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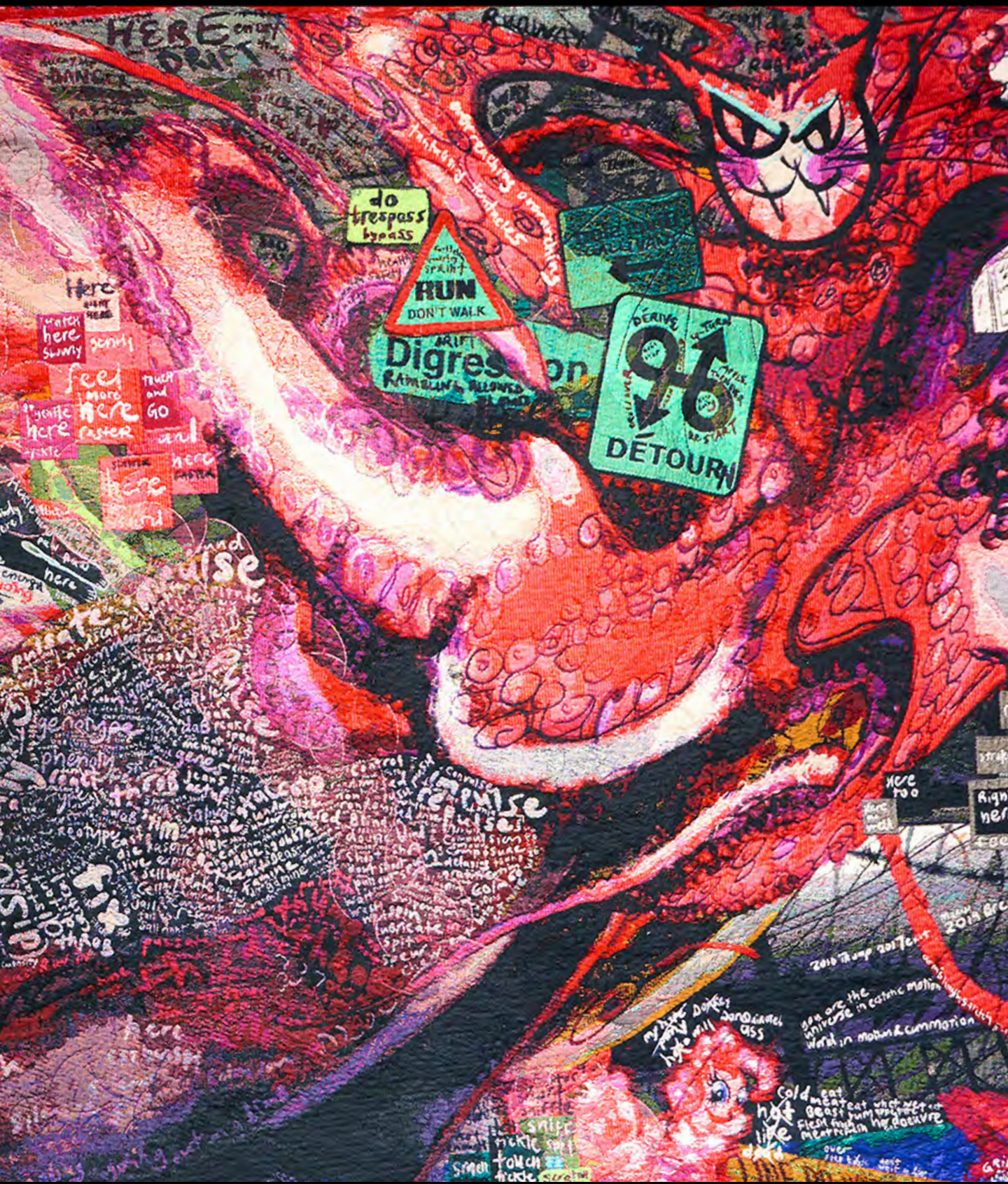
on art, neurodiversity & giant octopussies



Reflections on the art-science commission #MagicCarpet by Kai Syng Tan

On Art, Neurodiversity & Giant Octopussies:
Reflections on the art-science commission #MagicCarpet
by Kai Syng Tan
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All images in this booklet have been created by or for Kai Syng Tan as part of *We Sat On a Mat and Had A Chat And Made Maps! #MagicCarpet*, or created by collaborators for associated activities

The images between sections and on the covers are details of the tapestry, *I Run and Run, Let Out an Earth Shattering Roar, and Turn Into a Giant Octopussy* (2.9m X 1.45m, cotton, wool, perspex, bolts 2018), and/or associated activities. Photographers: Kai, Marco Berardi, Alex Lloyd and Flanders Tapestry.

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#MagicCarpet by Dr Kai Syng Tan 2017-2019 www.kaisyngtan.com/magiccarpet
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Written, designed and edited by Kai Syng Tan.
December 2019, Manchester, United Kingdom.

warming up

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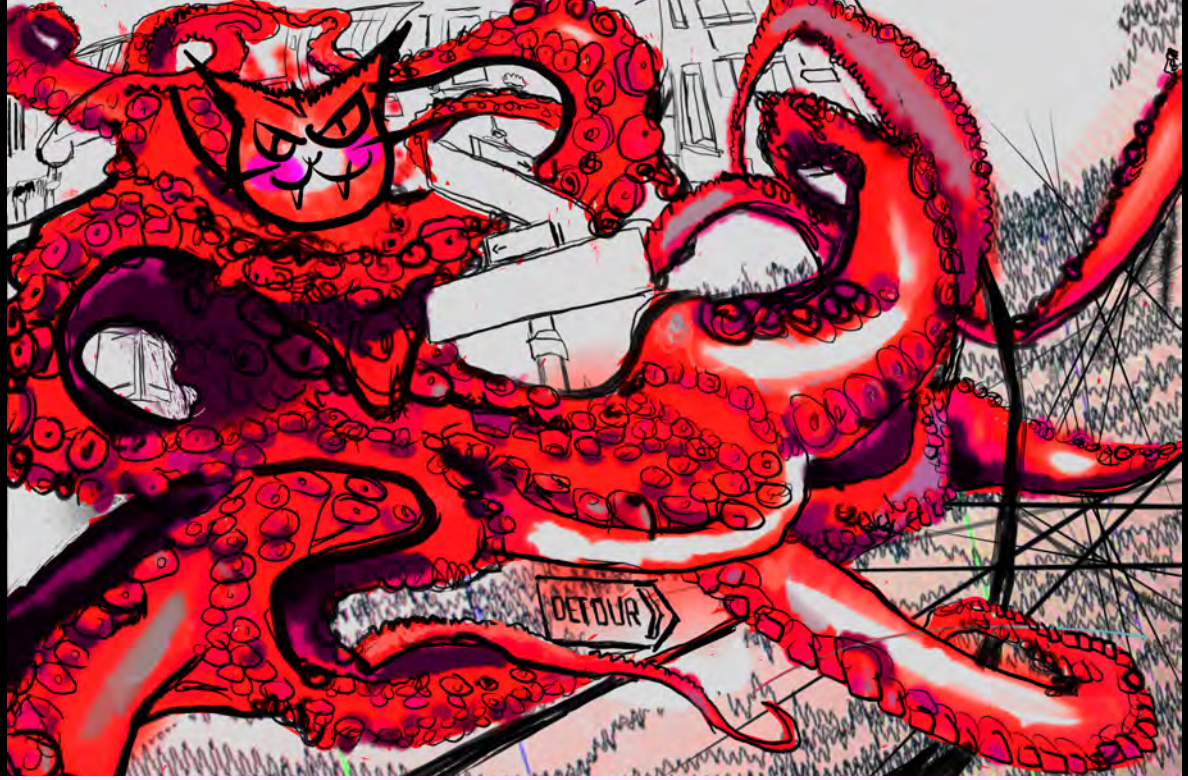
Image: The tapestry art installation, standing on an invisible loom. At the *King's Artists – New Thinking, New Making* exhibition, Arcade at Bush House, King's College London. Photograph by Alex Lloyd.

We Sat On a Mat and Had A Chat And Made Maps! #MagicCarpet was an art-psychiatry project and programme (2017-2019) with various discrete and overlapping processes, outcomes and outputs. It was initiated, led, curated and created by **Dr Kai Syng Tan**, as the first artist-in-residence of Social, Genetic & Developmental Psychiatry Centre (SGDP), King's College London. Kai's mentor was **Professor of Psychiatry Philip Asherson**. #MagicCarpet was commissioned and supported by Unlimited, celebrating the work of disabled artists, with funding from Arts Council England. The project was also supported by Cultural Programming and SGDP, both of King's College London.

Key partners and collaborators include UK Adult ADHD Network (UKAAN), Submit To Love Studios (Headway East London), Art Workers' Guild and Flanders Tapestry. Other collaborators included Professor of Biology Helen Chatterjee MBE (National Alliance for Museums, Health and Wellbeing), Jo Verrent (Unlimited), ADHD charity head Andrea Bilbow OBE (ADDISS), Professor of Art Andrew Stahl (Slade) and Dr Mohammed Rashed (Birkbeck).

The team consisted of Philip Tan (sound/music director, Singapore), Studio Maba (photography/film), Alessandra Cianetti (arts production manager), Michael Larsson (film director, Sweden), and David Kelly-Mancaux (Erkembode) (social media/publicity curator, R&D phase). British Sign Language interpreters included Jacqui Beckford, Izegbuwa Oleghe and Audrey Simmons. Production Assistants included Gaynor Tutani, Kai Xiang Lim, Iuliia Rakitina and Burcu Kuter. Yow Siew Kah provided additional feedback for this copy.

Image: Kai (centre) with Philip (far right), with collaborators of #MagicCarpet.



This booklet documents my reflections of my art-psychiatry commission entitled ***We Sat On a Mat and Had A Chat And Made Maps!* #MagicCarpet** for the period of 2017-2019. It is my invitation for feedback, and participation for #MagicCarpet's next adventures. The 18-month programme generated a creative space for people from diverse and divergent backgrounds to gather and chat about mind wandering, constructs of 'normality', and neurodiversity – all problematic, unstable terms and, thus, fascinating. Created in dialogue with Professor of Psychiatry Philip Asherson, #MagicCarpet mobilises Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and how that relates to mind wandering and visual art as a case study. Processes include an artist-in-residency programme, workshops and a range of artistic outputs, including a tapestry art installation, drawings, performances and badges.

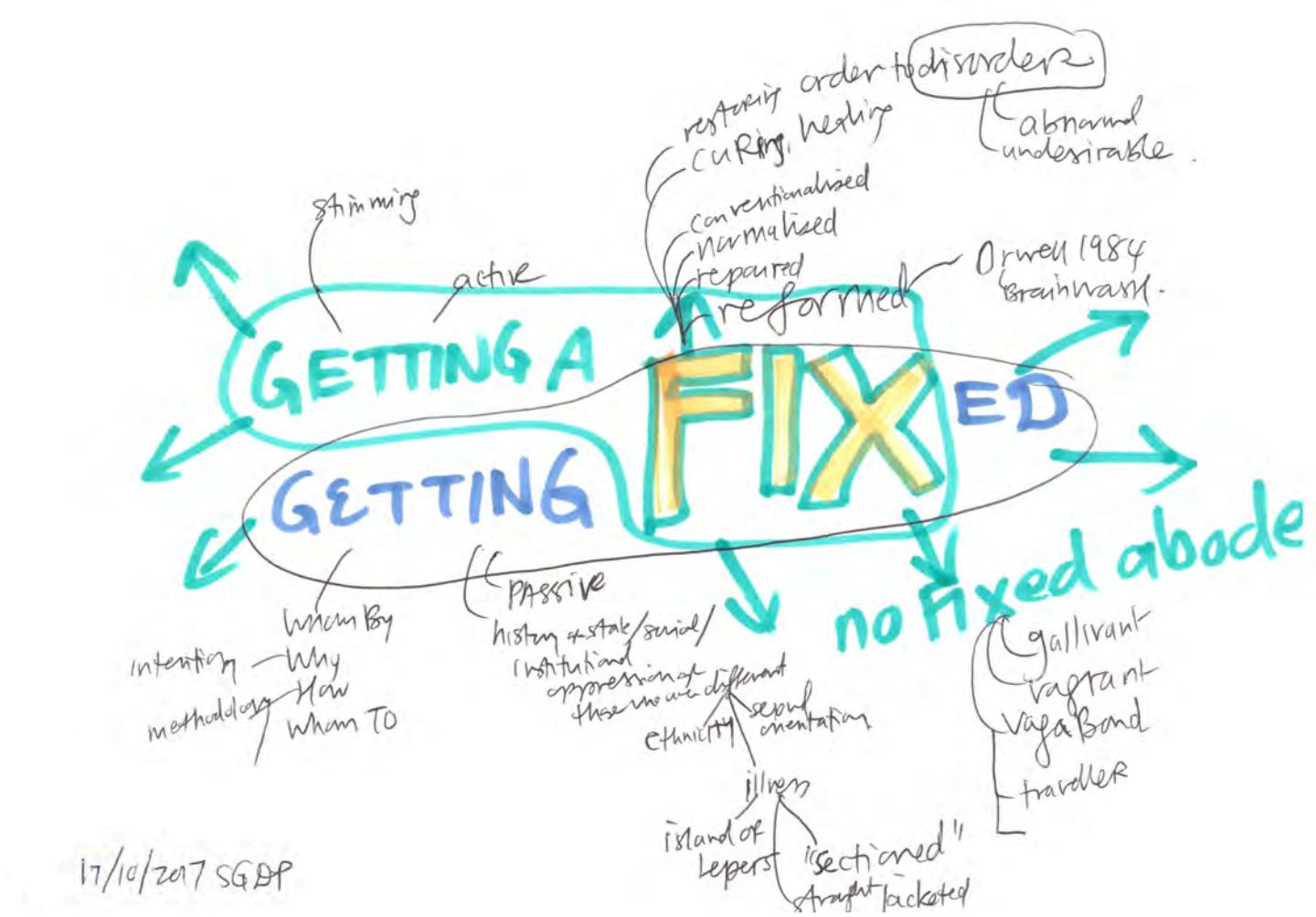
10,000 people have experienced #MagicCarpet through its exhibitions, workshops and keynote lectures. Venues include the Science Museum and Southbank Centre. Platforms include the Arts in Mind Festival in London and SOS Dyslexia Conference in San Marino. Press include Big Issue North and Resonance FM. There were also 2 podcasts and 13 short films. One of the films was in the Official Selection of the 2019 Arts and Humanities Research Council Research In Film Award, while another was an EU-funded one viewed 17,545 times in the first month of publication. Publications include an article that was read 2000 times in the first 2 days in *The Conversation* (10.6 million readers) and a top 2018 editorial on neurodiversity and women in Disability Arts Online. 100% of the feedback for several events state that the work challenges existing understanding of cognitive differences, mental health and interdisciplinary collaborations. An image won a National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement 2018 Images Competition Award for Culture Change, while another was on the cover of British Journal of Psychiatry. #MagicCarpet artworks have also been nominated for Sovereign Asian Art Award 2019, the largest art prize in Asia Pacific.

Exuberant and playful, #MagicCarpet exploits art's propensity for ambiguity, and extends the ambition of the All Party Parliamentary Group report on Arts Health and Wellbeing with its high-quality artistic outcomes that build cultural intelligence. Inclusive and empowering, #MagicCarpet contributes to discourses and practices around: arts leadership; socially-engaged art; drawing; installation, tapestry, performance, disability and participatory art; art writing; interdisciplinary and cross-sectorial collaboration, feminism, intersectionality, medical humanities, inclusive practices and (neuro)diversity, while spearheading what could be termed 'neurodiverse art' and 'ADHD art'.

Image: Sketch (2017) for *Psychiageographies [detournement] [exquisite corpse] [parenthesis].* The final drawing graced the cover of *British Journal of Psychiatry* (Cambridge), September 2019.

Paolozzi 1967
writing
between the lines
1cm square weave
100pixels

contexts

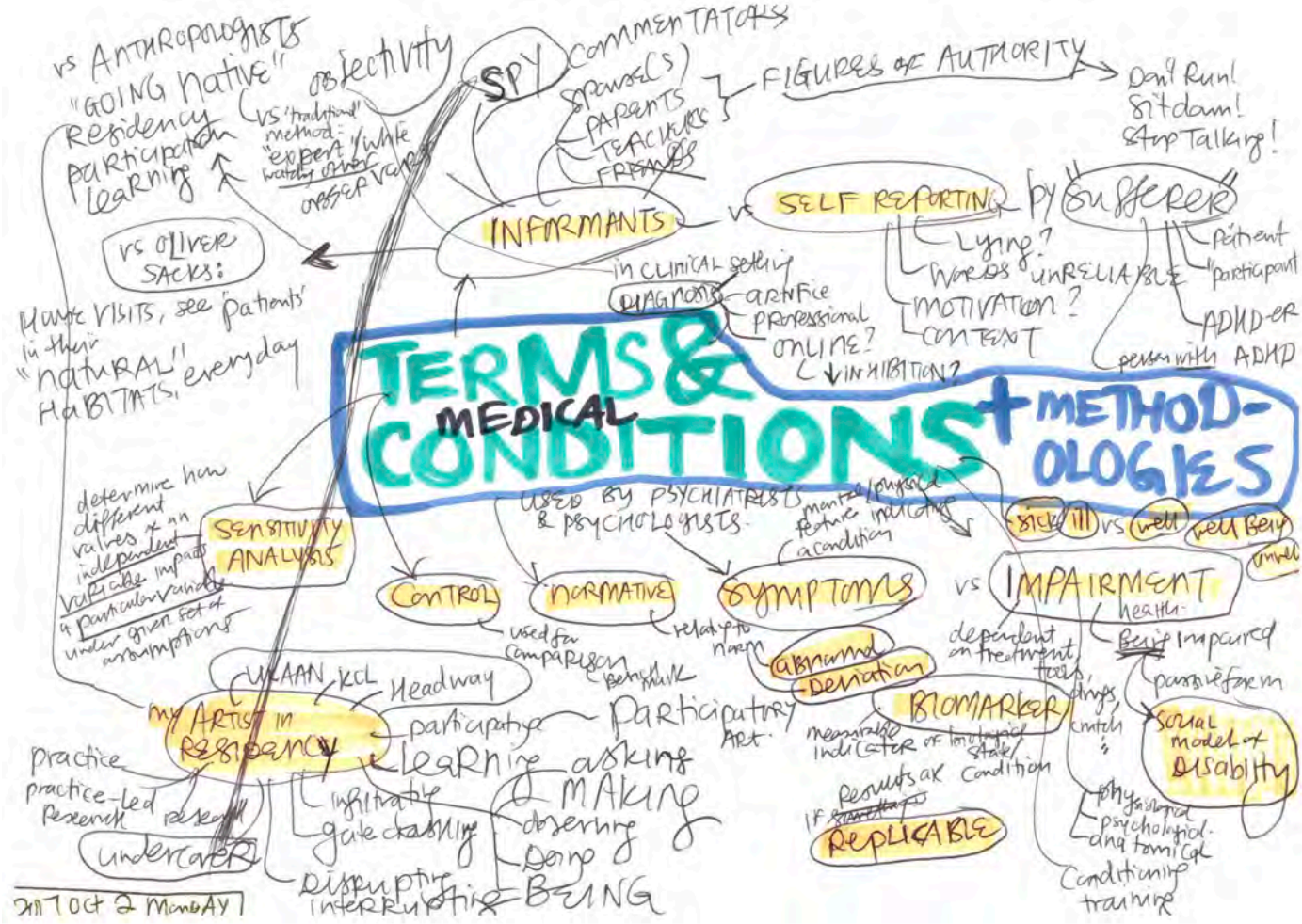


We are amid a global mental health crisis (Frankish, Boyce, & Horton, 2018). The development of 20 antipsychotics and 30 antidepressants over the past four decades has not improved the morbidity or mortality of mental disorders (Insel, 2015). Mental illness costs England £105.2 billion annually (Department of Health, 2011). Still, many consider its stigma worse than the illness (Thornicroft, Brohan, Rose, Sartorius, & Leese, 2009).

It's time to think outside the pillbox (Tan & Asherson, 2018). Global challenges demand interdisciplinary efforts (ESPRC, 2017), and there is 'strong evidence for [creative interventions'] impact and cost-effectiveness' (AHRC/UKRI, 2017). Research Councils recently awarded £8 million for the creation of new mental health networks (UKRI, 2018). Such efforts draw on the All Party Parliamentary Group Report on Arts Health and Wellbeing (APPGAHW) which argues that the arts can 'stimulate imagination and reflection' and 'change perspectives' (2017).

Interestingly, the APPGAHW focuses on the quality of the artistic activity 'rather than that of the output'. It rejects art that is 'lofty activity which requires some sort of superior cultural intelligence to access', and excludes efforts by the 'creative industry', instead focusing on the efforts of the non-profit sectors. *But aren't such lines of reasoning 'lofty'? Doesn't art stimulate and change perspectives because it engages and develops cultural intelligence? Shouldn't all forms of art – including the 'lofty' ones – help rectify our collective failure? Can't the quality of artistic output help tackle the negativity associated with mental health?*

Image: *Getting a Fix / Getting Fixed* (2017). This 'mapping' was created to help me process my learning during my residency at the Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre, King's College London.



This is where *We Sat On a Mat and Had a Chat and Made Maps! #MagicCarpet* could sit. This was an 18-month project commissioned and supported by Unlimited, celebrating the work of disabled artists, with funding from Arts Council England. With the aim of enriching medical and cultural understanding of mental health, and by extension, neurodiversity, through art in conversation with psychiatry, #MagicCarpet mobilises Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and how that relates to the phenomena of mind wandering as a case study. #MagicCarpet won a National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement Images Competition Award for Culture Change. Judges describe the winning image as 'challenging and thought provoking, and a really effective way of conveying the **positively disruptive energy** that engagement can release'. The 'magic' of *#MagicCarpet* was not to provide answers, but to stimulate questions and conversations to help bring about culture change in mental health. Exploiting art's propensity for ambiguity and play, #MagicCarpet extends the APPGAHW's remit and ambition with its creation of high-quality, well-made yet accessible artistic outcomes that build cultural intelligence, beyond art therapy and community arts (Tan & Asherson, 2018).

Along the way, #MagicCarpet pushes **'neurodiversity'** to the spotlight, which is virtually ignored in the APPGAHW. A framework that regards 'atypical neurological development as a normal human difference' (Jaarsma & Welin, 2012) and popularised by autism advocates in the 1990's, this is a contested term with diverse interpretations and allegiances, evident perhaps from this paradoxical definition itself (Tan, 2018d). Neurodiversity enriches this discussion as it is a 'more humane and accurate lens' (Baron-Cohen, 2017) with which to understand neurodevelopmental conditions like autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and synaesthesia, which often co-occur with mental health conditions.

Image: *Terms and (Medical) Conditions* by Kai Syng Tan 2017.
A4 in size, these mappings were created with marker pens and pens.

#MagicCarpet also contributes to existing interdisciplinary efforts, by showing how arts research can be at the cutting edge of improving lives, shaping new thinking and making, beyond the lazy instrumentalisation of art as 'communication', 'public engagement' or 'impact'. Like the mission of critical medical humanities, #MagicCarpet helps with 'widening of the sites and scales of "the medical" beyond the primal scene of the clinical encounter' and positions visual arts 'not as in service or in opposition to the clinical and life sciences, but as productively entangled' (Viney, Callard, & Woods, 2015). What distinguishes #MagicCarpet from, for instance, the outstanding *Hubbub* (Durham University), *Imagining Autism* (University of Kent) is that #MagicCarpet is **led by an artist- (rather than researcher), practice (rather than theory) and ADHD (rather than autism, the most 'outspoken' of neurodiversities).**

With its nuanced injection of scientific and artistic perspetives, #MagicCarpet also stands out from some of the existing efforts that deal with mental health in the creative and disability arts sectors, which sometimes venerate lived experience and demonise medical models of health, celebrate mental illness or neurodiversity as only 'superpowers' at the expense of nuanced discourses, scientific research or artistic quality, or, paradoxically, duplicate what they claim to oppose, and be prescriptive, pedantic or exploitative.

Art *can* be transformative. #MagicCarpet is an example of how art as a "soft and pure" discipline can lead change (Tan, 2019d). This booklet is my provocation and invitation for feedback and participation for #MagicCarpet's next adventures.

Image: *Small Deaths, Horniness and Taking Life by its Horns* (2017).
Cat reincarnates, in at least three formations, on the tapestry art.

approaches

#MagicCarpet brings visual art practice and research in dialogue with clinical practice, research, and lived experience of the neurodevelopmental condition of **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).** ADHD presents a powerful case study both because the Diagnostics and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, including the latest, 5th Edition (DSM V), classifies it as a mental disorder, and because the problems surrounding mental health are amplified in ADHD. Affecting 3-4% of adults worldwide, impairments include inattention, distractibility, disorganisation, hyperactivity, restlessness and impulsiveness (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) while strengths include risk-taking, divergent thinking, novelty-seeking, courage, resilience, hyper-focus and nonconformity (see for instance Abraham, Windmann, Siefen, Daum, & Güntürkün, 2006; Boot, Nevicka, & Baas, 2017; Greven, Buitelaar, & Salum, 2018; Mowlem et al., 2016; Sedgwick, Merwood, & Asherson, 2018). ADHD is invisible, not just because it is a non-physical condition, but is hidden from public discourse and imagination (Tan, 2018d). If mentioned, we speak ill of it or mock its existence, linking it with male criminals or bad parenting — seldom with women, and less so as a strength.

That ADHD is **controversial** makes it a fertile starting point. It is timely, too. The thinktank Demos argues that ADHD costs the UK 'billions of pounds every year' (2018). It urges the Government to 'work with people with ADHD and the media to develop an awareness-raising campaign, aiming to make ADHD visible to a wider audience and promote better public understanding of the condition'. Researchers also declare that 'time is ripe' to move away from the 'psychopathologic definition', and asks if research on high-functioning ADHD is 'at last entering the mainstream' (Lesch, 2018). They are exploring non-medical interventions like exercise and mindfulness too (Merwood and Kustow, 2017; Janssen et al., 2015; Rommel et al., 2013).

**Image: Participants at *Wandering Minds*,
#MagicCarpet's art-science speed-dating event.
South London Gallery, part of Arts in Mind Festival. Photograph by Alex Lloyd.**

Mind wandering, which refers to the engagement in self-generated thoughts unrelated to the external environment (Smallwood & Andrews-Hanna, 2013), enlivens the discussion because, while a universal human experience, *excessive* mind-wandering can be impairing. In fact, Philip is determining if it is a key feature and indeed biomarker for ADHD (Bozhilova, Michelini, Kuntsi, & Asherson, 2018). Scientists also recognise that self-generated thought 'allows consciousness freedom from the here and now', thus 'reflecting a key evolutionary adaptation for the mind'; in facilitating the connection to 'our past and future selves', mind wandering can 'provide a source of creative inspiration' (Smallwood & Andrews-Hanna, 2013). Mind wandering invites reflection on how ADHD relates to creativity too (Mowlem et al., 2016). Indeed, there are strong lineages in the arts that celebrate restlessness of the mind and body – Surrealism's free association, Virginia Woolf's stream of consciousness, or the Situationists' *dérive* or drift come to mind.

Image: Kai running an unscientific survey at *Mind Wandering: Best Friend or Worst Enemy?* SGDP. Photograph by Enamul Hoque.

#MagicCarpet, is, thus, where art and psychiatry collide – and create spaces of **'productive antagonisms'** (Latham & Tan, 2017), which I argue further adds rigour to the project. Referring to the engineering of creative collision between disciplines, productive antagonisms emphasise a 'willingness to run across the boundaries that separate disciplines' to 'see what happens when these boundaries are over run, out run, re-routed'. Artistic input is key, since this rests on a 'a willingness to explore, experiment, mess around with unexpected and indeed unlikely lines of connection and influence'. After all, 'making good art involves […] ill-discipline'.

This in turn links #MagicCarpet to the related concept, of being **'ill-disciplined'.** This refers not just to a sense of mischief that is often associated with children with ADHD, but how it takes on 'illness' as method, thereby subverting the negative connotations of illness (Tan & Asherson, 2018). It also refers to interdisciplinarity and indeed transdisciplinarity, which 'offers us a new vision of nature and reality. Trans-disciplinarity does not strive for mastery of several disciplines but aims to open all disciplines to that which they share and to that which lies beyond them' (Nicolescu, 2002, pp. 147–152).

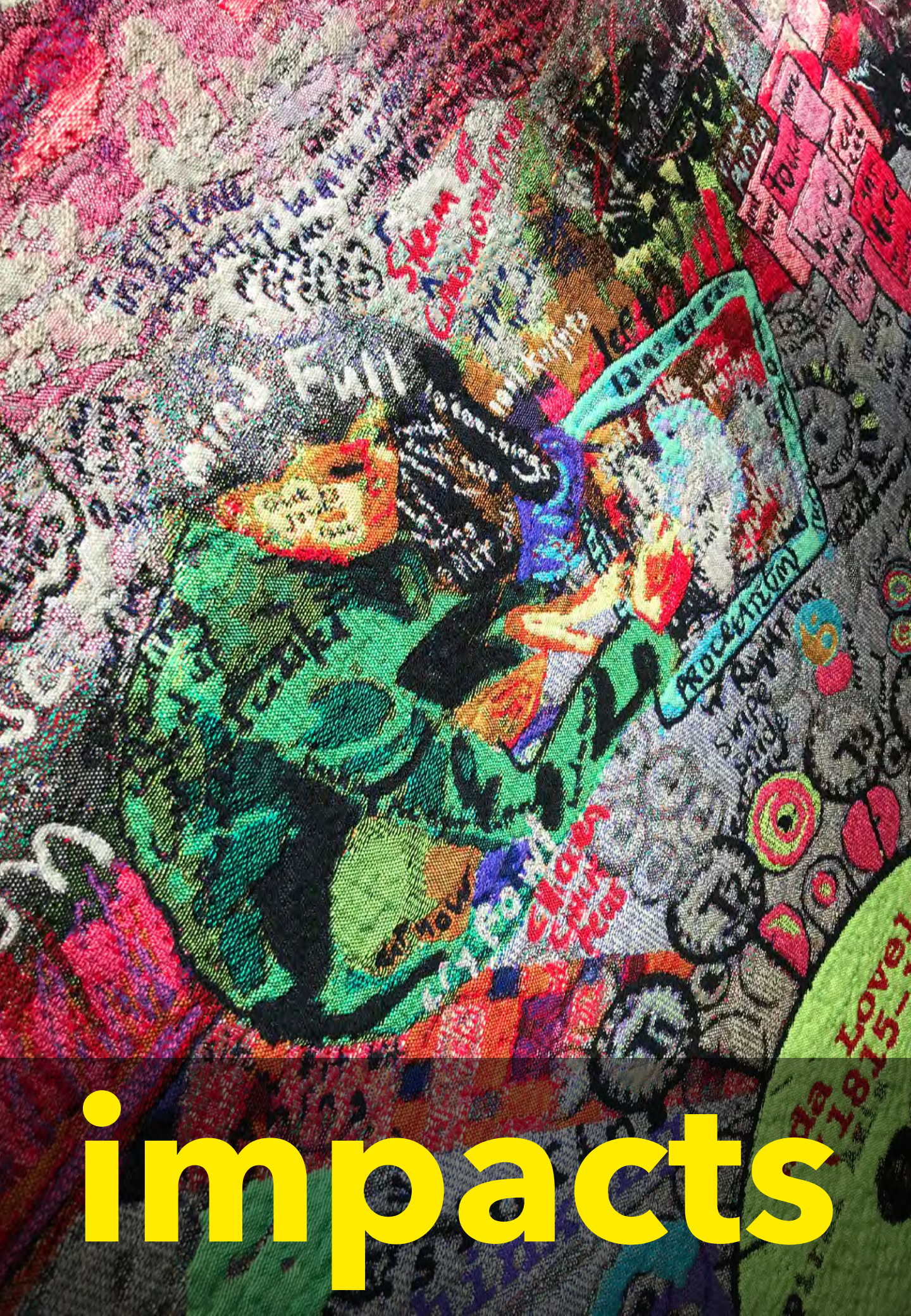
Badges to 'out' myself as a mind wanderer. They're also distributed to people I run into. Earlier batches were inspired by the 'Baby on Board' badge, while later ones drew on my favourite features of ADHD from DSM V. 600 in 13 designs have been given out so far.

Both productive antagonisms and ill-disciplined are played out on another level. The project was my process of inquiry as a woman, artist, curator and researcher with ADHD, as well as my public dialogue with a psychiatrist through art. My late diagnosis of ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia in Autumn 2015 raised questions not answers. I stepped out of my comfort zone of art, where I have dwelled professionally for 25 years, and stepped into the world of mind and brain sciences to work with **Professor of Psychiatry Philip Asherson**, a global authority of adult ADHD. We were based at the Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre (SGDP), where I was its first artist-in-residence. Akin to an artistic intervention or durational performance, I attended seminars and volunteered for research trials. #MagicCarpet is my process to learn about and interrogate dominant discourses around ADHD which focus on children or adult male criminals, and only as an aberration to be corrected, cured, ironed out, medicated (Tan & Asherson, 2017).

Image: Professor Philip Asherson talking to #MagicCarpet participants. SGDP. Photograph by Enamul Hoque.

Art in dialogue with psychiatry is meaningful also because conditions related to ADHD like dyslexia contribute to an over-representation (30%) within the arts (Bacon & Bennett, 2013). The project subverts the medic-patient dynamic, and overturns the stale trope of the artist as 'mad genius'. After all, mental illness affects 'Van Gogh, as it does bus drivers, plumbers, teachers, older people and children' (Rashed, 2019, p. 28). Outputs and processes include **a tapestry, performance-lectures, badges, photographs, drawings and workshops.** Measuring 2.9m by 1.45m, the tapestry captured my observations, questions and findings. This was weaved at Flanders Tapestries in Belgium, which has produced the works of artist Grayson Perry, Laure Provoust and others. The tapestry can be 'activated' as a carpet for people to sit and chat about their minds and brain. As words may be challenging or overrated, we also made drawings and maps – hence the 'carpet' and 'map' in the title.

Image: From *Badge-wearing Mind wanderer in Action (M.I.A)* (2017). Photograph by Enamul Hoque.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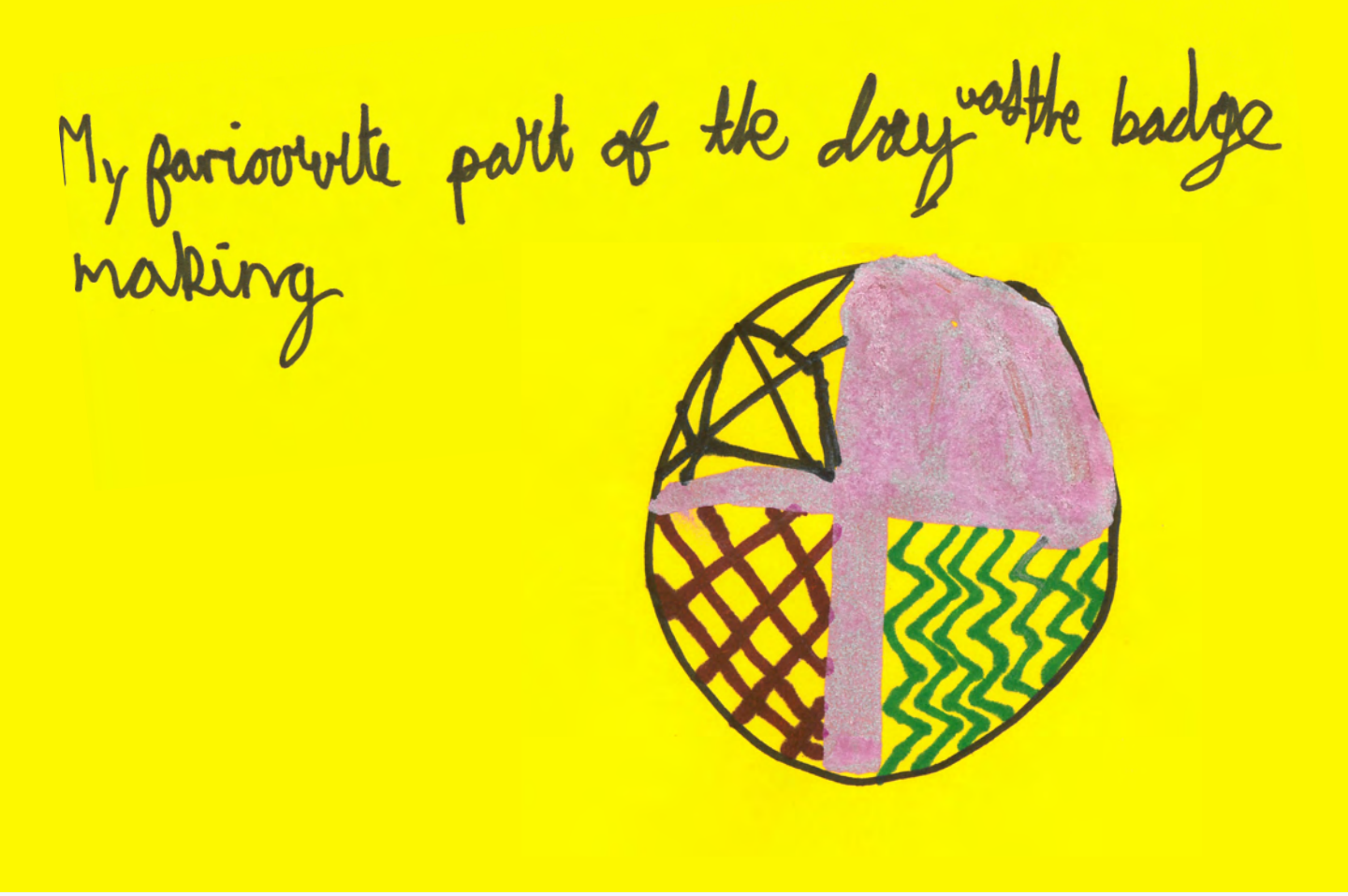


#MagicCarpet succeeded in **opening up a creative and critical space to gather diverse bodies and minds, as well as their diverse and divergent bodies of knowledge, to contribute to and extend discourses around mental health and neurodiversity**. It has enabled myself and Professor Philip Asherson to enter each other's spaces, as well as new spaces that we would not have traversed on our own.

Since Autumn 2017, 10,000 people, including mental health professionals, researchers and so-called 'service users' of mental health, aged 2 to 85, have stepped into #MagicCarpet's world through 26 exhibitions, 24 keynote lectures and discussions, within the UK and beyond. The tapestry was launched at the iconic Art Workers' Guild established by artist William Morris and held a debate on the possibilities and limitations of the term 'neurodiverse art', made drawings at the Innovation Showcase at Nesta's People Powered Future Health (for 500 health policy people), ran a speed-dating event for arts lovers and mental health professionals at the South London Gallery (in collaboration with Art Assassins, a collective for local youths aged15-20), exhibited at the the Southbank Centre (reaching 700 viewers across 4 days), and shared my 'unreasonable adjustments' with education policy makers and teachers at SOS Dyslexia Conference in San Marino.

We wrote 14 articles, including about the importance of 'lofty' art in mental health, which was read 2000 times within two days. There were 17 citations and 32 media engagement, including on Resonance FM, Big Issue North and South London Press. There are also two podcasts and 13 short films. One of the films was in the Official Selection of the Arts and Humanities Research Council Research in Film Award. Another film was an EU-funded one viewed 17,545 times in the first month of publication.

Image: Handwritten feedback by a student from Lyndhurst School, who joined 14 others and 2 teachers in a #MagicCarpet workshop as part of Arts in Mind, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience.

100% of the feedback for several events stated that the work has improved their understanding of how the arts and science can create new insights, and extended their views on mental health and neurodiversity. The tapestry encourages '**everyone to step outside their comfort zone** […] I learned more about the mind [than] what I would have learned in a classroom setting […] Art […] served as a process to educate me and to connect me with people', states a participant in *The Psychologist* (Marlow, 2018). Others describe the work as 'exciting and innovative'; 'already leading the way', and 'breaking new ground', and that they 'felt like I have **finally found my own community**' (King's Cultural Community, 2018). I received countless emails, many of which included heartfelt revelations from men and women sharing their professional and personal challenges and/or concerns for loved ones.

There were also several from 'neurotypicals', including 'Thank you for your speech – super moving and motivational and inspiring! […] I think it's super powerful and I believe it applies to others who are neurotypical but don't really fit in the box as well'. Just as feminism works best when everyone – not just women and those who identify as such – join in the cause, 'neurodiversity' is meaningless unless all types of minds, and bodies, get on board.

Image: Drawing by 85 year old Dr Vera Coghill, mother of Professor Dave Coghill, chair of European Network for Hyperkinetic Disorders Conference EUNETHYDIS 2018. Edinburgh Conference Centre.

Medical professionals felt empowered by #MagicCarpet, too. Sat shoeless on the #MagicCarpet, clinicians confessed mental health problems of themselves or in their families, which motivated their interest in the field. Health policy professionals commented on the benefits of the non-hierarchical and accessible setting, so different to a clinical one (Tan & Asherson, 2018). That #MagicCarpet is 'beautiful' (for instance Zatka-Haas, 2018; Hodgkinson, 2019; Harris, 2018) meant that people didn't associate it with the stigmatise that usually surrounds mental health. Everyone wanted to make drawings that was associated with a well-made art project. Scientific processes like electroencephalogram (EEG) and Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) aside, these drawings open up compelling ways to visualise the kinetic energy and imaginations of the mind. Shared online in a dedicated website (Tan, 2018c) and through exhibitions, the 134 drawings – including of strange beasts, abstract patterns and magical landscapes – have in turn helped to widen the lexicon of mental restlessness, and provoked discussions on the lines between pathology and 'normality'.

As an ADHD researcher states, 'A mahoossive (sic) thanks for inspiring me to have my ADD checked. Your talk got me back on track', while a participant states: 'Loved it loved it loved it. Felt at home. So Happy! :)', while another states, it was 'really exciting to see how the magic carpet became this generative object, quietly (though in its own way loudly) creating a space that was both safe and adventurous. You and your work really created a unique space, generous and energising'.

Image: Drawing by Abbie. EUNETHYDIS 2018, Edinburgh Conference Centre.

#MagicCarpet raised awareness around gender and how that relates to mental health and neurodiversity. How it went about doing this was also **inclusive.** This was achieved **via a playful and constructive tone**, avoiding the holier-than-thou approach of prescribing 'ground rules' or 'company conduct' of others (for instance Huijg, 2019; Performingborders, 2019), which seem antithetical to accompanying claims of inclusion and empowerment.

At the 5th European Network for Hyperkinetic Disorders Conference in Edinburgh, I invited 500 researchers and psychiatrists to consider #ADHDart created by #ADHDwomen (Tan, 2019a). I curated *Brisk/Risks*, an open mic event at Bush House on the Strand. Women step forward to share stories about taking risks (Tan, 2019b). They included Andrea Bilbow OBE on how she gave all up to set up the National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service (ADDISS), and Jaye Braithwaite, a young black woman who performed a poem about her Tourette's. In a *Disability Arts Online* article which became its top editorial in 2018, I urged readers to consider the efforts of Jess Thom aka Touretteshero (Tan, 2018d). At a Science Museum conference on health activism, I discussed the 600 badges that I have distributed to people whom I, a BAME woman with ADHD, interacted with in the past 18 months. Large and colourful, the badges, which come in 13 designs, including a set that refers to my 'favourite' impairments of ADHD on DSM V. The badges 'out' people as 'mind wanderers', and have become a collectors' items.

Image: Drawing by Sam Jevon. Headway East London a charity for people affected by brain injury).

Gender is important in this discussion. Women remain under-researched and under-diagnosed in ADHD, as the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) 2018 guidelines also suggests (2018). Researchers are learning about how autism and ADHD have different presentations in girls and women, and the extents to which they have traditionally camouflaged their conditions (Lai et al., 2017; Mowlem et al., 2018). That the iconic mathematician Ada Lovelace – my tribute to women scientists – occupies centre-stage on the tapestry also ensures that women are never far from our minds in #MagicCarpet. For a seminar on *Mind Wandering: Best Friend or Worst Enemy?* at the SGDP, I invited a young female PhD student in neuroscience as a panel member, who sat alongside distinguished academics such as arts in health leader Professor Helen Chatterjee MBE (UCL). I assigned a disabled undergraduate student as an activity leader in the public engagement activities. Quiet spaces, large prints and British Sign Language interpretation by BAME women were also frequently instated.

The inclusive approaches add up. One participant describes the events as 'positive, intriguing and productive […]. I think you achieved something very usual - a genuinely diverse and progressive format for people to express their thoughts' (Tan, 2018c). Another states that it was 'so good to have had intergenerational conversations' at an event while another thought that #MagicCarpet offers 'an impulsive opportunity to speak was so valuable and treasured by my and I'm sure other people's voice!', while another states that 'It was such a privilege to hear so many moving and fascinating stories – it really was a singular and special event'.

Image: Exhibition view of *Making Mind Wandering Visible* (October 2018-March 2019), Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre. Photograph by Gaynor Tutani.

Working across sectors and disciplines and artfully, playfully mixing things up, in an 'ill-disciplined' approach, #MagicCarpet presents a template of how art and science can clash and/or create sparks (Tan & Asherson, 2017). Like the experience of using dating apps, there must be the willingness to venture, to play, to feel vulnerable, to see what happens (Tan, 2018b). My residency at the Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre (SGDP) has been a challenge – and revelation. I did not expect to grasp the complex scientific concepts and approaches – and I didn't. Yet, the very process of not knowing, and working in a uniquely interdisciplinary environment was enough to make any brain buzz, let alone one that seeks novelty. The weekly seminars felt like collective brainstorming sessions by the top researchers and future leaders in psychiatry, neuroscience, psychology and genetics. My colleagues have also welcomed my presence and intervention. For me, that's **a swipe right – a match, a promising start.** Researchers report that they are now interested in the positive aspects of ADHD, and not just its deficits, 'because of your work with Philip'.

Apart from exhibitions, seminars and workshops related to #MagicCarpet, I have since invited other colleagues to introduce their work to the SGDP. This included my curation of an exhibition and book launch by a psychoanalyst-artist exploring the creative process, and the facilitation of an exhibition by a young research worker on mental distress through photography. I also set up an Art and Science Creative Collisions programme that I co-led with a PhD student in clinical psychology, which provided a creative space for colleagues to destress through arts and craft activities, or to use the arts and creativity can bring to their research in direct or indirect ways.

Image: Philip and Kai speaking at Unlimited Festival 2018, Southbank Centre. Photograph by Studio Maba.

The head of SGDP tweets that it has been ‘so lucky to have @kaisyngtan as part of the @SGDPCentreKCL, @KingsIoPPN. She brought creativity, and her wonderful good cheer to our daily lives (Lewis, 2019). For Professor Philip Asherson, #MagicCarpet is a ‘leading example of successful collaboration between scientific and cultural sectors. The project has been held as an innovative integration of art and science and functions as a powerful platform for the clinical and scientific community to develop an interesting dialogue, and to find new, exciting and innovative ways to communicate the science of ADHD. The work is contributing to both local and national training with healthcare professionals and researchers’ (King’s College London, 2019; King’s College London King’s Artists, 2019; Tan, 2018a).

Indeed, Philip was key for the success of #MagicCarpet. His level of **humanity, humility and humour** has shone through. I have worked with many species – geographers, composers, dancers, urban planners – but Philip has stood out as a powerful ally and wonderful sport. Philip had told me that I am a ‘fellow researcher’ at the start of the collaboration, then ‘we are fellow colleagues’ when he was providing a formal diagnosis of ADHD later. He walked the talk, by always listening and allowing me agency, making me part of the conversation whether he was treating patients in a men’s prison, or when he was with other mind and brain researchers. Perhaps having worked with creative colleagues with ADHD like Rory Bremner, and having performed in theatre in his younger days, Philip was open to the experimental nature of the project, and grasped early on that its ‘art’ lies not just in the exhibitions and artistic outputs, but its curation and performativity across 18 months. Not once has Philip expressed desire in, nor has any of their actions and interactions, signalled any interest in ‘fixing’ me, which colleagues from the art world had warned me about.

Interestingly, it had been self-proclaimed ‘allies’ who had insisted on focusing on deficits. ‘Let me fix that/you’, they say. At upwards of £200 per day.

Image: Launch of #MagicCarpet’s tapestry art installation. Art Workers’ Guild. 2018. Photograph by Marco Berardi.

#MagicCarpet contributes to discourses in the art world, such as the place of craft today, led by Grayson Perry for instance, and on drawing, led by David Hockney for instance, as my drawing has been created on iPad. My invitation in this section is to reflect upon what I feel is an under-discussed area, which is **how we could do better in the arts that explore mental health and the related areas of neurodiversity and disability**. Issues like tribalism, tokenism, bullying and exploitation exist in any sector. Yet, my personal experiences in arts in/and mental health has also revealed discrimination, hypocrisy and hierarchies of normality (Tan, 2019f). Arguably more toxic as that they outwardly trumpet liberalism and inclusivity, and are often women- and disability-led, striking parallels can be drawn with institutional racism which has been well-documented (for instance Di Angelo 2011, Ahmed, 2017; Sian, 2019). Lies, false allies and sham accomplices who are quick to 'womansplain' what discrimination and 'human rights' mean, from their ivory tower/social media handle/neuro-normative reality, to people they claim to ally with, have seemed, disappointingly, to be not the exception but the norm. Without being specific, it suffices to state that my encounters aren't unique or the worst. Which lead me to ask: *how would a less experienced or more vulnerable practitioner have been impacted? And if we purport to raise awareness about mental health through our work, shouldn't we do much better so that we safeguard the mental health of practitioners and participants?*

#MagicCarpet's response was to be **more inclusive, and more *ill-disciplined*, more *octopussy* and more 'open and non-judgemental'**, as a participant says of an event (Tan, 2018c). The spirit of project can be summed up by the tentacular chimera depicted in the work that roams the interstices of different frameworks, disciplines, ideas, ideologies and practices (Tan, 2018b). After all, it is when things rub up against one another, when things aren't just us versus them, black and white, but 50, 500 shades of greys, and aren't mutually exclusive, but allowing messy overlaps, blurred thresholds and inherent contradictions, that new questions can be born, when antagonisms can become productive. *Ill*-adjusted, this is a safari of beasts, illness as methodology – restless, un-fixed and *unfixable*. Its tentacles are of inconsistent lengths, viscosity, elasticity and levels of interest. Porous, non-bullet-proof and without magic bullets, they dip into conflicting schools of thought, flitting back and forth. Engineering conversations and collisions, #MagicCarpet celebrates play, difference and all its messiness.

Image: Innovation Showcase, People Powered Future Health, NESTA. 2018, London UK.

next up

All this is just the beginning. Further strands include:

The possibilities of **'neurodiverse art'** could be further unpacked. #MagicCarpet participants defined this as 'looking at the world in different ways', which is 'healthy' — and 'makes the rest of us re-examine ours', 'with the added element of surprise – that which is 'not typical' (Tan, 2018c). How does that relates to terms other practitioners have created such as 'neuroaesthetics' (Griffiths & Sinclair, 2017), 'dyslexic aesthetics' (Dyspla, 2018), 'neurotransgression' and 'dyspractice' (Oliver, 2019)?

Philip and I are keen to work on an **illustrated publication**, which communicates recent findings of mind wandering in relation to depression and PTSD. I began research on electroencephalogram (EEG) through a 4-month artist-in-residency at the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art, with colleagues in Singapore. With another colleague at Birkbeck, University of London, we ran workshops for activists of 'mad pride', researchers and clinicians to co-create ways to improve clinical practice.

For effective culture change, **(higher) education** is key. I want neurodiversity to inform what and how I teach. This includes my new role at the Manchester School of Art, the UK's first comprehensive art school set up in 1838, as a Senior Lecturer. I am leading a new MA/MFA programme in arts leadership. Back at King's, Philip has designed a new PhD programme on the dissemination and public understanding of science of ADHD and mental health through creative practice, to stimulate critical discourse, and to translate scientific findings into societal changes. This unique degree extends art-science awards such as Queen Mary's MSc in Creative Arts and Mental Health With another colleague, we are scheming a joint art-science professional degree, perhaps an MASc in neurodiversity.

Image: ROAM! ROAM! ROAM! (Portals and Potterings).
From BADGE-WEARING MIND WANDERER IN ACTION (M.I.A) series (2017).
C-Type gloss, 596X347mm, mounted on 3mm Forex. Photographer: Enamul Hoque

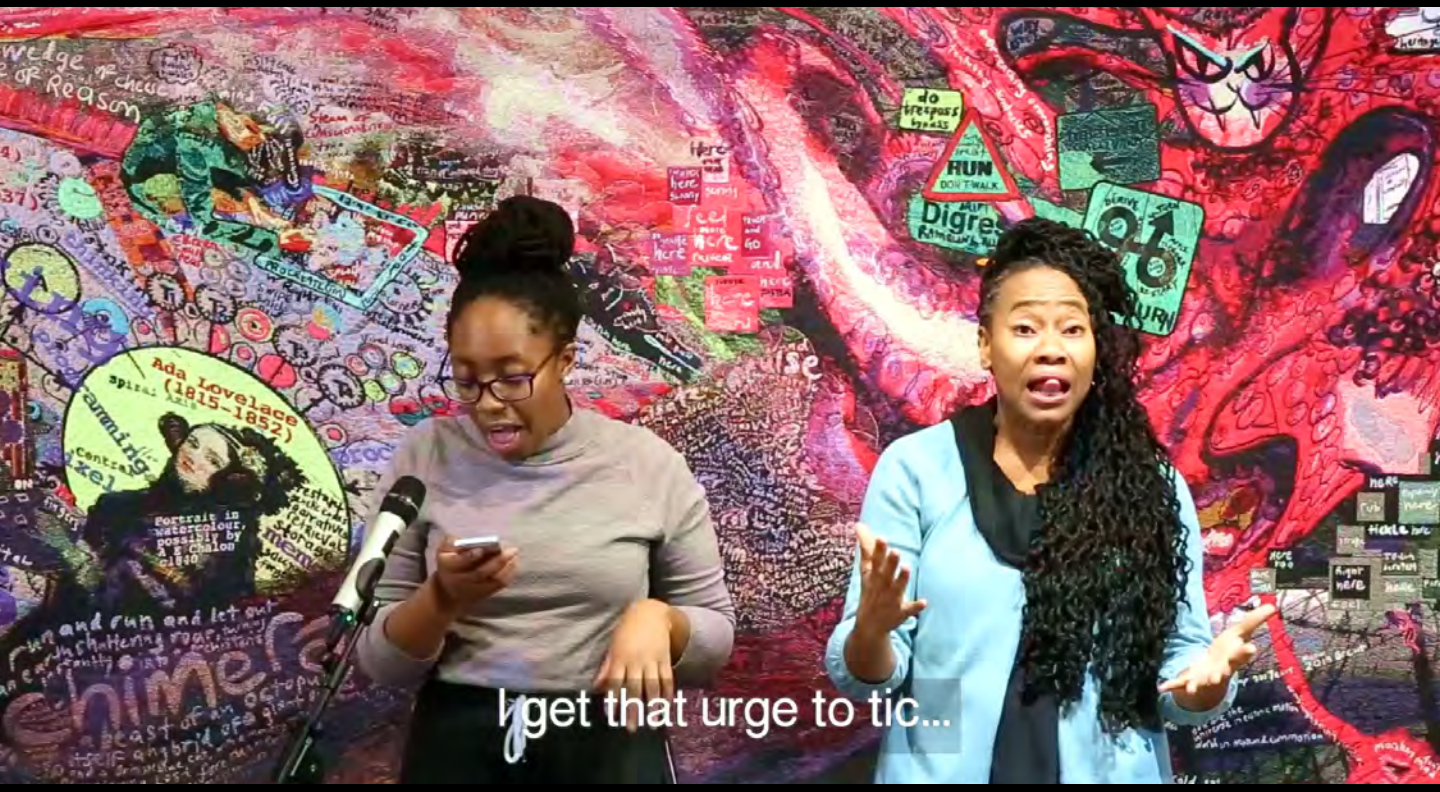
With allies across universities, I intend to set up **an intra-university neurodiversity network** for staff members. This is timely, not least given the rise of anxiety in higher education (see for instance Berg, Huijbens, & Larsen, 2016). As a colleague states, 'You are one of the most important drivers in giving me energy to push for change. I'm a dyslexic and dyspraxic academic and your story + that of others really resonated with me'. These peers feed me the energy to help push for change.

I continue to **work with organisations** keen to help rectify our collective failure in the mental health crisis. I am Creative and Cultural Consultant for UK Adult ADHD Network (UKAAN) which is an organisation for mental health professionals and researchers since 2009, and Arts Advisor for PsychArt, which was founded by psychiatry trainees in 2015 to celebrate the positive presence of creativity in psychiatry.

#MagicCarpet will continue to **tour** in the form of masterclasses and keynote lectures, including at University hospital Frankfurt, Germany, St Georges Hospital in London, Edinburgh College of Art and Reading University.

Several people, especially **women**, have also been seeking advice for their own personal and personal development. This includes an internship by a 17-year old from who travelled from South East Asia to work with me for 1 week. Meanwhile, my **own adventure of self-discovery** continues. Understanding that ADHD involves interactions between genetics, the environment, and social factors has opened up insights — and more questions (Tan, 2018b).

Image: From *Un-reasonable Adjustments, Creative Health, Neurodiversity in HE & Ways Forward,* a workshop with staff members at Plymouth College of Art. Participants came up with manifesto statements for an inclusive curriculum (2018).



I am not a fan of Slavoj Žižek, but he was not wrong to point out that it is the collapse of the left that has led to the global rise of the new right (Owens 2018). Ergo, only critiquing how things are from within 'safe spaces', adopting a 'wait and see' attitude, or (still) dreaming of a total revolution aren't enough any more. Thus, much of my current work is framed around **the leadership of art practice to catalyse future-facing imaginations, and to co-create new collective visions**. This is about art for social and culture change. #MagicCarpet has helped to join in existing dialogues and instigate new ones around how we understand ourselves and one another, amidst a world in turmoil today (Tan, 2020, 2019e, 2020). It has shown how art — good quality art — can engage in meaningful dialogue with other disciplines and sectors to stimulate discourses around urgent issues. As an extension, I have also proposed to curate an exhibition and/or festival entitled *What Could A Neurodiversity-led 2050 Look Like?* which commissions pilots and prototypes by new and unexpected pairings of artists with scientists and technologists, to show: 'Look! This is how things *could be!* How can we get there together?' And in such dark times, we *need* hope, which writer Rebecca Solnit argues, is a 'gift', a 'power' (2017). These efforts are affirmations of the transformative power of art, to make us feel hope, still, amid the despair.

Medical interventions haven't averted the mental health crisis. **Art is no magic pill either, but with its propensity for play and ambiguity, it can invent new spaces for new questions and discourses.** #MagicCarpet joins other endeavours of the co-creation of knowledge through art, like *The Heart of the Matter* (Layton & Biglino, 2018) and *The Perception of Pain* (Padfield, 2013). Novel, interdisciplinary approaches can stimulate imagination and reflection, and transform how we see mental health. #MagicCarpet continues to fly, and with other efforts, collectively effect culture change in how we understand mental health.

Image: Jaye Braithwaite (left) performing at Brisk/Risks, a #MagicCarpet open mic. With BSL interpreter Jacqui Beckford (right). Arcade at Bush House, King's College London. Still from film by Studio Maba.

appendices

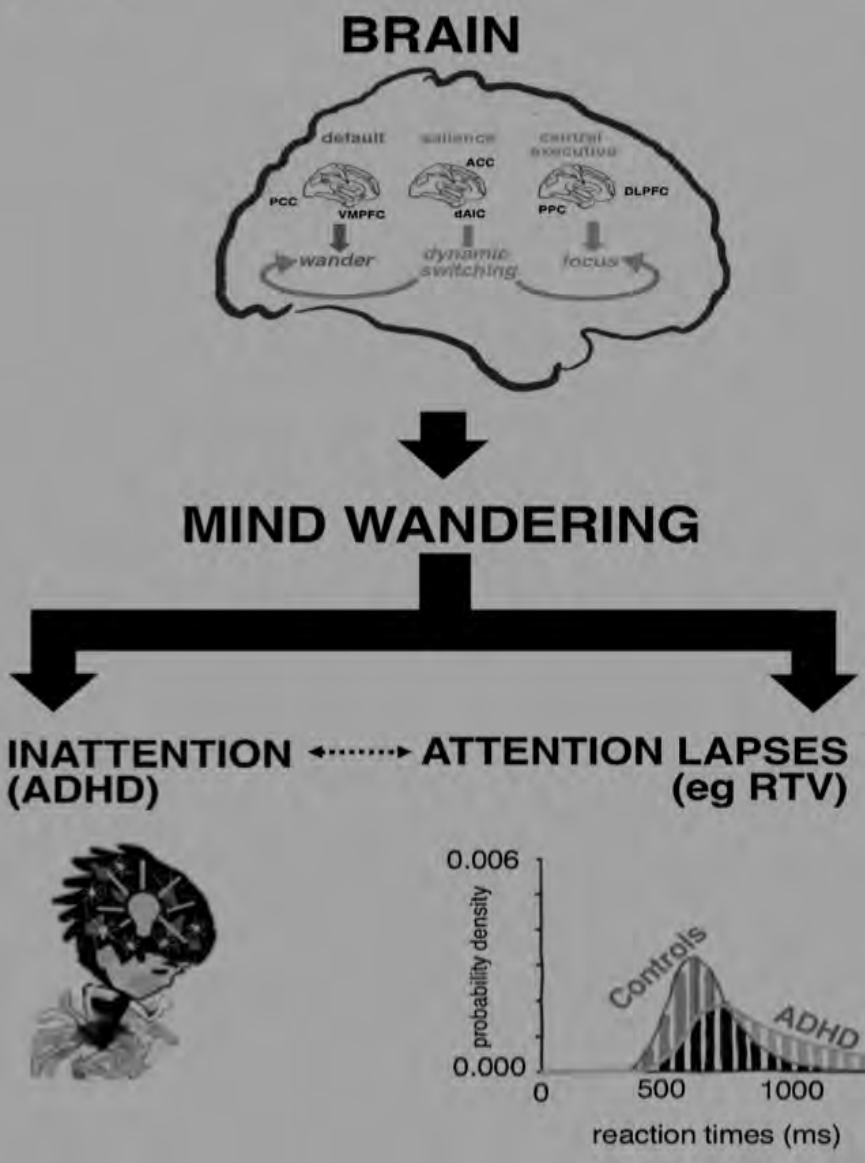


Fig. 1. Visualisation of the linear relationship between neural activity, mind-wandering (MW), inattentive symptoms and attentional lapses in the MW hypothesis. The top, central image represents the three neural networks underlying excessive and spontaneous mind-wandering in ADHD. The key hubs of the default mode network are the posterior cingulate cortex, and ventromedial prefrontal cortex, associated with active mind-wandering. The central executive network includes dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, and posterior parietal cortex, which are active during cognitively demanding tasks and serve as a marker of task focus. The salience network involves the anterior cingulate cortex, and anterior insula, linked to the regulation of the interaction between the default mode and central executive network. The bottom, left image represents inattentive symptoms in ADHD. The bottom, right image represents the greater variability in the distribution of reaction time scores in ADHD.

wandering has been linked to ADHD and ADHD-associated impairments, and unlike ADHD symptoms such as inattention, mind wandering can be measured using a range of direct and indirect measures. These include rating scale state and trait measures, experience sampling in daily life, experience sampling during experimental paradigms, and the neural correlates of MW. Potentially these may provide new clinical and neural biomarkers of ADHD that could provide new insights into the neurobiological basis of ADHD, which can be used for diagnosis and prediction and monitoring of treatment effects, and could lead to novel treatments targeting the regulation of mind wandering in ADHD.

2. ADHD, mind wandering and the default mode network

2.1. What is mind wandering?

Mind wandering (M occurs when e's mind drifts away from the sk a foc erna ask elat ts a ages. is a ive exper e t rep nts to 50 d ie (illw oo 201 Wh ms MW can be beneficial to individuals (e.g. strategic thinking about a grant proposal while driving a car), other forms can be detrimental (e.g. spontaneous uncontrolled thoughts that interfere with tasks such as connectivity between the brain's default mode network (DMN) and executive control networks (Fox et al., 2015; Sripada et al., 2014).

2.2. Spontaneous mind wandering is associated with ADHD

The first study of MW in ADHD was conducted using an experience sampling technique to measure on-task and off-task thoughts during a simple attention task (Shaw and Giambra, 1993).The frequency of task-unrelated thoughts was found to be increased in college students with a childhood history of ADHD diagnosis, compared to controls. Among the controls, male and female groups that reported high levels of childhood ADHD symptoms also demonstrated more task-unrelated thoughts than controls reporting low levels of childhood ADHD symptoms.

A further study, using the MW Deliberate and Spontaneous scales (Carriere et al., 2013) found that a group who h been diagnosed with ADHD showed more spontaneous than delib e MW (Seli et al.,). t d th ous ot era w gnifi rela with HD mpt sev her ly us an t c mp co site in D symptoms was positive orrelated with a composite in of W derived from experience s ling data of task-unrelated ghts during a lab session, and daily life (Franklin et al., 2017). Furthermore,

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specifications

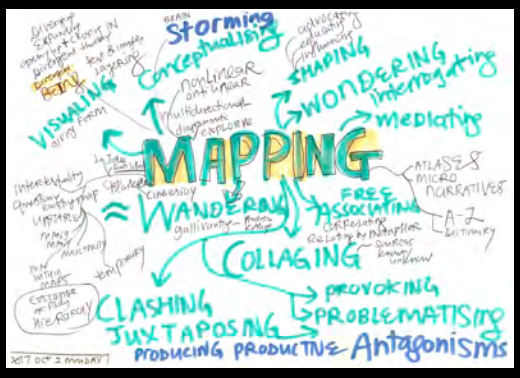
TAPESTRY + INVISIBLE LOOM

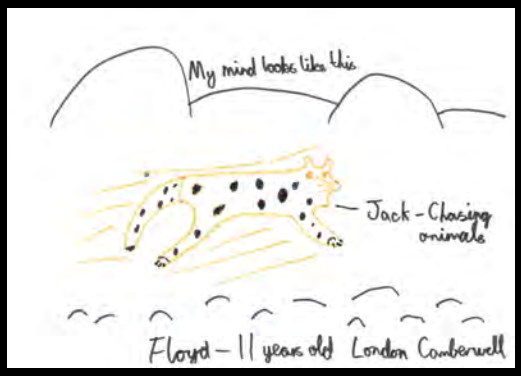
Installation process (4-5 persons over 6' tall needed for assembly). Southbank Centre, 2018.

Large and overworked, the tapestry flits in and out of reason, legibility and consciousness. It explores mind wandering through the kaleidoscope of time: of histories past, of futures to come. It is also a safari of mind wandering beasts, of pixels, of tactility, of palimpsests, of sex, of death, of mortality, of immortality, of sweat. There is Basquiat, Beckett, Kathy Acker, Hokusai, My Little Pony and my dead cat. Grotesque and tender, the tapestry references what I learnt as the Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre's first artist-in-residency. It also pays homage to Magritte's Time Transfixed, pointing to how the arts celebrates the wanderings of the mind.

The image could be considered as a snapshot of my restless and busy mind. I'm depicted sitting on a rug, making drawings on iPad, in a reference to my own process of creating the image for the tapestry, which was my first in 20 years. Close by is a woman also with a digital device, this time a laptop. This is mathematician Ada Lovelace, who worked with Charles Babbage on his early prototype of the computer, which was inspired by the Jacquard loom. That she assumes centrestage reminds us of the importance of women in science, and that the 'digital' refers not only to computers, but how it relates to the craft of weaving and hence how these, like our toes and fingers, are extensions of the magical human body and mind.

- Title of tapestry: *I Run and Run, Let Out an Earth Shattering Roar, and Turn into a Giant Octopussy* (2018)
- Specs: 2.9m X 1.45m. Wool, cotton
- Process: Drawing on iPad, then 10-week weaving process on digital Jacquard loom at Flanders Tapestry in Belgium, where artists Grayson Perry and Laure Provost weaved theirs
- Installation: On invisible loom; 'activated' by being sat on to chat & make drawings; on table; hung (pockets at back of tapestry) …
- Invisible loom: Designed by Studio LW
- Loom specs: Acrylic cast, bolts. 34 kg total. 3050 x 2000 x 1000mm.





DRAWINGS + MAPPINGS

These drawings (top left and right) and mappings (bottom left) were my building blocks (2017) for the tapestry. Each drawing consists of yet more layers, references and red herrings, designed to intrigue rather than clarify/enlighten. The drawings have been created on iPad. Taking a cue from Hockney's iPad drawings, this process has enabled me to reconnect with my first contact with art since 4 years of age – drawing – albeit now mediated via a new technology. They were also my first drawings in twenty years. Drawings by participants of my workshops (above middle and right, the latter by Professor of Cognitive Neuroscinece Katya Rubia) also inspired me.

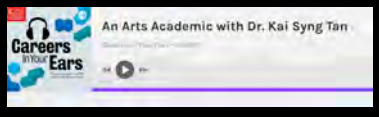
- **Drawings, set of 3. 420 X 594 mm. iPad, marker pen. Paper. (2017).**
- Clockwise from top right: **Psychiageographies [detournement] [exquisite corpse] [parenthesis]. On the cover of British Journal of Psychiatry published by Cambridge Uni. Press (July 2019)**
- ***Gibbon Mind Donkey Will*** **and** ***The Mind Excessively Wandering (Red Herring) Scale.***

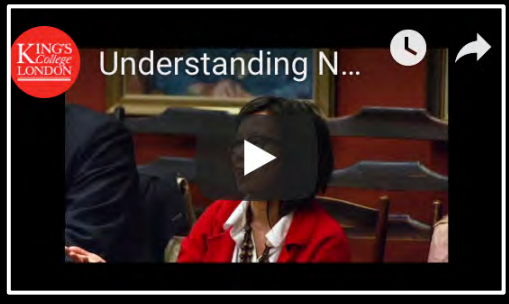
- Above left: **My 80 'mappings' (A4) to process what I was learning from my infiltration/durational performance amongst psychiatrists, psychologists and neuroscientists (2018).**

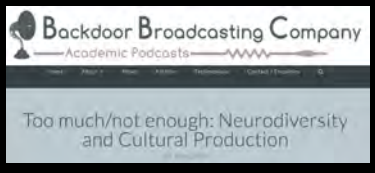
- Above middle and left: **Also: 200 drawings (A5) by participants of workshops**

MEDIA + MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

- More than 10 films, including a film poem (4'30") on wanderings of the body and mind, a film (14'30") on risk-taking, an interview with Winkball media (5'), a film on mental health created by ESRC Mental Health Leadership Fellow Prof. Louise Arseneualt
- 1 audio description for blind people
- 2 podcasts & 1 radio recording (Resonance FM)
- Play films on www.kaisyngtan.com/magiccarpet







PERFORMANCE PHOTOS + BADGES

Drawing on the 'Baby on Board' badges (bottom left) and impairments of ADHD listed on DSM V (bottom right), I made 11 badges and 6 sets of photographs to make ADHD and neurodiversity visible,: more seen, more heard, more talked about, not avoided, not dismissed, not spoken about in hushed tones, not just a specialist subject, and not just spoken ill of (because there is more than one side to any story). These badges out myself as a mind wanderer, so that they become starting points for discussion, and disagreements, about mind wandering and how it transports and/or impairs you. People I run into also receive badges. When more badge-wearing mind wanderers wander about, not just in the underground but above ground, in the streets, society can be infected with conversations about ADHD, neurodiversity and mental wellbeing.

➤ 650 badges (76mm, 58mm) in 11 designs distributed already

➤ Photographic series: *Badge-wearing Mind wanderer in Action (M.I.A)* (2017). C-Type gloss, 596X347mm each, mounted on 3mm Forex. Photographer: Enamul Hoque.

-Clockwise from top: *ROAM! ROAM! ROAM! (Portals and Potterings)*

-Making Mind wandering Visible (Photobombed)

-Come Ride With Me on My Magic Carpet (V&A Tapestry Room).

-ROAM! ROAM! ROAM! (Let's Feel Good).

-Mind in (com)motion in a world in (com)motion (London 7 October 2017 incident)

-Mind Wanderer OverBoard/OverBored (An Eye for An Eye).

playlists

AWARDS & GRANTS

1. 2019: Arts & Humanities Research Council Film Award Official Selection. Judges: leading producers & directors from C4, Royal Shakespeare Company, Financial Times & Aardman Animations. https://vimeo.com/273138637
2. 2019: Sovereign Art Prize Nomination.
3. 2018: National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement Images Competition Award for 'Culture Change'.
4. 2019: Grant from British Council and Unlimited. To attend IntegrART in Zurich, Switzerland.
5. 2019: Grant from Wellcome-ISSF for participation in Birkbeck Arts Festival with *Too Much / Not Enough: Neurodiversity & Cultural Production* (exhibition, provocation, film premiere). With Dr Sophie Jones, Alexandra Cianetti. (The image preceeding this page shows the tapestry art installed at the Birkbeck Arts Week in a room that used to be the art studio of the sister of Virginia Woolf, artist Vanessa Bell).
6. 2019: Grant from Birkbeck, University of London. For curation of Mental Health Activism and Clinical Practice. Co-curator: Wellcome ISSF Research Fellow in philosophy and psychiatry Dr Mohammed Abouelleil Rashed.
7. 2018: Artist-in-Residency award. Centre for Contemporary Art, Nanyang Technological University. Singapore. With additional flight sponsored by Unlimited international.
8. 2017: Unlimited Main Commissions award. 2017: Centre for Mobilities Research Fellowship. Lancaster University. UK.
9. 2017: Artist-in-Residency award. King's College London, King's Artists. UK.

PERMANENT COLLECTIONS

1. 2019: Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre
2. 2018: Private collectors via Shape Arts
3. 2016: Wellcome Trust Images Library for an image that was to be a preparatory image for the tapestry. (See image on page 53.)

FORTHCOMING

1. 2021: Keynote Speaker, Health Service Research and Pharmacy Practice (HSRPP) conference. Reading University.
2. 2020: Book chapter. 'Ill-Disciplined: Creative, Neurodivergent Intervention and Leadership in Higher Education – A Manifesto'. In Beyond Borders? Articulations, provocations and performativities in Arts & Humanities research, which explores the spaces, places and territories that exist above and below, amidst and with/out borders in Arts & Humanities research. Edited by Jacqueline Taylor et al (Birmingham City University).
3. 2020: 2-month exhibition as invited artist, Manchester Centre of Craft and Design
4. 2020: Masterclass & lecture. Edinburgh College of Art Lecture and Masterclass, entitled 'Ill-Disciplined: Creative, Neurodivergent Intervention and Leadership in Higher Education'
5. 2020: Masterclass & lecture for COCA, EU-funded consortium of neuroscientists, psychiatrists and psychologists, University Hospital Frankfurt, Germany.
6. 2020: Invited speaker, Conference supported by Medice, Berlin, Germany.
7. 2020: Lecture, Inst. of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, London
8. 2020: Provocation & Launch of Neurodiversity in HE Network, Reading University
9. 2020: Lecture & Masterclass, University hospital Frankfurt, Germany. For EU-funded consortium of scientists
10. 2020: Workshop. St Georges Hospital, London, UK. Invited by Dr Deborah Padfield.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

As Curator/ Co-Curator

1. 2019: Psychoanalysis and the Creative Process. Curator of Dr Patricia Townsend's exhibition, book launch and chat. Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre, King's College London.
2. 2019: Co-curator. Mental Health Activism and Clinical Practice Workshop series. With Wellcome ISSF Research Fellow in philosophy and psychiatry Dr Mohammed Abouelleil Rashed. Birkbeck, University of London. Guests include Reader in Forensic Psychiatry, University of London, Professor Annie Bartlett, and artist /mad activist Dolly Sen and Dr Norman Poole, Consultant Neuropsychiatrist & Editor of BJPsych Bulletin.
3. 2019: Art After Dark. January, September. NTU Centre for Contemporary Art, Singapore.
4. 2018: *The Art of ADHD* programme and #MagicCarpet exhibition. 5th EUNETHYDIS International European Network for Hyperkinetic Disorders Conference. Edinburgh.
5. 2018: Art & Mobilities Network Inaugural Symposium. Discussions-Exhibition-Workshop with 30 UK and international artists and researchers). Co-curated with Dr Jen Southern, Professor Emma Rose, Dr Linda O Keefe. Peter Scott Gallery, with Lancaster Institute of Contemporary Art and Centre for Mobilities Research, Lancaster University.
6. 2018: Brisk / Risks open mic event. Part of *King's Artists: New Thinking, New Making.* Bush House Arcade.

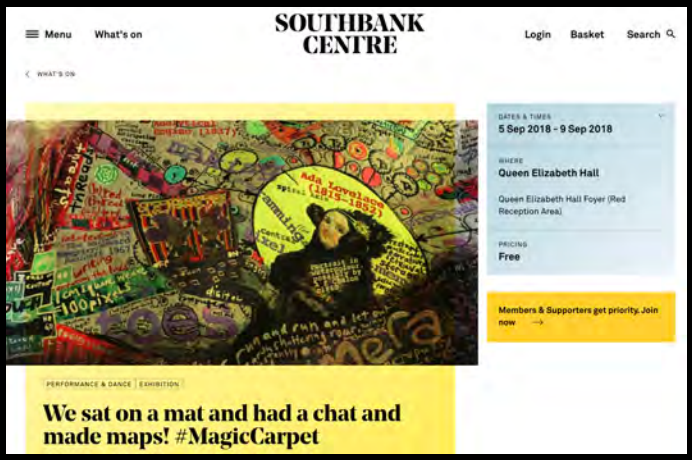
7. 2018: #MagicCarpet exhibition *Making Mind Wandering Visible* and discussion *The Creative Researcher?* Social, Genetic & Developmental Psychiatry Centre, KCL.
8. 2018: #MagicCarpet,Innovation Showcase, Nesta's People Powered Future Health for 500 health policy people
9. 2018: #MagicCarpet: Wandering Minds. Art-science 'speed-dating' programme, South London Gallery.
10. 2018: #MagicCarpet exhibition and discussion on 'neurodiverse art', Art Workers' Guild.
11. 2017: #MagicCarpet Open Studio and discussion. Social, Genetic & Developmental Psychiatry Centre, KCL.

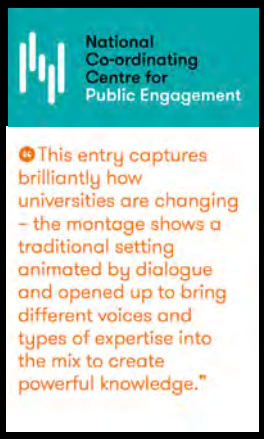
As Invited Artist

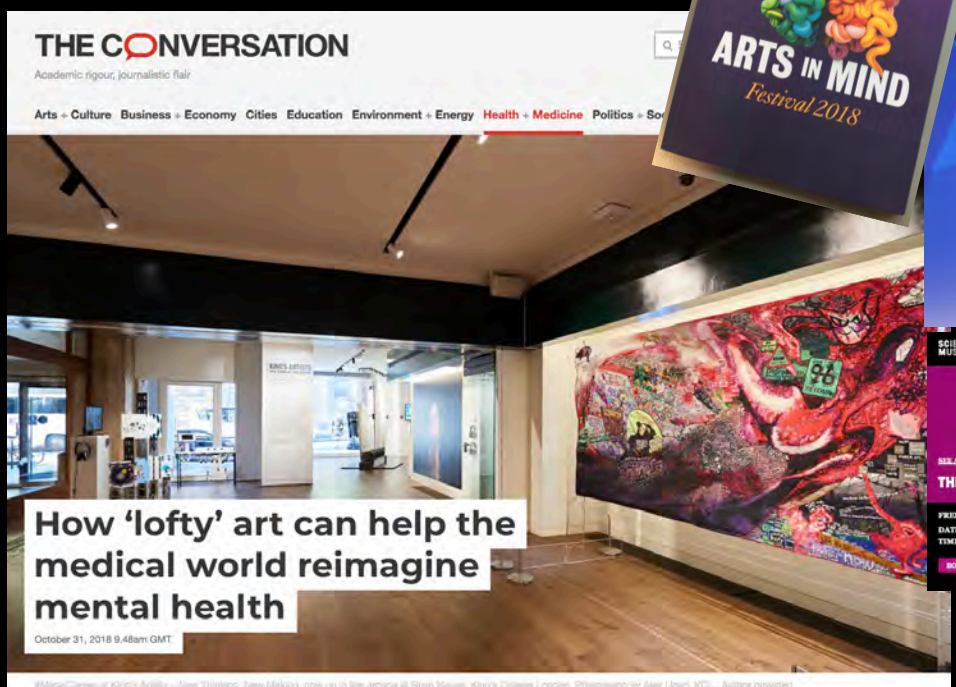
1. 2018-9: Making Mind Wandering Visible. 5-month solo show, Social, Genetic and Environmental Psychiatry Centre, KCL, UK.
2. 2019: Lecture & Workshop. For staff of Plymouth College of Art.
3. 2019: 4th National Conference SOS Dyslexia in San Marino. Invitation by Professor Antonella Gagliano of Messina
   University, Professor Giacomo Stella, Director of Scientific Committee of the Conference.
4. 2019: Talk, Hai Sing Catholic School, Singapore.
5. 2019: Reading University. At the invitation of Professor of Social Pharmacy Kath Ryan.
6. 2018-9: *King's Artists: New thinking, New Making*. Bush House Arcade, KCL.
7. 2018: Unlimited Festival, Southbank Centre. Exhibition, performance-lecture, discussion.
8. 2018: 5th EUNETHYDIS International European Network for Hyperkinetic Disorders Conference. Edinburgh.
9. 2018: Performance with Lois Bentley. MA Art and Science seminar, Central Saint Martins.
10. 2018: Exhibition. Birkbeck Institute Annual conference 'Distraction'. Presentation by Ale Cianetti for #MagicCarpet.
11. 2018: Arts in Mind Festival. Exhibition at Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience. Workshop with children from Lyndhurst Primary School, KCL.
12. 2018: Third Museums for Health and Wellbeing Conference. Thinktank, Birmingham.
13. 2018: King's Undergraduate Medical Education in the Community Teacher Development workshop. KCL.
14. 2017: Exhibition. MRC Festival Preview Event, Social, Genetic & Developmental Psychiatry, KCL. Annual Medical Research Council Festival of Medical Research (England, Scotland, Wales, online and in Africa).
15. 2017: Performance and exhibition. UK Adult ADHD Network (UKAAN) 7th Congress. Mermaid Conference Centre, for 400 world-leading clinicians and researchers in ADHD.

WRITTEN PUBLICATIONS

1. 2019. 'TRANSCRIPT: Neurodivergent Leaders in the Cultural and Academic Sectors?' *A-N Blogs* (blog). 19 June 2019. https://www.a-n.co.uk/blogs/transcript-neurodivergent-leaders-in-the-cultural-and-academic-sectors/ .
2. 2019. 'TRANSCRIPT: Too Much/ Not Enough "Neurodiversity" in UK Art & Academia?' *A-N Blogs* (blog). 19 June 2019. https://www.a-n.co.uk/blogs/transcript-too-much-not-enough-neurodiversity-in-uk-art-academia/ .
3. 2019: "Risk-Taking and ADHD?" *Mind the Gap Blog* (blog). June 19, 2019. https://mind-the-gap.live/2019/06/19/risk-taking-and-adhd/
4. 2019: "#ADHDwomen Making #ADHDart to Widen the Discourse on Mental Health." PsychART. March 2019. http://www.psychart.org.uk/index.php/blog/23-adhdwomen-making-adhdart-to-widen-the-discourse-on-mental-health
5. 2019: A-N blog post *Towards cultural change: re-imagining mental health through 'lofty' art* https://www.a-n.co.uk/blogs/towards-cultural-change-re-imagining-mental-health-through-lofty-art/
6. 2019: Artwork on the cover of the British Journal of Psychiatry in July 2019. Published by Cambridge University Press since 1853 on behalf of The Royal College of Psychiatrists, it is one of the world's leading psychiatric journals and read by all registered psychiatrists in the UK. 'Psychiageographies [Détournement] [Exquisite Corpse] [Parentheses]'. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, September. https://static.cambridge.org/covers/BJP_0_215_3/cover.jpg?send-default-cover=false&send-full-size-image=true
7. 2019: "Effecting Change in Perspective Is a Challenging (and Hence Critical) Endeavour." BMJ Blogs: Medical Humanities (blog). May 15, 2019. https://blogs.bmj.com/medical-humanities/2019/05/15/effecting-change-in-perspective-is-a-challenging-and-hence-critical-endeavour/
8. 2018: Disability Arts Online Showcase: *Unreasonable Adjustments* https://bit.ly/2TE7qTc
9. 2018: With Philip Asherson. "How 'lofty' Art Can Help the Medical World Reimagine Mental Health." The Conversation. October 31. https://bit.ly/2r7fs17 2685 readers within first two weeks of publication.
10. 2018: Diagram in: Bozhilova, N., Michelini, G., Kuntsi, J. and Asherson, P., 2018. Mind wandering perspective on ADHD. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 92, pp.464–476. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2018.07.010







How 'lofty' art can help the medical world reimagine mental health

October 31, 2018 9.48am GMT

#MagicCarpet at King's Artists – New Thinking, New Making, now on in the Atrium at Strand House, King's College London. Photograph by Alex Lloyd, KCL. Author provided

Email
Twitter 41
Facebook 118
LinkedIn
Print

We are in the midst of a global mental health crisis, according to a recent review by the Lancet medical journal. Our "collective failure" to respond to this crisis results in "monumental loss of human capabilities and avoidable suffering". The development of 20 antipsychotics and 30 antidepressants over the past four decades has not improved the morbidity or mortality of mental disorders. In England, mental illness costs £105.2 billion annually. People consider the stigma around mental health worse than the illness itself.

Authors

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Disclosure statement

#MagicCarpet is an Unlimited commission

11. 2018: Exceptional talent, the state of fun & islands of after death: a story in 100 slides. https://bit.ly/2Ob34Ha
12. 2018: What else could 'neurodiversity' look like? Disability Arts Online editorial. https://bit.ly/2HEGFzD One of DAO's top 10 editorial pieces with each of the 636 users (by August 2018) spending more than 5.25 minutes on article (site average: 1.42 minutes). http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2018.1430488
13. 2018: 'Mind Wandering: Best Friend or Worst Enemy? An art-science inquiry'. A-N Blogs (blog). February 6, 2018. https://www.a-n.co.uk/blogs/mind-wandering-best-friend-or-worst-enemy.
14. 2017: With Philip Asherson. 2017. "Come Sit on a Mat with an Artist and a Psychiatrist to Have a Chat about Mind Wandering, Gingerbread Men, Shark Baits, and the Interface of Normal/abnormal Behaviour." Mind the Gap Blog, May 12. http://bit.ly/2qzn5za MiND the Gap is a joint scientific blog of several multicenter projects on developmental psychiatry, funded by the European Union.

KEYNOTES & CONFERENCES

1. 2019: Performance-lecture at Science Gallery. Part of The Material Culture of Health Activism. London UK.
2. 2019: Poster with PsychART at Royal College of Psychiatrists International Congress.
3. 2019: Invited Speaker. 4th National Conference SOS Dyslexia in San Marino. Invitation by Professor Antonella Gagliano of Messina University, Professor Giacomo Stella, Director of Scientific Committee.
4. 2019: Invited Respondent, for philosopher-psychiatrist Dr Mohammed Rashed's book launch Institute of Advanced Studies, University College London.
5. 2019: Image and artist statement in Representing the Medical Body. Science Museum. London.
6. 2018: Keynote. *Understanding Neurodiversity: An Introduction in the Higher Education Context and Beyond*. Kings College London.
7. 2018: Co-convener with PsychART committee members of PsychART 2018 conference attended by 170 delegates and Stephen Fry.
8. 2018: Invited Speaker. Diversity and Inclusion, Disability History Month, King's College London
9. 2018: Invited Speaker. Panel discussion, 5th International European Network for Hyperkinetic Disorders Conference. Edinburgh.
10. 2018: Chaired *The Art of ADHD*, 5th International European Network for Hyperkinetic Disorders Conference.
12. 2018: Convened and chaired *The Creative Researcher? Tactics for the Early Career Researcher*. Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre with panel discussion. As part of launch of solo exhibition *Making Mind Wandering Visible.*
13. 2018: Keynote, Arts & Mobilities Inaugural Symposium. Centre for Mobilities Research, Lancaster University.
14. 2018: Invited Speaker. Lecture. Guy's Hospital Nursing BSc. King's College London.
15. 2018: Invited Speaker. Be There at The Start. Unlimited/Arts Admin. Attenborough Arts Centre, Leicester Uni.
16. 2018: Chair, discussion. Art Workers' Guild. With mentor Professor Philip Asherson and other guests.
17. 2018: Third Museums for Health and Wellbeing Conference. Thinktank, Birmingham.
18. 2018: Social, Genetic & Developmental Psychiatry (SGDP) seminar. With Professor Philip Asherson. KCL.
19. 2017: Talking Points. UCL Institute of Advanced Studies. Chair: Professor Megan Vaughan.
20. 2017: #MagicCarpet Open Studio panel discussion. Mind Wandering: Worst Enemy or Best Friend? With Professor Philip Asherson, Professor Helen Chatterjee and others. SGDP, KCL.
21. 2017: Launch of Kings Artists scheme at Bush House, Kings College London. With Professor Philip Asherson.
22. 2017: Invited Speaker with Professor Philip Asherson. PsychArt 2017. Supported by Royal College of Psychiatrists, celebrating creativity, the arts and psychiatry.
23. 2017: Invited Speaker: Led section on arts and ADHD . UK Adult ADHD Network Congress 2017.
24. 2017: Invited Speaker. Hidden Projects (on invisible disability). Brighton Dome.

CITATIONS

1. Cianetti, Alessandra. 2019. "Art and Academia: A Non-Scientific Equation to Work Together." PsychART. 2019. http://www.psychart.org.uk/index.php/blog/24-art-and-academia-a-non-scientific-equation-to-work-together.
2. Open Philosophy, Volume 2, Issue 1, Pages 30–38, ISSN (Online) 2543-8875, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1515/opphil-2019-0004. Sanna Lehtinen, published by De Gruyter.
3. Rasmussen, Annette Bang. 2018. "What is it like to have ADHD?" Aarhus Universitet. October 31, 2018. http://newsroom.au.dk/nyheder/vis/artikel/what-is-it-like-to-have-adhd/

4. ADHD Institute. 2018a. “Day 2: 5th EUNETHYDIS International Conference on ADHD.” https://bit.ly/2r0ohtQ
5. ADHD Institute. 2018b. “Day 3: 5th EUNETHYDIS International Conference on ADHD.”https://bit.ly/2OZ9CZf
6. Economic and Social Research Council. 2018. “Let’s Talk Mental Health.” 2018. https://esrc.ukri.org/about-us/strategy-and-priorities/mental-health/lets-talk-mental-health/.
7. National Coordination Centre for Public Engagement NCCPE. 2018. “Images of Public Engagement 2018.” https://bit.ly/2yn6O2W
8. Watson, A., 2018. Embracing the non-linear (Password ’nonlinear’). Choreographing Clumsy: Dyspraxia and Choreographic practice. https://bit.ly/2KKtPRY
9. Joanna, M., 2018. Why Is ADHD More Common in Boys Than Girls? ReliaWire. https://bit.ly/2IyVof5
10. J. Sedgwick, 2018. Art Meanders with Psychiatry on a MagicCarpet at the SGDP. ADDISS Newsletter April.
11. Mind Wandering: Review of Kai Syng Tan’s exhibition at King’s College London by Jane Sedgwick, in National Attention Deficit Disorder Information & Support Service (ADDISS) newsletter which is read by individuals and families affected by ADHD as well as researchers and health providers in this area.
12. Showcasing Success, report on cultural achievements of King’s College London http://kings-college-london.instantmagazine.com/starting-point/showcasing-success-2017-18/home/
13. Arts in Mind Festival publication. King’s College London https://issuu.com/kcl95/docs/arts_in_mind_review_lo_res_a150dpi_?e=33176760/67094561
14. King’s Artists: New thinking, New Making. Exhibition pamphlet. King’s College London.
15. King’s College London. 2018. “Exhibition of Work from Artist-Academic Collaborations Launches at Bush House.” https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/News-Article.aspx?id=2f10269d-9e0b-418a-b2b5-f90028b4e29f .
16. UK Adult ADHD Network, 2017. UKAAN Congress 2017 report. [online] UK Adult ADHD Network website. Available at: https://www.ukaan.org/september-2017.htm
17. Rashed, M.A., 2017. Response to Order/Disorder, Kai Syng Tan’s UCL Institute of Advanced Studies Talking Points Seminar. Kan Zaman. https://bit.ly/2w3zv2C.

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT & MORE CITATIONS

1. King’s College London. 2019. ‘An Arts Academic with Dr. Kai Syng Tan by Careers in Your Ears: A Podcast on Anchor’. Careeers in Your Ears. Accessed 23 November 2019. https://anchor.fm/careersinyourears/episodes/An-Arts-Academic-with-Dr--Kai-Syng-Tan-e8spch .
2. Molema, Geraldine. 2019. ‘“When I Enjoy Something, like Making Art, I’m Capable of a Hyper Focus”’. *Inside Stories* (blog). 19 June 2019. https://insidestoriesglobal.com/entrepreneurship-and-adhd-kai-syng-tan/
3. King’s College London. 2019. ‘THE CULTURAL COMMUNITY at King’s and beyond’. In Touch: The Culture Issue, June 2019.
4. Backdoor Broadcasting Company. 2019. ‘Too Much/Not Enough: Neurodiversity and Cultural Production’. Accessed 19 June 2019. https://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2019/05/too-muchnot-enough-neurodiversity-and-cultural-production/
5. Arthey, Rachelle. 2019. “Inside King’s: The Cultural Community at King’s and Beyond.” https://alumni.kcl.ac.uk/news-features/inside-kings-the-cultural-community-at-kings-and-beyond
6. Kings College London. 2018. *Understanding Neurodiversity: An Introduction in the Higher Education Context and Beyond*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfFZbTWmFi4
7. King’s Cultural Community. 2018a. *King’s College London | Arts in Mind Festival 2018 Film*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rPkVPvgt2k
8. ———. 2018b. *King’s College London | Arts in Mind Festival 2018 Summary*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMp15MaE1Eg&feature=youtu.be
9. Tan, Philip. 2019. *Talk PICTURING HAPPINESS: Art After Dark Performance*. Singapore. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jdx67OkvICU
10. ———. 2019. *PICTURING HAPPINESS? An Exploratory Conversation between 6 Scientists and Artists*. Centre for Contemporary Art. https://vimeo.com/314174649 .
11. WinkBall Interviews. 2018. *Dr. Kai Syng Tan at King’s Artists – New Thinking, New Making*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTtJOs2S4O0&feature=youtu.be .

12. Arthur, Anna. 2018. “King’s Artists – New Thinking, New Making. An Exhibition of Works from Six Contemporary Artists Working across the University.” The Culture Diary, October 23, 2018.
13. Disability Arts Online. 2018. “Southbank Centre Announces Fourth Unlimited Festival Celebrating the Artistic Vision of Disabled Artists.” *Disability Arts Online*, July 17, 2018. https://bit.ly/2NUBU7Y
14. Zatka-Haas, James. 2018. “Kai Syng Tan #MagicCarpet.” *Disability Arts Online*, September 20, 2018. http://disabilityarts.online/magazine/opinion/kai-syng-tan-magiccarpet/ .
15. Clear Spot: Arts In Mind, 2018. Mixcloud. 4 Jun. https://bit.ly/2AlgBXo
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17. Marlow, S., 2018. Arts in Mind. *The Psychologist* (The British Psychological Society), 31, pp.68–69. https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-31/august-2018/arts-mind
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19. Verrent, J., 2018. Why don’t we just… treat disabled artists equally? Big Issue North. [online] 4 Jun. Available at: https://www.bigissuenorth.com/comment/2018/06/dont-just-treat-disabled-artists-equally/ .
20. Mental Health Awareness: Sarah Hughes interviewed by Dr Kai Syng Tan on Let’s Talk Mental Health. 2018. Directed by L. Arseneault. Economic and Social Research Council. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gY9kETgasJU
21. Interviewee in short film, pan-European training network MiND (mastering skills in the training Network for attention deficit hyperactivity and autism spectrum Disorders) mind-project.eu. Filmed by 4QUARTER FILMS ADHD in Adults. 2018. Shine a Light on ADHD. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmS7jUhB74A&t=1s.
22. Dziadik, S., 2018. Unlimited Visual Arts. Unlimited. Named as a must-see exhibition https://weareunlimited.org.uk/unlimited-visual-arts/
23. Hunt, J., 2018. Be There At The Start – Attenborough Arts Centre showcases Unlimited’s research and development programme. [online] Available at: http://www.disabilityarts.online/magazine/opinion/start-attenborough-arts-centre-showcases-unlimiteds-research-development-program/
24. University College London, Institute of Advanced Studies. 2017. “Talking Points: Dr Kai Syng Tan on The Artist-Researcher as Connector-Disrupter-Running Messenger?” UCL MediaCentral. December 5, 2017. https://mediacentral.ucl.ac.uk/Player/11419
25. King's College London. 2017. "The Arcade at Bush House Re-Opens with Inaugural Installation, World Futures." News. October 25, 2017. http://bit.ly/2G3etbm
26. British Council. 2017. “Unlimited Announces Ambitious New Commissions from Disabled Artists.”.
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feedback

‘The montage shows a traditional setting animated by dialogue and opened up to bring different voices and types of expertise into the mix to create powerful knowledge. The use of the technique (photo montage) was brilliantly judged […]. It created a multiplicity of perspectives and views, like a kaleidoscope. This is challenging and thought provoking, and a really effective way of conveying the positively disruptive energy that engagement can release’. ‘The title was excellent, and captured the spirit of culture change: an animated group challenging established ways of framing disability, challenging the old with the new, taking risks. The clever and provocative construction extended to the caption, which captured vividly what it feels like to be caught up in the thrill of creating new knowledge which challenges and changes the world’. **– Judges on photo montage that won the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement Images Award 2018 for Culture Change**

‘The tapestry clearly illustrates Kai’s restless body and mind and taps into a long artistic tradition. It’s a very beautiful manifestation of a hidden disability.In the context of Unlimited, this commission is breaking new ground, linking academics, scientists and artists in interesting ways and enabling an artist to immerse herself in an emerging realm of neuroscience, including clinical trials. The work is all about process and what Kai calls ‘productive antagonisms’ – atomic collisions where people from different backgrounds meet and discuss the latest science and lived experience of ADHD and neurological disabilities’ **– 509 arts, production & consultancy company, 2018**

‘The tapestry is dense, visually and thoughtfully. It’s a voyage through Kai’s mind. A portrait of Mathematician Ada Lovelace sits on top of streams of text. The text runs throughout in seemingly infinite amounts, appearing at first legible, then running off into a black murky void. Everything about the tapestry screams at you, and it is beautiful for that reason. There’s so much going on that you really want to touch it, explore every nook and cranny, uncover its secrets through returning to it again and again’. – **James Zakta-Hass, Disability Arts Online, 2018**

‘Such complexity! A world of stories on the table’. **–Head of Visual Arts Programme Jenny White, British Council, 2019**

‘We have been so lucky to have @kaisyngtan as part of the @SGDPCentreKCL, @KingsIoPPN. She brought creativity, and her wonderful good cheer to our daily lives, while working with Philip Asherson on #ADHD and mindwandering’; ‘I have been enjoying all the images of brains and mind-wandering in the SGDP Atrium – they brighten up my day.’ **– Professor of Genetic Epidemiology Cathryn Lewis, Head of Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre, 2019**

‘You take our product to a real professional level’ **– Flanders Tapestry, which also weaved the work of artists Laura Provoust and Grayson Perry, 2019**

‘I wanted to congratulate you and thank you for an amazing event yesterday. Your event was so innovative and really brought art and science together, two disciplines that are so far-fetched from each other. I learned more about the mind, ADHD and how important art is in navigating various outlets and that was more valuable to me in terms of what I would have learned in a classroom setting. The connection between art and science is so essential, and you were able to impact and educate individuals so effectively and bring awareness at the same time. Your event was exceptional as it encouraged everyone to step outside of their comfort zone and try to understand their own inhibitions in terms of ADHD and of other people as well. […] Due to my ADHD, I have always struggled making friends or having access to specialists and your event was able to break both barriers and provide a ‘family’ as well as imparting useful skills in return. Art in that case served as a process to educate me and to connect me with people that are just like me, something that I am extremely grateful to you. – **Shushank Chibber, in *The Psychologist* 2018, of *#MagicCarpet: Wandering Minds*, a speed-dating activity at South London Gallery, 2018**

‘Thank you for your speech – super moving and motivational and inspiring! […] I think it’s super powerful, and I believe it applies to others who are neurotypical but don’t really fit in the box as well’. **– Attendee of a keynote on neurodiversity 2018**

‘Thank goodness for you & your work Kai! You are one of the most important drivers in giving me energy to push for change’. **– Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice Dr Ranjita Dhital, University of Reading, 2019**

‘Already exercising leadership role’; ‘already leading the way’; ‘will produce high quality outputs’; ‘clearly has a good deal of energy’; ‘impressive track record’; ‘originality, innovation’; ‘strong collaborative partnerships’; ‘very compelling’; ‘very strong case’; ‘exciting and innovative’; ‘important topic’; ‘very interesting and creative research outputs’; ‘ambitious’. **– Reviewers, Arts and Humanities Research Council Leadership Fellowship application, which draws on and extends #MagicCarpet. All 3 reviewers scored the proposal '4' or good, and rated two sections as ‘outstanding’, ten ‘very good’, 2019**

‘The highlights of the day were the opportunity to question rather than define, and the honesty and openness’; ‘The performative lecture was so packed with info & ideas, & Kai set this up really well’; ‘The interactive workshop- discussions etc. & sharing ideas with each other- provocative statements’; ‘Style of morning presentation- big words, colours, concepts. How the whole day was about thinking & understanding’; ‘The level of discussion; the relaxed nature of delivery’; ‘I enjoyed the whole day, I can’t fault it’; ‘Would have liked more!’; 'I’m feeling so inspired & reassured, thank you’; ‘A great day, good balance of presentation and workshop. Extremely relevant and informative’; ‘It was incredibly useful to think of ways in which we are all neurodiverse + diverse and how this should be considered to make improvements/inclusions in everyday life- v. good to hear an artist’s perspective’; ‘Excellent material both for reflection and practical use when interacting with students. Thank you, Kai!’ **– Participants of neurodiversity lecture and workshop, Plymouth College of Art, UK, 2019. 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the activity has ‘improved my understanding of “neurodiversity” in the HE context, and that they will ’apply what I’ve learnt in my communication and interactions with students & colleagues’.**

‘It was great to see neurodiversity being explored in such varied and interesting ways. The short project film exploring risk-taking and neurodiversity was honest and engaging, and it was fantastic to see Kai’s #MagicCarpet tapestry in person - a unique representation of mind-wandering and neurodiversity’. – **Assistant Curator of Science Gallery Imogen Clark, 2019**

‘A ridiculously brilliant tapestry by Kai Syng Tan is on display @birkbeck_arts #BBKArtsWeek #mentalhealth #adhd #geniusalert’’; ‘Thank you so much for showing us the amazing tapestry. So much is going on there in terms of gender politics, mental health (‘including the mental health in academia crisis’, history… I have taken a few pics and will be thinking about your art for some time ☺ Keep up the good work! **– Dr Sasha Dovzhyk, on *Too Much / Not Enough: Neurodiversity & Cultural Production*, Birkbeck Arts Week, 2019**

‘Thank you Kai for a v-special event. I’m a dyslexic and dyspraxic academic and your story + that of others really resonated with me. It’s so important share experiences and hear about the diverse lives by neuro diverse people’; ‘I loved the experience first time doing it. The Risk was worth it’; ’I really enjoyed the event. Thanks for organising such a wonderful and creative event’; ‘I really enjoyed the stories. Simply an amazing night ☺’; ‘What an event!I came to support a friend. I had no prior knowledge of ADHD’; ‘It was so amazing to hear more, listen to people tell us their story, their truths, themselves. An education & a joy’; ‘What an informative evening! Kai sets a very open and non-judgemental atmosphere, which allows people to speak so freely, and hence we hear very touching and informing stories from the audience. Thank you’; ‘This was extremely validating for women with ADHD. Thank you. Mind-wandering a word I now have and helps me’; ‘I really enjoyed this event. It was stimulating hearing stories of risk takers. It made me think what risks have I taken and now can I take risks in the future. It also gave me an insight into ADHD and how it effects people which I found interesting and exciting’; ‘Great, diverse, sharing, multi generational’ **– participants of the *Brisk/Risks: Open Mic*, Arcade at Bush House, King’s College London, 2018**

What an inspiring evening! Kai sets a very open and non-judgemental atmosphere, which allows people to speak so freely, and hence we hear very touching and inspiring stories from the audience. Thank you.

Thank you Kai for a v. special event. I'm a dyslexic + dyspraxic academic and your story + that of others really resonated with me. It's so important share experiences and ~~[illegible]~~ hear about the diverse lives of neuro diverse people.

I REALLY ENJOYED THIS EVENT IT WAS STIMULATING HEARING STORIES OF RISK TAKERS. I MADE ME THINK WHAT RISKS HAVE I TAKEN AND HOW CAN I TAKE RISKS IN THE FUTURE. IT ALSO GAVE ME AN INSIGHT INTO ADHD AND HOW IT EFFECTS PEOPLE WHICH I FOUND INTERESTING AND EXCITING.

WHAT AN EVENT!
I CAME TO SUPPORT A FRIEND
I HAD NO PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF ADHD
IT WAS SO AMAZING TO HEAR MORE, LISTEN TO PEOPLE TELL US THEIR STORY, THEIR TRUTHS, THEMSELVES
AN EDUCATION & A JOY.

My dream (one of them, at least) is to do what you ~~to~~ do: not be afraid to bridge the gap between ~~art~~ art and science.

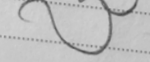
Great, diverse sharing —
- multi-generational,
- intersectional,
- mixed genus, including performance

Kai's Introduction stinks in excellent balance between warm invitation + sciencing of purpose + human — I think it's a winning format — would it change it.

Excellent, incredible piece of work and so so challenging!

Very interesting presentation / talk. Thank you soo much! Much enjoyable and informative. Gabriele

Thank you Kai!



you are amazing!

Thank you for showing us this amazing tapestry. So much is going on there in terms of gender politics, mental health (including the "mental health in academia crisis" (tm) (c)), history... I have taken a few pics and will be thinking about your art for some time :) Keep up the good work! Sasha

‘Kai was so charismatic and engaging, the children loved her. Don't forget us next year’!**- Co-Head Teacher, Inclusion Manager Jolanta Nowakowska. Lyndhurst Primary School**

'Great exploration of ADHD as a way of knowing & being’. **– Assistant Professor Dr Jess Hughes, Reading Area Community College, USA. 2018.**

‘The event was just tremendous. It was such a privilege to hear so many moving and fascinating stories – it really was a singular and special event. It was really exciting to see how the magic carpet became this generative object, quietly (though in its own way loudly) creating a space that was both safe and adventurous. You and your work really created a unique space, generous and energising, and I'm so glad I got to share it. So many mind-blowing performances’! **–Dr Sophie Jones, Wellcome ISSF Birkbeck Fellow, on Brisk/Risks: Open Mic, Arcade Bush house**

Highlights include: ‘Meeting people the same as me - I am not alone!!! :)’, ‘‘Engagement with audience’, ‘debate’, ‘being introduced to different concepts and different ways of seeing things’, ‘The conversation was great’, ‘The artists to speak to, the speakers and the debate’, ‘Atmosphere’, ‘Diversity of definitions’, ‘Speakers’, ‘Contents’, ‘Discussing art practice + ADHD + a neuro-normative art market world’, ‘Discussing education - barriers faced by people with ADHD’, ‘Science-neuro-diverse-art’. Other comments: ‘Loved it loved it loved it. Felt at home (underlined twice). So Happy! :)’ **– participants of *Art, Neurodiversity and Giant Octopussies: #MagicCarpet launch*, Art Workers Guild, 2018**

‘Had a wicked, random evening with #MagicCarpet @wesatonamat. Kai is super freaking awesome! Kai Forever! […] I keep my @wesatonamat 'Kai' badge here now, so Kai is with me wherever I go in this crazy world’. **– Author with ADHD pm Brisk/Risks: Open Mic, Bush House Arcade, 2018**

‘Excellent’. **– Roundabout, UK dramatherapy charity 2018**

‘The project is a very exciting and innovative integration of art and science and functions as a wonderful platform for the clinical and scientific community to develop an interesting dialogue with Kai, and to find new, exciting and innovative ways to communicate the science of ADHD through her art. Kai […] is very exciting to work with. She contributed to both local and national training with health care professionals and researchers. […] She has integrated extremely well into our scientific community becoming a key member of our research team, sharing and developing ideas, and making important contributions to the dissemination of science to the public’. **— Professor Philip Asherson. 2017**

‘So thought provoking, open and moving. It’s really been a pleasure to have been part of supporting your project’. – **Director, Cultural Programming, Alison Duthie, King’s College London. 2018**

‘We feel that it will be great platform for the artists to share their thoughts about mind wandering and what that might mean to them in particular since their brain injury’. **— Michelle Carlile, Submit to Love Studio Manager, Headway East London, a charity for people affected by brain injury, #MagicCarpet Partner. 2017**

‘The tapestry was the most beautiful piece of work I’ve have seen in a long time’. **– visitor to King’s Artists exhibition, Bush House Arcade, which was seen by 1500 people in 1.5 months**

‘I really enjoyed it. Great to get immersed in the discussions about art, mind wandering, neurodiversity, accessibility and the rest, and what a fantastic panel. The place was buzzing’. **– Dr Sarah Holme, editor of he National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service /ADDISS newsletter and science communicator**

‘Rich, layered, detailed, worked, overworked and a perfect example of #creativecase where #ADHD is no barrier but instead a creative impetus’. **– Jo Verrent, Senior Producer, Unlimited. 2018.**

‘Thank you for bringing us all together’, ‘I have gained a better understanding of what the possibilities are and the constraints that our society constructs place on us’, ‘A really engaging and interesting and thought provoking evening!’; ‘Well done!’, ‘I thought this was a very interesting evening and a very interesting discussion on both embracing and the definition of neurodiversity to different people’; ‘You are great!’, ‘I enjoyed everything’, ‘Keep doing more events’; 'I had an amazing time at the #MagicCarpet event at The Arts Guild. It was wonderful to meet so many like minded people. I came away with the overriding thought (and one that had been brewing for a while) that the Art World, the business of it, the 'professional approach' of artist statements, funding applications, articles etc etc etc is all geared towards a neuro-normative brain […] What I need to do is work on the communication of it - not to apologise to the arts establishment but a FIRM and CONFIDENT 'this is what I do’; ‘ ‘Thanks […] for being able to gather so many different people and create such a proactive, engaging and safe environment for people from all disciplines to be part of the conversation (yesterday I spoke with NHS people, academics, poets, theatre-makers, students….)’; ‘I am still thinking about what was shared that evening’ **– Participants of *Art, Neurodiversity and Giant Octopussies: #MagicCarpet launch*, Art Workers Guild, 2018. 100% of the feedback agreed or strongly agreed to questions: ‘The event was useful to my research/professional development and/or interest’ and ‘This event has challenged my understanding of how artists and scientists work together, and/or my own body and mind and that of others that are different to mine’.**

‘Thanks so much for hosting such a positive, intriguing and productive event […]. I think you achieved something very usual - a genuinely diverse and progressive format for people to express their thoughts. Great work. I also really enjoyed your slightly meandering approach to mediation! Somehow both provocative and reassuring at once’. **– Guest speaker Ben Platts Mills, Director, Headway East London**

‘The mat is amazing! You have reflected my thought patterns**’. – Artist Jacki Cairns, 2018**

‘Thank you so much for organising the workshop, it was so stimulating and refreshing! Took all the stress away for the time we were involved in art to be honest!’ **– geneticist on Art-Science Creative Collisions workshop, 2018**

‘So good to have had intergenerational conversations. Informative + surprising’; ‘It was a mind opening experience’. ‘Beautiful experience’. ‘Very fun & engaging! Talking with strangers is nice:)’. ‘Helped me talk to others, I am normally an introvert who watches.’ ‘What you did do was create a safe + wonderful way to be open to each other.’ **– Participants of *Wandering Minds*, South London Gallery, 2018**

‘Your work is really making a difference’ **– Professor Developmental Disorders & Neuropsychiatry Jonna Kuntsi, 2018**

‘Your carpet is magic’. **– Dr Jolanta Zanelli, Psychosis Studies, KCL, 2018**

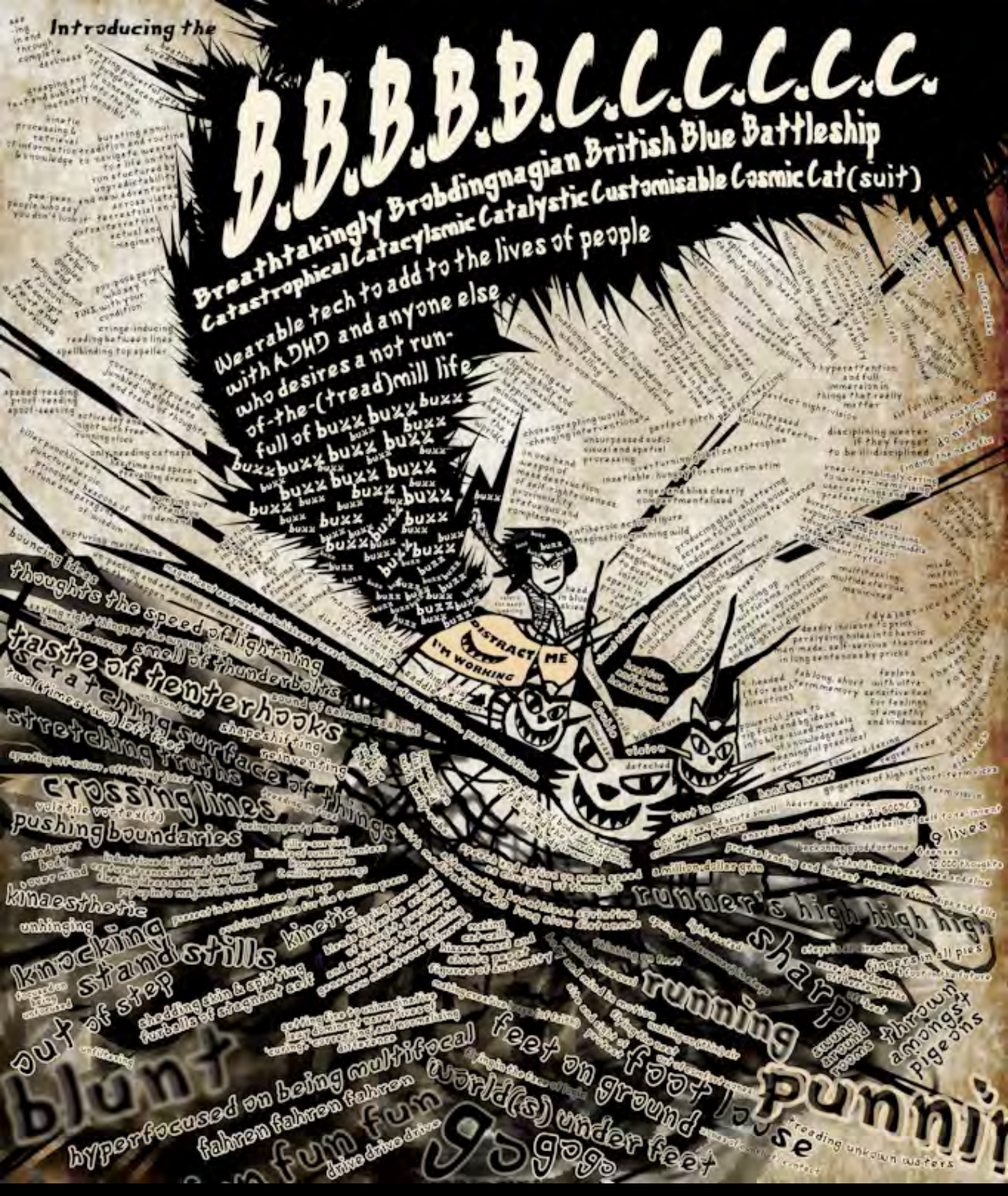
‘It was great to be part of your very special event. I enjoyed the evening immensely. I love what you’re doing and find it very inspiring. There doesn’t appear to be a lot of understanding or appreciation about neurodiversity in academia’. **– Academic who attended *Brisk*/*Risks* Open Mic 2018**

I found it wonderful being there and feeling immediately connected with everyone. Neurodiverse experiences run deep. Please let me know if I can support you with this and build on your amazing work. […] We very badly need to do this - long overdue. Let’s start our revolution! 😃 **– Academic who attended *Brisk*/*Risks* Open Mic 2018**

The very beautiful #MagicCarpet part of an engaging+thought provoking evening discussing neurodiversity+art. It should be in Tate, so amazing. Couldn’t believe the size and the detail of the work’. **– *Gunes Tavmos,* Birkbeck Arts Week, 2019**

I am ready to fly away with it! Love it

‘Kai has a discursive style and is intuitive which is crucial given the diversity of staff and the complexity of the issues at our institution. This generosity led to imaginative outcomes from participants’. – **Manager and coordinator of inclusive practice Sally Hall, Plymouth College of Art, 2019**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Breathtakingly Brobdingnagian British Blue Battleship
Catastrophical Catacylsmic Catalystic Customisable Cosmic Cat(suit)
Wearable tech to add to the lives of people
with ADHD and anyone else
who desires a not run-
of-the-(tread)mill life
full of buzz buzz buzz
DISTRACT ME
I'M WORKING
thoughts the speed of lightning
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scratching surface of things
stretching truths
crossing lines
pushing boundaries
kinaesthetic
knocking
stand stills
kinetic
out of step
blunt
hyperfocused on being multifocal
fahren fahren fahren
fun fun
gogo
world(s) under feet
feet on ground
foot loose
running
runner's high high high
sharp
punnin
thrown amongst pigeons
treading unknown waters

profile

Dr Kai Syng Tan FRSA SFHEA is an artist, consultant, curator and academic who is concerned with the body and mind in motion in a world in motion and commotion. She is best known for gathering diverse and divergent bodies and bodies of knowledge to engineer spaces of 'productive antagonisms' (Latham & Tan 2016) across disciplinary, geopolitical and cultural boundaries, in what she calls an ~~interdisciplinary~~ 'ill-disciplined' approach (Tan & Asherson 2018).

Marked by an 'eclectic style and cheeky attitude' (*Sydney Morning Herald* 2006), 'radical interdisciplinarity' (Alan Latham 2016) and 'positive atmosphere' (*Guardian* 2014), Kai's performance-lectures, installation, film, critical and creative text have been featured at Biennale of Sydney, Documenta (European Artistic Research Network conference) and Tokyo Designers' Week. Venues include Science Museum, Southbank Centre, MOMA (New York), Royal Geographical Society and Moscow's Dom Muzyiki. Media engagement include BBC Radio3 and Fuji TV. Recognition includes National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement Images Award (Culture Change) and San Francisco International Film Festival Golden Gate Award. Collections include Museum of London and Fukuoka Art Museum. She has taught in more than 40 higher education institutions as lecturer, programme leader and examiner, including King's College London, Royal College of Art, Australian National University, and Tama Art University (Tokyo).

Kai is described as 'absolutely instrumental' (Gregg Whelan 2015) in opening up what could be called 'Running Studies', which explores running as an arts and humanities discourse. This draws on her PhD research at the Slade School of Fine Art. Her Arts Council England funded Unlimited commission, #MagicCarpet, explores mind wandering, difference and neuro-diversity and has been enjoyed by more than 10,000 people and said to 'create a family for people with ADHD' (*The Psychologist*). Co-created with disabled colleagues, the £4m Opening and Closing Ceremonies of 8th ASEAN Para Games (with Kai as Visual and Communications Director) was applauded as 'spectacular' by Singapore Prime Minister and game-changing and 'most inclusive' by the Singapore Association of the Deaf. With Jen Southern and others, she helped to curate the inaugural Arts and Mobilities Network Symposium in Summer 2018 at the Peter Scott Gallery.

Kai is Senior Lecturer at Manchester School of Art, designing and leading a new MA/MFA in Executive Arts Leadership and assisting with a new MSc in Creative and Cultural Industry Leadership. She is also King's College London Artist in Residence and Visiting Fellow, UK Research and Innovation and Arts and Humanities Research Council Peer Review College Member, Music In Detention trustee, Founder and Lead of RUN! RUN! RUN!, Co-Founder and Manager of the 70-member Running Cultures Research Group, Creative and Cultural Consultant for UK Adult ADHD Network (network for mental health professionals), Advisor to PsychART (linking psychiatry, creativity and the arts, funded by Royal College of Psychiatry), and Visual and Communications Consultant for Philbeat (Singapore creative company).

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'The work captured vividly what it feels like to be caught up in the thrill of creating new knowledge which challenges and changes the world' – National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement 2018 Images Award

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