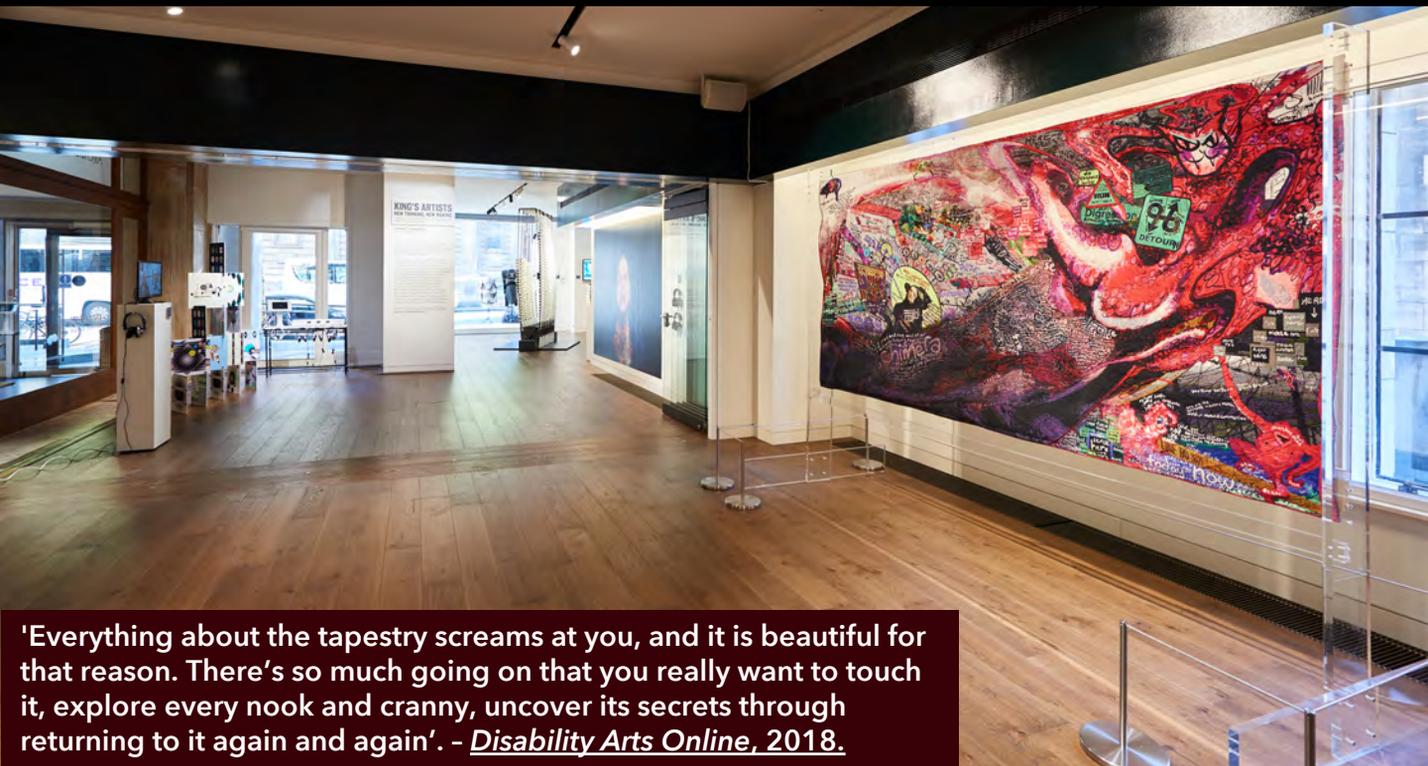


# #MagicCarpet

By Dr Kai Syng Tan (2018)  
kai@kaisyngtan.com

Weaving art & science together to  
open up new spaces for dialogues  
on mental health & neurodiversity

National  
Co-ordinating  
Centre for  
Public Engagement  
2018 Images Award  
for Culture Change



'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'. - [Disability Arts Online, 2018.](#)



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# #MagicCarpet



## ABOUT #MAGICCARPET

*We Sat On A Mat and Had a Chat and Made Maps!*

#MagicCarpet (from 2017) is an art-science exploration which collides diverse and divergent bodies (and bodies of knowledge) together to widen existing discourses on mental health and (neuro)diversity, with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and how it relates to mind wandering as a starting point. It is also an artist's public dialogue with global authority of adult ADHD and Professor of Psychiatry Philip Asherson about her hyperactive mind, and how ADHD relates to women, creativity and leadership. Outputs include **a tapestry, badges, drawings, maps, performances, films and participatory art.** Interdisciplinary 'ill-disciplined' and exuberant, #MagicCarpet exploits art's propensity for ambiguity and play, and extends the All Party Parliamentary Report on Arts, Health and Wellbeing's argument on how art can transform health. #MagicCarpet has reached 9500 people. Venues include Science Museum, Manchester Craft & Design Centre, Southbank Centre, South London Gallery, Nesta People Powered Future Health Innovation Showcase, SOS Dyslexia conference (San Marino), European International Network Hyperkinetic Disorder (Edinburgh), and the Peter Scott Gallery (Lancaster). Coverage include Resonance FM, Big Issue North and South London Press. #MagicCarpet was awarded a prize for 'Cultural Change' by the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (2018). Publications include an article that was read 2000 times within 2 days of publication 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 an event stated that the work has challenged their understanding of how the arts and science can collide and create new insights. AHRC reviewers describe the work as 'exciting and innovative'; 'already leading the way'.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Dr Kai Syng Tan FRSA SFHEA is a curator, artist and consultant best known for catalysing and leading innovative programmes such as RUN! RUN! RUN! (since 2014), #MagicCarpet (since 2017) and the £4 million ASEAN Para Games opening and closing ceremonies (2015). Marked by an 'eclectic style and cheeky attitude' (Sydney Morning Herald), 'radical interdisciplinarity' (Dr Alan Latham, UCL) and 'positive atmosphere' (Guardian), Kai has shown at Biennale of Sydney and Tokyo Designers' Week. Venues include MOMA (New York), Royal Geographical Society and Moscow's Dom Muzyki. Media engagement include BBC Radio3 and Fuji TV. Recognition includes San Francisco International Film Festival Golden Gate Award. Collections include Museum of London and Fukuoka Art Museum. Kai is King's College London Artist in Residence and Visiting Fellow, UKRI and AHRC Peer Review College member, UK Adult ADHD Network Research Committee Member, PsychART Advisor and Music In Detention Trustee.

*Above: Audio description enjoyed at King's Artists exhibition, Bush House Arcade, where the tapestry is displayed on an invisible loom, as seen on cover (top image). Photographs by Alex Lloyd, London UK (2018).*

*Cover (bottom): People sitting on the the tapestry to chat about the mind and how we think about it at the tapestry's launch at the Art Workers' Guild. Photograph by Marco Berardi, London, UK 2018.*

# #MagicCarpet

## TAPESTRY + INVISIBLE LOOM

- Title: *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.

Large and overworked, the tapestry flits in and out of reason, legibility and consciousness. It explores mind wandering through the kaleidoscope of time. 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 is 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. She 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.



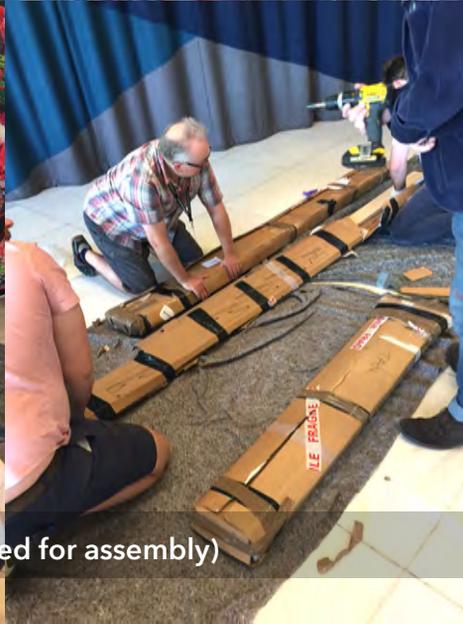
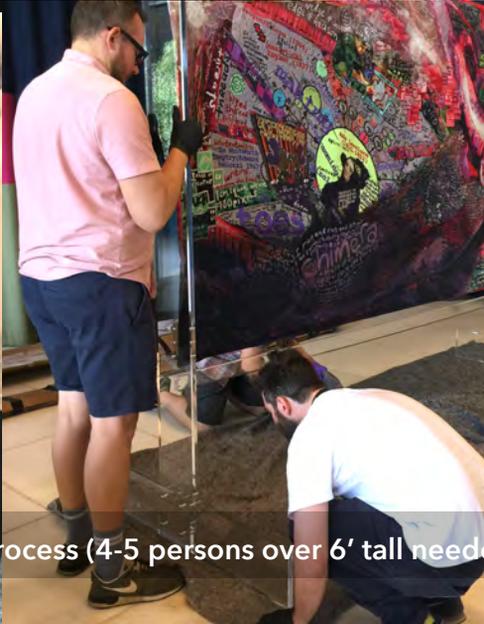
Southbank Centre 2018



Birkbeck Arts Week 2019, in a room that used to be sister of Virginia Woolf, artist Vanessa Bell's studio

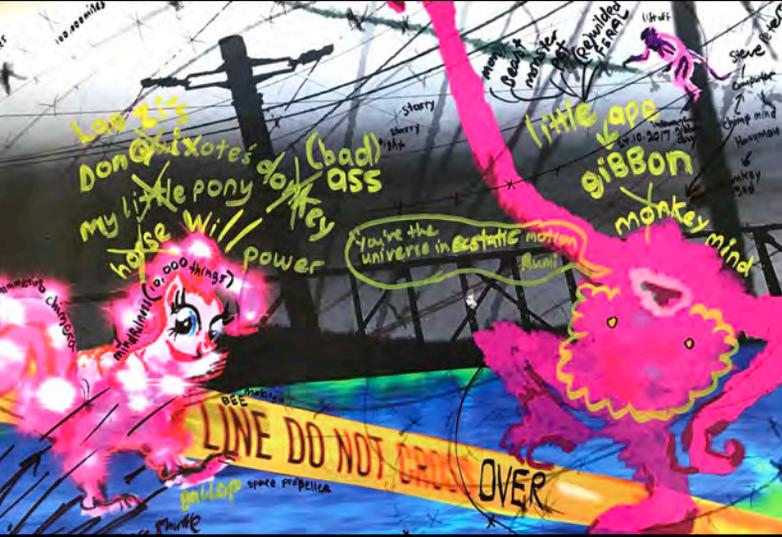


NESTA innovation showcase



Installation process (4-5 persons over 6' tall needed for assembly)

# #MagicCarpet DRAWINGS + MAPPINGS

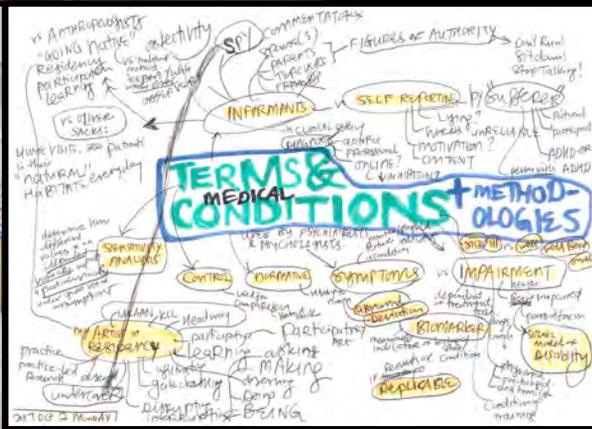


These drawings on the left were building blocks (2017) for the tapestry. Each drawing consists of yet more layers, references and red herrings, designed to intrigue rather than clarify/enlighten. The drawings have been created on iPad. Taking a cue from Hockney's iPad drawings, this process has enabled 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, set of 3. 420 X 594 mm. iPad, marker pen. Paper. (2017).
- From top: Psychiageographies [detournement] [exquisite corpse] [parenthesis]. On the cover of British Journal of Psychiatry published by Cambridge Uni. Press (July 2019)
- Gibbon Mind Donkey Will
- The Mind Excessively Wandering (Red Herring) Scale

➤ Also: 200 drawings (A5) by participants of workshops (bottom left, as displayed at Social, Genetic and Developmental Psychiatry Centre, London, UK (2018)

➤ Bottom middle and right: 80 'mappings' (A4) by myself to process what I was learning from my infiltration/durational performance amongst psychiatrists, psychologists and neuroscientists (2018).





## #MagicCarpet BADGES + PHOTO SERIES

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 thus far
- ▶ 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)*.

# #MagicCarpet

- 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'), an ESRC documentary on mental health
- 1 audio description for blind people
- 1 podcast on neurodiversity
- 1 radio recording (Resonance FM)
- See [www.kaisyngtan.com/magiccarpet](http://www.kaisyngtan.com/magiccarpet)



**MagicCarpet**

You are listening to an audio description created by Jenni Elbourne (2018, 7:30')

This is about *Run and Run Let Out an Earth Spattering River, and Turn into a Giant* (Artscape Kai Syng Tan 2017) Jenni viewed the tapestry, sat and chatted with Kai in August 2018, developed the script and made the recording at the Brixton Hill Studio.

The AD was commissioned by Unlimited and premiered at the Unlimited Festival at the Southbank Centre (5-9 September 2018). The tapestry is a key outcome of a 15 year project known as #MagicCarpet. Mentor: Professor Philip Asherson. Producer: Alessandra Loratti.

Read the script: <http://www.magiccarpet.com/audio-descriptions>  
Find out more about #MagicCarpet: <http://www.backdoorbroadcasting.com/>  
Follow Jenni: <http://twitter.com/jenelouise>

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# #MagicCarpet

W: [www.kaisyngtan.com/magiccarpet](http://www.kaisyngtan.com/magiccarpet)

T: @wesatonamat #magiccarpet E: kai@kaisyngtan.com



- [9 films & #MagicCarpet website](#)
- [Centre for Mental Health interview](#), ESRC film by Prof Louise Arseneault
- [Arts in Mind Festival radio interview](#), Resonance FM
- Birkbeck [Podcast](#) with 2 provocations: on '[neurodiversity](#)' and on [leadership](#)
- [Shine a light on ADHD](#). EU-funded film seen 17,545 times in 1<sup>st</sup> month



- On the [sailience of high quality art in mental health](#), *The Conversation* (10.6 million subscribers; 2000 readers in 2 days)
- On [thought-leadership of arts & humanities in culture change](#) in BMJ medical humanities blog
- On [being first artist-in-residence of Social, Genetic & Developmental Psychiatry Centre](#)
- Reached 9000 via conferences & exhibitions in 1 year
- Southbank Centre (700 people)
- [Innovation showcase, NESTA's People Powered Future Health](#) (500 health policy people)
- European Network for Hyperkinetic Disorders Conference (500 researchers & psychiatrists)
- Curated event with Art Assassins (aged 15-20), South London Gallery
- Dyslexia Conference, San Marino
- Workshop for kids with ADHD, Lyndhurst School
- 40 citations



- National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement 2018 [Images Award for Culture Change](#)
- Arts Council England funded [Unlimited commission](#)
- King's Artists [Award](#)
- Drawing on [BJPsych journal cover](#)
- Drawing in [Wellcome Library](#)
- On [neurodiversity and women](#). Top editorial on [Disability Arts Online](#)
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- [Keynote lectures & provocations](#)
  - [Lead & design research](#)
  - [Unpack medical infor/news into accessible & engaging visuals & activities](#)



- [Run bespoke hands-on masterclass on neuro-diversity](#)

What is it? Why does it matter?  
What can I/we do? Creating guidelines for the workplace  
[Wellbeing & mental health](#)  
What is 'wellbeing' in an unwell world? What are boundaries of 'normality'?

[Disability & inclusion](#)  
Models of disability; disability arts; 'unreasonable' adjustments?

Past/current clients:  
Plymouth College of Art; GPs teaching at King's; nurses at Royal Infirmary (Manchester)

- King's Artists [Award](#)
- Drawing on [BJPsych journal cover](#)
- Drawing in [Wellcome Library](#)
- On [neurodiversity and women](#). Top editorial on [Disability Arts Online](#)



➤ 'Kai has contributed to local and national training with health care professionals and researchers [...] She's a key member of our research team' - Professor of Psychiatry Philip Asherson, KCL

➤ 100% of feedback for #MagicCarpet: 'project has challenged my work' and 'improved my understanding of mental health'.

- The tapestry is 'beautiful' and 'screams' for your attention ([Disability Arts Online](#)), creating a family' for neurodivergent people ([The Psychologist](#))
- Arts & Humanities Research Council Reviewers: 'outstanding', 'exciting and innovative'; 'already leading the way'; 'impressive track record'

Psychiatrist Prof. David Coghill & #MagicCarpet. European Network for Hyperactivity Disorder Congress (Edinburgh 2018)



- #MagicCarpet (2017-8) brought psychiatrists, neuroscientists, arts & humanities scholars, service users together through art to create dialogues around & insights into mind wandering, creativity, ADHD, mental health & neuro-diversity.
- Outputs: tapestry (2.9m X 1.45m, weaved at factory where artist Grayson Perry weaved his tapestries), badges, drawings, photos, performances, maps, workshops (for ages 7-85)
- Collaborators: UCL Prof. of Biology Helen Chatterjee MBE, ADHD charity head Andrea Bilbow OBE,
- Partners: Headway East London, [UK Adult ADHD Network](#) (Kai now advises on its art programme).