

12 February-
12 April 2026

POETS OF MUSIC

Aki Sasamoto Bagus Pandega David Medalla
Fischli & Weiss Ian Carlo Jaucjan

Re-enchanting the World

The most important thing I think is to give life to materials, so that instead of finding ourselves separate from them we find a complete dialogue with the material.

—David Medalla, quoted in Guy Brett, "Lygia Clark: The Borderline between Life and Art", *Third Text*, no. 1 (1987)

In 1961, David Medalla made an auto-creative work he called *Cloud Canyons*, which he presented for the



David Medalla, *Cloud Canyons No. 31*, 1964, 2016 (detail)

first time in 1964 on the balcony of the Signals Gallery in London.¹ Affectionately nicknamed "bubble machines," these works generated foam towers through the hollowed mouths of towerlike receptacles (initially plywood pillars, which Medalla changed to large plexiglass tubes in later iterations) that then curved, bending at the weight of each foam

column. These effervescent spires were ever-changing forms that existed only temporarily before dissolving and re-forming. Medalla states, "I would not call myself a sculptor, because a sculptor is one who shapes things out of whatever was there, I shape things out of my head." Indeed, his biokinetic works link ideas across the human, the machine, and nature.

Medalla, who referred to himself as a "poet who celebrates physics" in an issue of *Signals* magazine from the 1960s, iterated on his bubble machines and expanded his exploration of biokinetic sculptures by using sand and mud as active materials. Artists have long been explorers, inquisitive minds entering territories other professions rarely venture into and cross-fertilizing disciplines in their studio-laboratories.

Drawing its title from Medalla's quote, this exhibition explores artistic invention and examines how contemporary artists have continued this radical proposition of art as machines that can harness natural phenomena, while simultaneously highlighting their capacity for transcendence. By working with scientific processes as "collaborators" in the creation of experiences and understanding,

the exhibition reminds us that wonder itself is a form of knowledge, and that deep insights about our world emerge when art and science converge in the spirit of poetic discovery.

The Swiss artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss had a fluid practice similar to Medalla's, with the same penchant for materiality. Perhaps less avant-garde,² the duo had a decidedly "conversational mode of collaboration"³ that includes books, films and videos, mixed-media installations, photographs, sculptures, and an early costumed performance wherein they dressed up as a rat and a bear. Their interest in ordinary objects, systems, phenomena, and the everyday has created a corpus that is located outside of practices invested in medium. Instead, their juxtapositions of objects that refer to phenomena are imbued with an unexpected quality that could be called sublime.

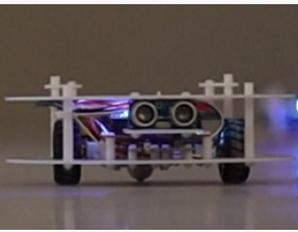


Peter Fischli and David Weiss
Der Lauf Der Dinge (The Way Things Go) (still), 1987

Their iconic video work *The Way Things Go* (1987) is an offshoot of another project titled *Equilibres*, a set of sculptures that they photographed

on the cusp of entropy. Fascinated by chain reactions and states of impending collapse, the artists explored how common inanimate objects could come to life—lighting the next object on fire, creating chemical reactions, rolling, spilling, inflating, wobbling, and careening off one another. Like Rube Goldberg illustrations of elaborate mechanical contraptions come to life, *The Way Things Go* (1987) embodies something more complex: order from seeming chaos, precise engineering while teetering on collapse.

Ian Carlo Jaucian, a Philippine-based visual artist who occupies the liminal space between scientific inquiry and aesthetic investigation, has evolved from his training as a painter to develop a diverse practice encompassing kinetic installations, interactive works, robotics, and sculpture. His work is characterized by the dogged interrogation of scientific phenomena through artistic methods, creating what he terms "heretical science"; for him, this means the use of experimentation and speculation to explore concepts that exist beyond conventional empirical verification.



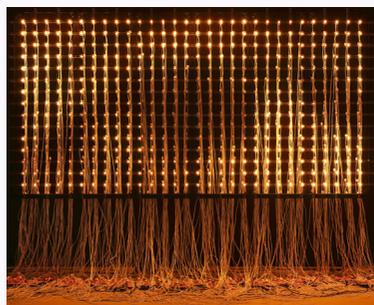
Ian Carlo Jaucian, *Viral Automata Mk 2*, 2017, 2026

Viral Automata (2017), an early work, has been remade here with new materials and improved significantly, reimagining computer viruses through battery-less robots that transmit colored “infections” via infrared sensors while moving across the floor, which in previous iterations was electrified. Improvements in his experiments have allowed Jaucian to do away with the electrified floor, allowing the robots to move around freely. The work is fun, but also harks back to a time when viruses were feared by entire computer systems. The artist attests, however, that, “the project explores the idea of non-intelligent artificial life, and a ‘perfect’ non-malicious virus that is in equilibrium with its environment.”⁴

His installations often make their mechanisms visible, embracing the process of prototyping and iterating. In *On the hidden labors of rest, and other observations concerning stillness* (2026), Jaucian constructs a robot whose sole purpose is to move in the opposite direction of the earth’s rotation. This work exemplifies the artist’s meditation on physical elements—a planet spinning on its axis—and how the daily incomprehensibility of such phenomena is made tangible through a robot struggling, almost impossibly, to resist the fundamental physical laws that govern existence. Jaucian’s *The Irresolute Places of Now* (2026) and *deus = x*; (2026) also explore natural phenomena through investigation and play. Unlike the DIY impetus of some artists who work with technology and machines, Jaucian instead takes technology apart and links machine components directly to make tangible natural phenomena, thus revealing how technological systems both enable and constrain possibilities, exposing the contradictions inherent in our increasingly mediated existence. Another artist who works deeply in technology is

Indonesian artist **Bagus Pandega**, whose mechanical and kinetic installations contain electronic systems that are powered by the natural world; often, plants find their way in as part of the battery—or act as the battery itself—that runs his machines. However, the novelty in Pandega’s work lies not in the yoking together of nature and technology, but in how he makes visible these extractive relationships.

In *Rhythmic Devotion* (2023), a mandaliong is played via the energy drawn from plant life. The unsure and plaintive tone of the sound is eked out as if from an old-fashioned phonograph. Pandega constructs installations that operate as living systems—modular assemblages of found technology and nature through house plants that respond to their environment with choreographies of movement, sound, and light. His 2018 project in Tokyo, *A Pervasive Rhythm*, is an installation of 450 bulbs taken from motorcycle’s blinkers. The



Bagus Pandega, *A Pervasive Rhythm*, 2018

flickering lights are controlled using a digital multiplex system to create the appearance of a floating eye. This riotous installation of bulbs mimics present-day LED screens, and reflects Pandega’s preference for motorcycles as a mode of transportation back in Indonesia. As Harry Burke observes, his practice becomes “a lesson in disassembling the master’s tools and rewiring them for new, more life-giving uses”⁵—a radical reimagining of how we might engage with both colonial histories and contemporary extractive capitalism. His installations reveal the entanglements of nature, technology, art, and capital as always already interconnected,

monumentalizing systemic contradictions that are lived and deeply known.

The Japanese-American artist **Aki Sasamoto** works primarily in performance, exploring systems, unpredictability, and the poetry that could be found in bodies that didn’t conform to the norm. She began working with kinetic sculptures when she became pregnant and performing became difficult, saying, “I wanted to make objects that perform.” Similar to Fischli and Weiss, Sasamoto wanted to exploit environmental forces, like air and heat, as well as the dispersion of elements rather than use motors to activate her works.



Aki Sasamoto, *Social Sink Microcosm #2* (detail), 2022

Her most recent projects center on chirality,⁶ or the asymmetries found throughout nature. Sasamoto became fascinated by this phenomenon when she encountered a rout of snails under a bridge in rural France. While most snail shells spiral clockwise, some rare specimens coil counterclockwise. These snails, strangely, are unable to mate with the majority. For Sasamoto, these counterclockwise snail shells became symbolic of “lefties,” as well as queerness, eccentricity, and difference. Interested in learning more, she met with biologists to discuss the persistence of these minority traits despite their evolutionary disadvantage. Dissatisfied with the answers, she argued that “we need the lefty, we need the eccentric,” and looked to art.

Produced for the 59th Venice Biennale, *Sink or Float* (2022), which *Social Sink Microcosm #2* (2022) is part of, transforms industrial kitchen sinks into kinetic sculptures. Perforated plexiglass sheets cover the basins, and an HVAC system forces air through, setting snail shells, bottle caps, sponges, and sugar

packets moving, spinning, and jostling each other. On one sheet, a feather attached to a shell—a touch of a drag queen’s boa—works like a rudder to steer the little shell counterclockwise and spin faster than the others. The spinning snail shells are both scientific specimens and empathetic characters in the artist’s tableaux, with the clockwise majority and counterclockwise minority coexisting in structured chaos.

In her video *Point Reflection* (2023), Sasamoto extends her investigation of chirality through video and performance. Like her earlier work *Sink or Float* (2022), the video brings into play snail shells and their directional spirals; in this instance, however, the video is autobiographical. The snail operates as character, specimen, and metaphor—a body that can be otherwise, that coils against the norm. Sasamoto treats the snail through both storytelling and identification, and analytically, to extract data and theorize structures of difference.

The concept of the artist as “poet of physics” suggests a unique form of translation—converting the mathematical abstractions of natural law into sensory, emotional, and spiritual encounters. These works function as mechanical metaphors, where spinning motors become meditations on planetary motion, twirling shells speak of evolution, where pressure systems evoke breathing, where electromagnetic fields materialize as visible light or audible sound. Each work embodies a poetic hypothesis about how invisible forces might be felt, heard, or seen. Building from exploration of impermanence and chance as done by artists like Medalla and Fischli and Weiss, the works presented in this exhibition engage with systems that embrace unpredictability while maintaining enough structure to create meaning—mechanical haikus written in the languages of physics and engineering.

Joselina Cruz

Public Programs

Conversation between Artists
Bagus Pandega and Ian Carlo Jaucian
Saturday, 14 February, 2 PM
MCAD Multimedia Room

Bagus Pandega and Ian Carlo Jaucian, both artists featured in *Poets of Physics*, will talk about the objects and interactions leading to the works that are part of the exhibition.

Industrial Design Showcase
Friday, March 6, 10 AM–5 PM
12F, Cafeteria, D+A Campus

This celebration of DIY culture features works of students and faculty members of Benilde Industrial Design, as well as suppliers. Creativity and practical skills are on display as they reinvent and create various objects

Sonic Experimentation: A Performance by Elemento
Friday, 20 March, 6–8 PM
MCAD Ground Floor

Elemento is a collective of artists, poets, painters, and performance and sound artists who perform in art galleries, art conventions, bars, and even traditional rock-and-roll concert venues. Using instruments called sandatas, *Elemento* creates experimental music and sound.

1. Chanon Kenji Praepipatmongkol, “David Medalla: Dreams of Sculpture,” *Oxford Art Journal* 43, no. 3 (December 2020): 339–359. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxartj/kcaa023>.

2. They have in their careers, despite their absurdist practice, put together pamphlets titled *Order and Cleanliness* (1981) and a mural *How to Work Better* (1991), a ten-point list of simple statements that suggests that “working better” is as much about an approach to everyday life as it is about productivity.

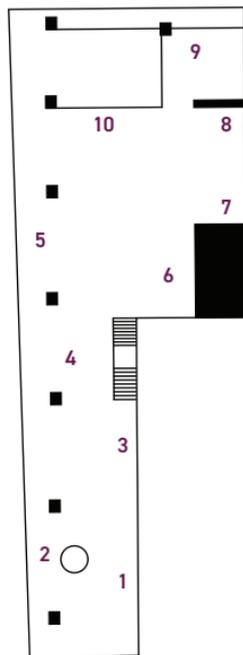
3. Nancy Spector and Nat Trotman, *Peter Fischli and David Weiss: How to Work Better* (Guggenheim Museum: Del Monico Books, 2016), 1.

4. Artist’s portfolio.

5. Harry Burke, “Bagus Pandega: From Nutmeg to Nickel,” *Mousse Magazine*, 6 October 2025. <https://www.moussemagazine.it/magazine/bagus-pandega-harry-burke-2025/>.

6. “Chirality (/kaɪrælɪti/) is the property of an object not being identical to its mirror image. An object is chiral if it is not identical to its mirror image; that is, it cannot be superposed (not to be confused with superimposed) onto itself. Conversely, an object is achiral (sometimes also amphichiral) if its mirror image cannot be distinguished from the object (i.e., can be superposed onto its mirror image), such as a sphere. A chiral object and its mirror image are called enantiomorphs (Greek, ‘opposite forms’). Chirality is a property of asymmetry and important in several branches of science.” See Wikipedia, “Chirality (chemistry),” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chirality_\(chemistry\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chirality_(chemistry)).

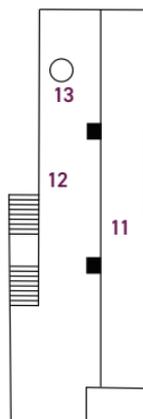
Ground Floor



- 1** **Bagus Pandega**
(L-R)
Indecisive Things #4
Indecisive Things #3
Indecisive Things #2
2018
Courtesy of the artist and ROH
- 2** **David Medalla**
Cloud Canyons No. 31
1964, 2016
Private collection

- 3** **Aki Sasamoto**
Social Sink Microcosm #2
2022
Private collection
- 4** **Ian Carlo Jaucian**
On the Hidden Labors of Rest, and Matters Concerning Stillness
2026
Courtesy of the artist
- 5** **Peter Fischli and David Weiss**
Der Lauf Der Dinge
(*The Way Things Go*)
1987
Courtesy of Frenetic Films
- 6** **Ian Carlo Jaucian**
deus = x;
2026
Courtesy of the artist
- 7** **Bagus Pandega**
Rhythmic Devotion
2023
Lito and Kim Camacho Collection
- 8** **Ian Carlo Jaucian**
Still Life
2026
Courtesy of the artist
- 9** **Bagus Pandega**
A Pervasive Rhythm
2018
Courtesy of the artist and ROH
- 10** **Aki Sasamoto**
Point Reflection
2023
Courtesy of the artist and Take Ninagawa

Mezzanine



- 11** **Ian Carlo Jaucian**
Viral Automata Mk 2
2017, 2026
Courtesy of the artist
- 12** **Ian Carlo Jaucian**
On rigor in science
2026
Courtesy of the artist
- 13** **David Medalla**
Cloud Canyons
2019
Lito and Kim Camacho Collection

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