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Kai Syng Tan

The Artful Agile Atypical OCTOPUSSY

I am an artful, agile, atypical Octopussy.
My ape-pussycat-octopus chimera performs an
embodied mode of (un-)knowing and (co-)creation.

I know, as my body-mind in (com-)motion is a
powerful technology, techne and mode of intervention
to relate to other body-minds in a world in (com-)motion.

Guided by my gut instinct and
belly-knowledge (Lao Tzu and Lau 1963; Schipper
1994), I am hands-on, with my head in the sky, feet
on the ground. I grin, as a Cheshire Cat, entering
infinite rabbit holes as my insatiable
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
(ADHD)/dyslexic/autistic/
dyspraxic busy body-mind desires.

I know, also as
I do not know,
yet, and I can't.

I'm human. I'm humbled
by nature and the
more than human. I pursue
knowledge for its own sake

and to make change, for I'm impatient about the
injustices and status quo. I can't be, fixed, and am
always seeking my next fix.

I am a sight and site of protest (Tan 2019). I sabotage even
especially my own complacency. Here is but a freeze-frame, one moment

for this page, amid our moment of multiple global crises. You will have run into other iteration
have been many fore-runners who have paved the way. I'm following in the footsteps of the C
2500 years ago who map the body-mind with the state, nature and cosmos (Lao Tzu and Lau 19
Schipper 1994), countering Cartesian dualism and logocentrism. I also draw on the mischief of T
Teh-Ching Hsieh blurring life with lived experience, live art and social art. I am restless and promi
default and desire. I'm a migrant on the move, having escaped the claustrophobia of my home
hyperactive, and refuse to stay put. I move outside of my comfort zone, to collide with members
Clumsy, non-linear, dialogic, self-reflexive, iterative, I say/do/ think the right things at the wron
wrong order. I fall. I'm tongue-tied, limbs lose. I mute myself selectively.

I growl. I grow. I mis-spell. I mis-sell.

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Y

I create new knowledge by juxtaposing and combining distinct fields and actors, through 'productive antagonisms' – curation of diverse and divergent bodies and

bodies of knowledge (Latham and Tan 2016) and being 'ill-disciplined' – playful interdisciplinarity and subversion of 'illness' (Tan and Asherson 2018), which I have developed with a geographer and a psychiatrist respectively. Both draw on my divergent thinking and disdain for boundaries. This has opened pathways for others like me, widening 'Running Studies' (Tan 2018; Filmer 2020) and diversifying 'neurodiversity', including by founding a new network for 320 other creative, neurodivergent researchers and practitioners.

Yet this iteration – the Octopussy – is novel. It learns from the novel Covid-19 virus, which is 'clever' (Groppelli in Channel 4 2020), hijacking normality and morphing into new strains.

It also learns from pussycats, which hijack soul-destroying Zoom calls, and octopuses, which are die-hard. Around for 296 million years, with three hearts and half a billion neurons or 'excitable cells' each, octopuses are curious, embracing novelty, protean in behaviour and in body (Godfrey-Smith 2016).

Each limb is its own mind, problem-solver and sensor.

**Let's join forces. Let's entangle our bodies, minds, hearts, souls and soles.
Let's conjoin our tentacles and take collective action. Let's activate abnormal
measures for the new normal. Celebrate wicked modalities of thinking, making and
organizing to disentangle wicked issues to come.
Embody the Octopussy.**

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