

poets of
physics

Primary Level Study Guide

Aki Sasamoto

Bagus Pandega

David Medalla

Fischli & Weiss

Ian Carlo Jaucian

Pre-Visit

We see physics in action everyday. It affects movement and motion, such as walking and riding a bike, and our use of technology like phones, listening to music, and searching the web. Being surrounded by physics means small-scale particles like atoms, then affecting bigger phenomena, both in natural phenomena like earthquakes, and astronomical occurrences, such as the earth's rotation on its axis.

Reflection Guide

- Think of a hobby you enjoy, and ponder the applications of physics in it. If you like sports, how does physics affect motion? What are the forces at play? On the other hand, if you are interested in art, think about how physics affects color theory and light perception.
- What influences your perception of motion, light, and sound? How might these be experienced by others? Consider people with disabilities and those from differing age gaps.



Recommended Media

The movie *WALL-E* (Stanton, 2008) shows robotics, space travel, and environmental science. The film is an excellent starting point for the interaction between physics and climate change.

Considering the world as it is today, along with predictions of the future of humanity, what is the importance of physics in understanding technology? Can it raise awareness about environmental degradation and climate change?

Note your observations about the main character, WALL-E, and take these notes when you visit the exhibition. What are the similarities and differences between WALL-E and the robots in *Viral Automata Mk 2* by Ian Carlo Jaucian?



Context of the “Poets of Physics”

Poets of Physics comes from the idea of the “Extension of Nature”. It is centred on David Medalla’s work *Cloud Canyons*, the iconic bubble machine. The artwork continuously creates foam or bubbles to make a sculpture that always changes. This form follows a life-cycle, existing only for a short period of time, disappearing, and reforming again.

Medalla thinks of himself as “a poet who celebrates physics”. After different versions of bubble machines, he widened his exploration of works that follow the same direction, this time using sand and mud as active materials. The exhibition looks into how contemporary artists approach the overlap and interaction between art and physics. It also explores how physics can be poetry, thus imagining the artists as poets too.

Preliminary Activity

What is your prior knowledge of physics and art? Have you seen any instances of the two subjects in relation to one another? When thinking of the title “Poets of Physics,” what comes to mind? Are there any elements you expect to see at the exhibition? How does physics function as a form of poetry?

Feel free to explore STEAM Powered Family, a webpage with artistic experiments that use physics:
<https://www.steampoweredfamily.com/category/science-experiments/physics/>

Visit

Exhibition Layout and Artwork Information

The diagram illustrates the exhibition layout across two levels: the Ground Floor and the Mezzanine. The Ground Floor is a large rectangular space with a central staircase. Numbered locations (1-10) are marked with squares or circles. The Mezzanine is a smaller, narrower space above the ground floor, with numbered locations (11-13) marked with squares or circles.

Ground Floor

Mezzanine

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

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

MCAD curator and director Joselina Cruz explains that the exhibit is about perception as the thread that ties everything together. She writes that the artists use physics as material for poetry, not to teach formulas but to unsettle how we see. Foam, rhythm, imbalance, planetary winds, and viral circulation are presented as ways to make perception visible. This framing sets the expectation that what you encounter will be less about science lessons and more about how we experience change.

Source: <https://www.benilde.edu.ph/mcads-new-exhibit-poets-of-physics-invites-reflection-on-how-we-perceive-change/>

Visit

Using the insights gleaned from the Pre-Visit section, take a close look at the artworks displayed and examine the materials used for each.

Bagus Pandega, whose work you'll immediately see, often challenges pre-conditioned relationships between objects and its viewer (ROH Projects, 2025). In *Indecisive Things #2*, *Indecisive Things #3*, and *Indecisive Things #4*, what ideas are being expressed? What medium was used, and how does it convey the message of the artist?

Bagus Pandega



Indecisive Things #4, *Indecisive Things #3*, *Indecisive Things #2* (from left to right), 2018
Bagus Pandega

UV print on acrylic sheet, LED running text, found electronic objects, electronic relay trigger system

Photography by Akira Watanabe. Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD) Manila.



Image courtesy of Bagus Pandega
Read more about the artist's practice:

<https://rohprojects.net/artists/bagus-pandega>

Cloud Canyons by David Medalla

David Medalla's *Cloud Canyons* rises so slowly that the foam towers seem frozen. You watch, and nothing changes, until suddenly a bend or collapse shifts the form (Benilde Newsstand, 2026).

Pristine L. De Leon (2019) says:

It is the ever-evolving shapes that heighten the sculpture's power as public art. Columns of white foam rise, curl, and fall, each an exercise in free abstraction that gives tangible form to an immaterial force. What differentiates "Cloud Canyons" for instance from growing trees or billowing fountains may be its capacity to draw on air. Imagine an aircraft scribbling letters in the sky.

Examine the similarity between your perception of the work and the above descriptions. How does perception then become a subject and active agent of shaping the work?



Cloud Canyons, 2018
David Medalla

Plexiglass tubes, wood, fiberglass, water, soap, and oxygenator

Photography by Akira Watanabe. Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD) Manila.

Lito and Kim Camacho Collection.

Activity

What artworks depicted motion?

How were light and sound used?

Look at the materials. Describe them and ponder how they were used to illustrate concepts in physics.

Introduction to Kinetic Art

Kinetic art is art that depends on motion for its effects. Its keyword, “kinetic”, means relating to motion (Tate Museum, n.d.) It can be made of various materials like metal, plastic, acrylic, wood, and wire. Some challenges it faces are conservation and maintenance, and material durability. With these considerations, imagine your own kinetic artwork. What materials would it be made of, and what makes it kinetic? Draw your artwork in the box.

Post-Visit

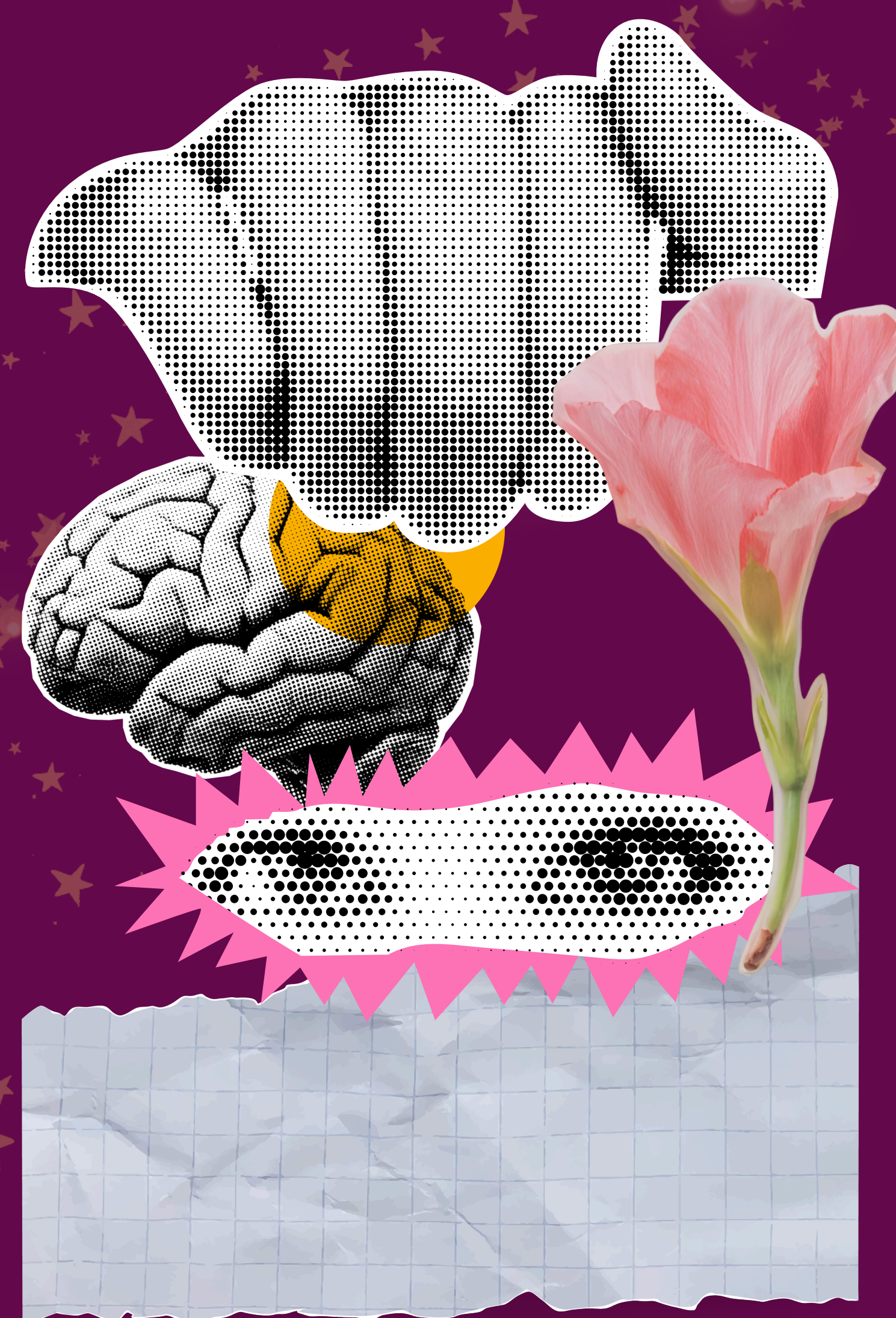
Making Sense of Change

What are some natural phenomena that represent change?

- How can we see change in the environment and our surroundings?
- What do these changes represent, and how do we perceive them?

After pondering these questions, gather used magazines, newspapers, and photos. Look at what each of them mean to you. On a surface like a canvas or vellum board, make a collage of these clippings. You may also add or cover up elements as you see fit.

Look at your finished work, and think about how the clippings have changed, now that you have combined them in a single piece of work. How did its meaning change? How did you perceive it this time? What new meanings emerged?



Moving Forward

Poets of Physics shows how physics and art can represent change, shaping how we see and perceive. Our perception and environment are ever-changing, much like the nature of David Medalla's *Cloud Canyons*.

There are a great deal of examples where scientific fields can give us a renewed perception. Next time you watch the sunset, take note of the colors in the sky changing and how the clouds move. Make a record every other day, and make observations on how each sunset is different. How do you see it? Is there anything new you notice?

References and Further Reading

- Bagus Pandega (n.d.) ROH Projects. Retrieved from <https://rohprojects.net/artists/bagus-pandega>.
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