

poets of  
physics

Secondary Level Study Guide

Aki Sasamoto

Bagus Pandega

David Medalla

Fischli & Weiss

Ian Carlo Jaucian

# Pre-Visit

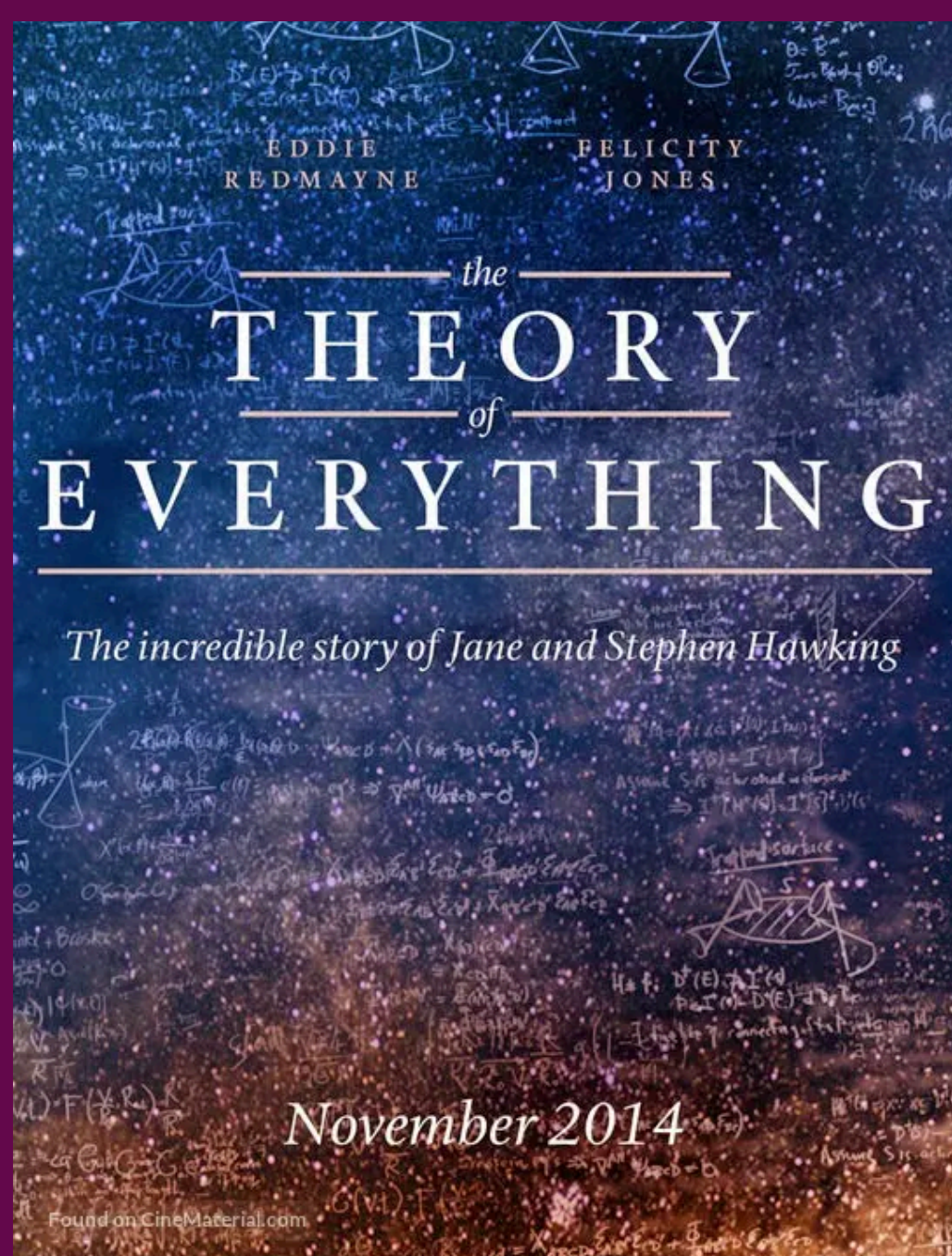
Physics can be seen in our everyday lives, in fundamental forces and the transformation of energy. This includes gravity, physical activities such as walking and running, thermodynamics in cooking, and electromagnetism that powers our gadgets. These physical laws govern our daily lives.

Its all-encompassing nature also means that it affects subatomic particles such as electrons, protons, and photons, accounting for changes in how the universe operates as a whole. It is also found in natural phenomena such as earthquakes, auroras, and rainbows, and astronomical occurrences, like how gravity and tidal forces are responsible for the rotation of planets.

## Reflection Guide

The exhibition, *Poets of Physics*, aims to reimagine perception as a subject. It uses art, not to explain how science works, rather, so audiences can examine perception. It is important to ask:

- How do disciplines, such as physics, affect our perception? How can different fields, like art and physics, work in conjunction with one another to shape the way we see?



*The Theory of Everything* (Marsh, 2014) is a film about the life of physicist Stephen Hawking. He is influential and well-acclaimed, and was the director of research at the Centre for Theoretical Cosmology at the University of Cambridge.

The semi-autobiographical novel shows his battle with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and his marriage, along with his work, particularly on time and blackholes. Notice the changes in his life and how they influenced his work, or changed his perspective.

## Recommended Media

## Context of the “Poets of Physics”

In 1964, David Medalla presented the first iconic bubble machine, an auto-creative work he called *Cloud Canyons*, which continuously generates foam or bubbles to produce ever-changing sculptural forms that exist only temporarily before dissolving and reforming. Medalla would later refer to himself as “a poet who celebrates physics”; after several iterations of the bubble machines, he expanded his exploration of these biokinetic works using sand and mud as active materials.

Drawing its title from Medalla’s quote, the exhibition explores how contemporary artists have continued this radical proposition of art machines that examine natural conditions while exploring their capacity for transcendence. By working with scientific phenomena not as subjects to be illustrated, but as “collaborators” in the creation of experiences and understanding, the exhibition becomes an opportunity to remind 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.

## Preliminary Activity

Reflect on the following questions:

- What are the areas of shared interest among physics, art, and poetry? How do I encounter each of these disciplines in daily life?
- How is meaning and perception born out of our personal experience? Is it a process that is easy to articulate? How can it be articulated?

# 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 vertical corridor and several side rooms. The Mezzanine is a smaller, narrower space located above the Ground Floor, accessible via a staircase. Numbered markers (1-13) indicate the locations of various artworks throughout the space.

**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

Joselina Cruz, MCAD director and curator, 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

*A Pervasive Rhythm* by Bagus Pandega ‘turns car blinkers into eyes, pulsing with sound and light. The irony is clear. Blinkers are meant to signal a turn, a change in direction, yet here they are installed to blink endlessly. The repetition becomes a static display, a rhythm that never leads anywhere. The piece expresses inevitability, like the human need to blink, but it does so through a system locked in constant repetition. What should mark change instead becomes a reminder of how change itself can feel inevitable and mechanical’ (Benilde Newsstand, 2026). Now, consider: What does it mean to be static and moving?



A Pervasive Rhythm, 2018  
Bagus Pandega  
Installation view  
Courtesy of the artist and ROH Projects  
Image courtesy of College of St. Benilde

Seeing the themes of necessity, instinct, innate nature, and change, you can critique how the art achieves its ability to tell a story. These are a few questions to start with:

- In your own terms, identify the different elements of the artwork. How do they express poetry, and what kind?
- Are there other messages you can associate with the artwork?
- What elements are immediately visible? What elements are not?
- How does the title relate to the work itself?

## 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.

With these articulations in mind, think about different processes or things that are dynamic, or static:

- What aspects of the work are ever-changing? What stays the same?
- What is the poetic aspect of these changes? What methods of storytelling are used?
- Are there any real-life situations that are seen in the artwork? What are they?
- How does the artwork, when seen in person, differ from the pictures? What causes these differences?



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.

# Post-Visit

## Being a Poet of Physics

Now that there has been a foundation of physics and the central message of the exhibition, it's your turn to be a poet of physics. By looking at imagination and scientific and personal knowledge, how can you create an artwork that also functions as poetry?

Think of a phenomenon of physics, such as rainbows, weather changes, and/or natural disasters.

- What meanings and metaphors can be formed by looking at them?
- Are there any personal experiences or societal issues that can be likened to these phenomena?
- How would you draw/paint/sculpt it, and what materials would you use to illustrate your message?

After creating your artwork, think about the following:

- How does art function as poetry?

Show your artwork to your peers, and ask them for their opinion and interpretation.

- Is the element of physics evident in the work? If so, in what ways?
- What do you perceive to be the message of the work?



## Moving Forward

Now that you have gleaned perspectives from different ideas, these might be questions worth asking:

- Did the exhibition repeat existing ideas about art and science?
- Did you learn anything new? What about in relation to science?
- Why are these ideas repeated? If not, how are they unique?
- How do these ideas benefit society?

Disciplines, such as art and physics in this instance, can work together to shape perception. This is also applicable to all other fields. Think about two different fields that work together to shape how you see and what you think. How does math relate to science? How do the literary arts affect the way we see the world? How does arithmetic affect finance?

It is important to see how subjects like physics manifest in our everyday lives. This can then help us connect it with other disciplines, and realize how it molds our perception. This consciousness will hone more of an appreciation about the workings of the world and ourselves.

## References and Further Reading

- Benilde Newsstand (2026). MCAD's New Exhibit Poets of Physics Invites Reflection on How We Perceive Change. Retrieved from <https://www.benilde.edu.ph/mcads-new-exhibit-poets-of-physics-invites-reflection-on-how-we-perceive-change/>.
- David Medalla (2019). Cloud Canyons. Plexiglass tubes, wood, fiberglass, water, soap, and oxygenators. Lito and Kim Camacho Collection.
- Marsh, J. (2014). The Theory of Everything [Film]. Working Title Films.