us. Right now I have a whole list of producers who worked on **Fatima's** album **And Yet It's All Love** on my playlist - I don't think I would have discovered this music without the **Yarnadelic Remixes** shade card/playlist, leading me on little journeys through [Bandcamp](#). Has this project taken you on any special listening journeys?

**Muriel:** Oh yes it has been a wonderful journey through the work of many artists' whom I didn't know at all before this project! The image and the sound that will stay in my memory forever is the [Camberwick Green](#) tune and words that open [John Arbon's playlist](#):

**"Here's a box, a musical box  
Woundup and ready to play'  
But this box can hide a secret  
inside  
Can you guess what is in it  
today?"**

**- opening credits to the  
popular television show,  
Camberwick Green**

It says it all!

In that box (and **Bandcamp**, to which you led me!) I found wonderful music to hear! From the [Gee's Bend quilters](#) to Molly Drake; [Bessie Jones and the Georgia Sea Island Singers](#); and [Colleen Et les Boîtes à Musique](#). I also took a deep dive into Nick Drake's music...

**Felix:** I love **Bandcamp**! We have explored a lot of things together in the last few years - tunes, grids, punch-cards, knitting patterns - what have you most enjoyed

about this project and what do you hope the knitters who sign up to **Yarnadelic Remixes 0.1** will get from it?

**Muriel:** Often, we believe that creativity is a kind of magic, as we only usually see the end result. But I have been learning for many years that creativity is all about the process. Processes of trial and error are fundamental as they are the best way to learn - just like we learn when we are children: trying, failing and finally having fun with it.

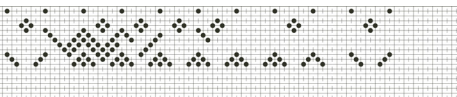
What I really enjoyed was playing with a gorgeous and inspiring yarn like **Yarnadelic**, and finding ways to combine two of my favourite interests: Music and Knitting. I love that these contexts share so many common points. Most of all, I enjoyed playing together!

What I hope is that other knitters will enjoy our musical and knitting playground as we share it. All the games in the playground are fun: playing with colours, rhythms and musical motifs; discovering unique musical artists and learning new knitting techniques. I hope that as the **Yarnadelic Remixers** discover our work, they will find their way to create their own new remixes of music to wear and patterns to hear!

**Felix:** I could not agree more! Thank you, Muriel, for the generosity you have shown this collaboration; for your willingness to join me in mess-making and playfulness; imperfectionism and curiosity. And to you, dear reader, I hope the spirit of play and invention in which Muriel and I have created **Yarnadelic Remixes 0.1** can find its way onto your needles as we share with you, in coming months, the fruits of this long and rich collaboration in play.

**YOURS IN KNITTING & SOUND,  
Felix & Muriel x**





“Often, we believe that creativity is a kind of magic, as we only usually see the end result. But I have been learning for many years that creativity is all about the process. Processes of trial and error are fundamental as they are the best way to learn - just like we learn when we are children: trying, failing and finally having fun with it.”

- Muriel Pensivy

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### Links

- [Knitted Correspondence](#) (KNITSONIK blog)
- [Muriel’s Instagram](#) (where you can see lots of Knitted Correspondence)
- Muriel’s [Knit Loud! mitts and cowl set](#)
- [Sadie Plant](#) author of *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women and the New Technoculture*
- Anonymous punch-card operator; [Bureau of the Census](#)
- Anonymous IBM keypunch operator; [The Census Bureau](#)
- [Loom](#) with punch-cards
- [Music Box Migrations](#) by artist Kathy Hinde
- [A peak inside](#) Anna Joliet’s Music Box Emporium
- [Soundweaving](#) by MA textile student Zsanett Szirmay and composer Bálint Tárkány-Kovács
- [Marble Machine](#) by composer Wintergatan
- [How to Programme A Music Box](#) by composer Wintergatan
- [Yarnadelic Playlist](#) by John Arbon
- [Yarnadelic Shade Card](#)
- [Bandcamp](#)
- [Colleen Et Les Boîtes À Musique](#)
- [Camberwick Green](#)
- TV show opening credits

