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Bagus Pandega: *Daya Benda*
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Object Power: Bagus Pandega Meshes Technology and Culture

New Exhibition *Daya Benda* reveals the Indonesian artist's commitment to using technology to empower, and even foster, the blossoming of nature.

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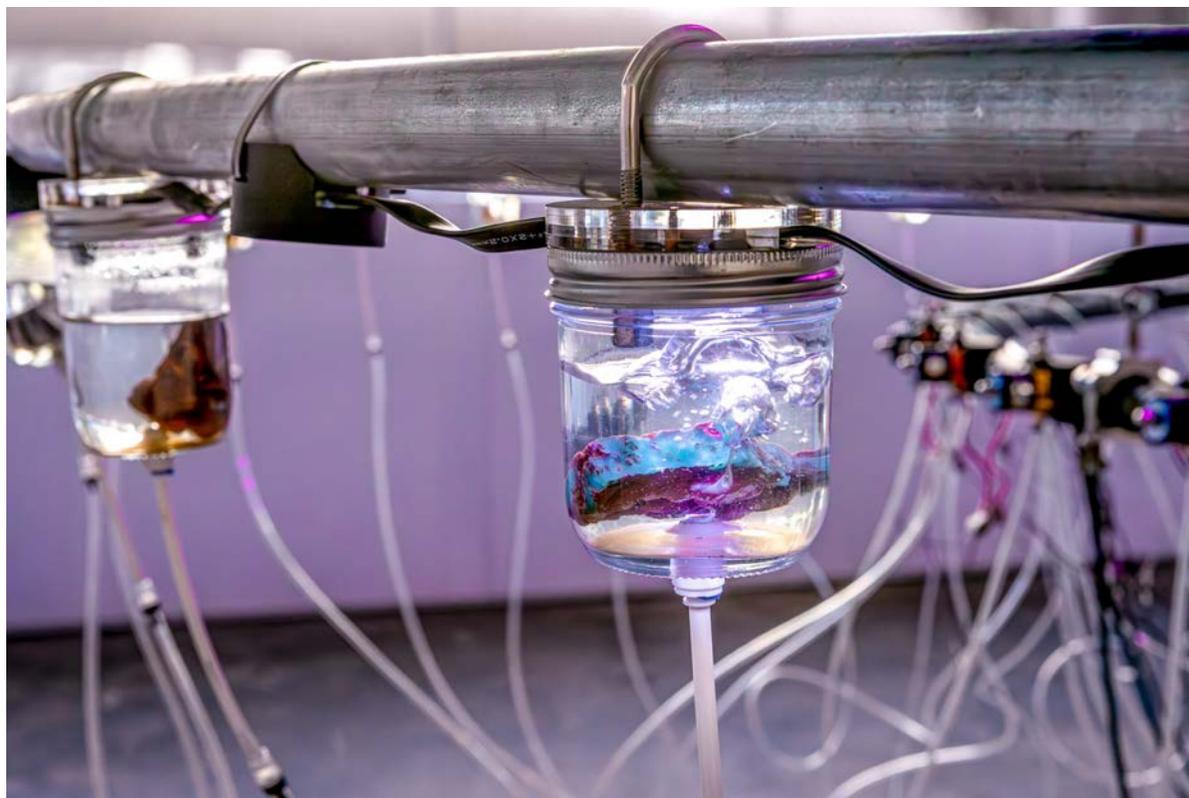
By Yinka Elujoba – 27 October 2025, New York

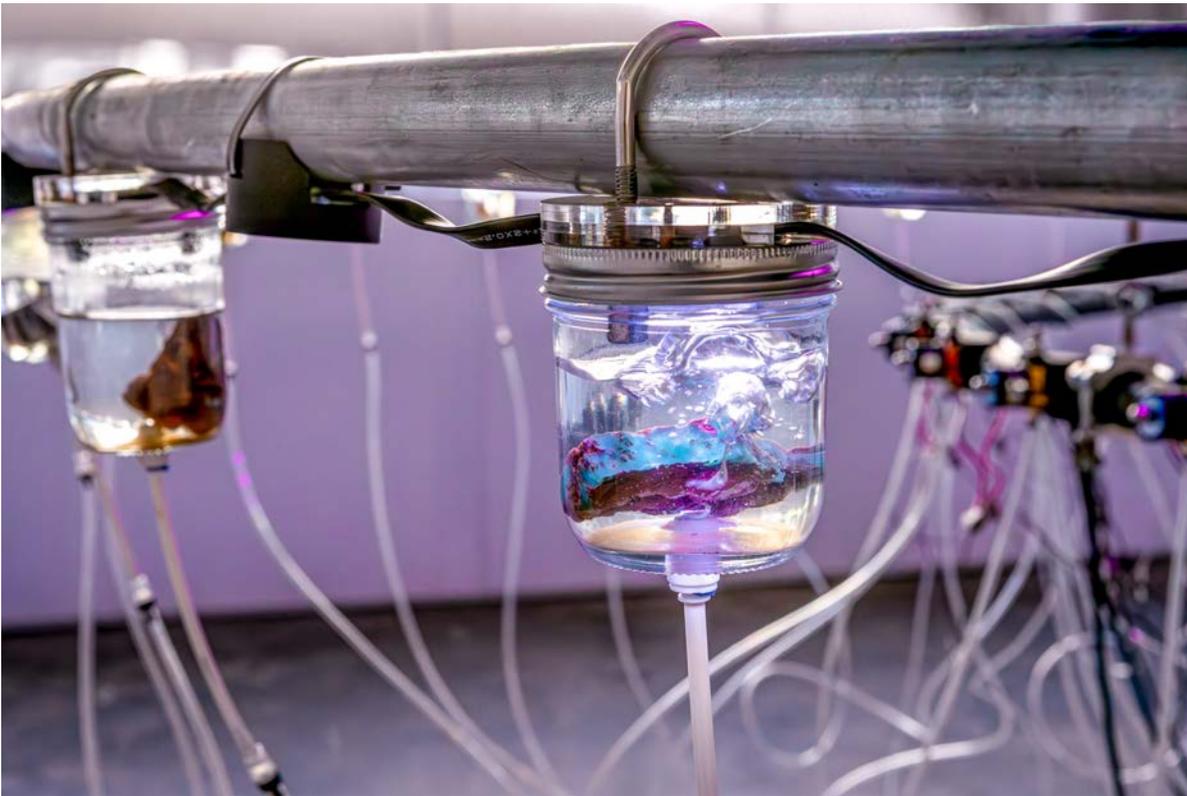
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Three concentric metal pipes are suspended from the ceiling of the Swiss Institute in New York. *Hyperpnea Green* (2024), the largest installation in the show, is a marvel. Tubes on each pipe are connected to transparent containers, in which stone minerals extracted from both Indonesia and common household plants found in the U.S. are suspended in a clear liquid. Displayed high up in the centre of the installation is a large potted plant with a purple lamp above it.



Bagus Pandega, *Hyperpnea Green* (2024) (detail). Exhibition view: *Daya Benda*, Swiss Institute, New York (30 September 2025–4 January 2026). Photo: Daniel Pérez.

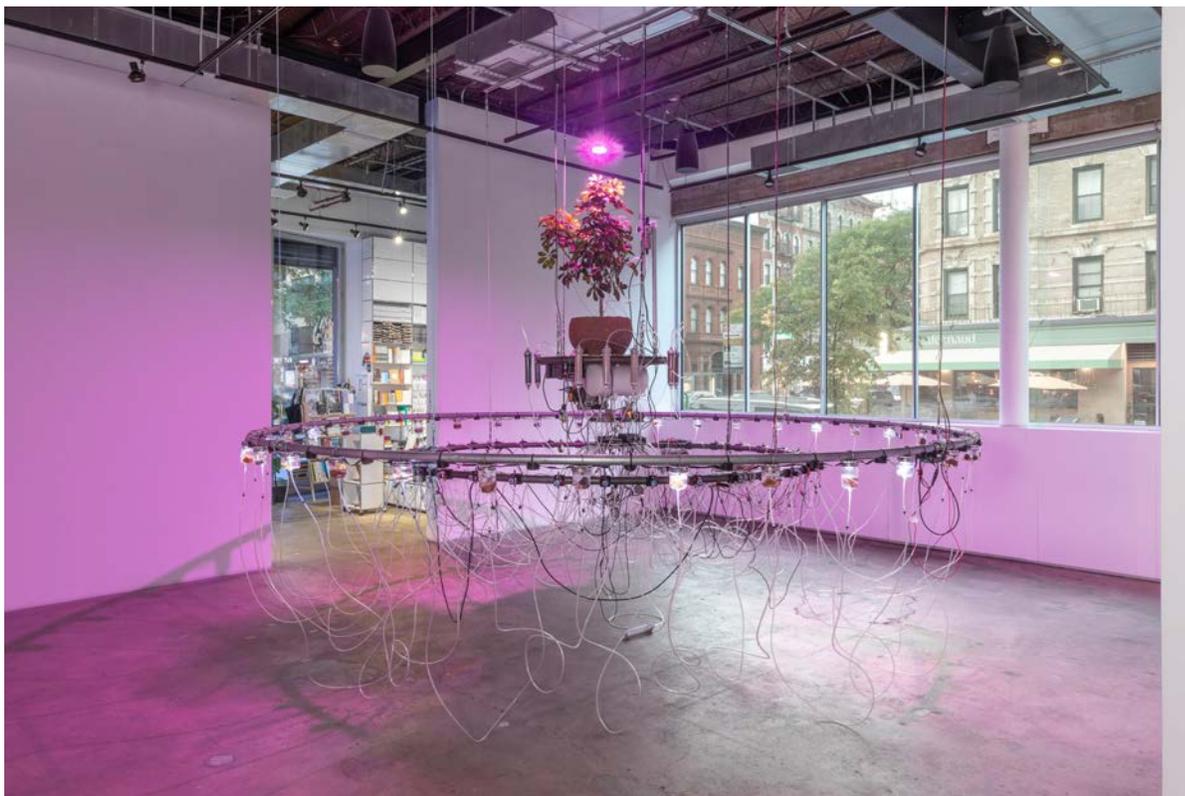




Bagus Pandega, *Hyperpnea Green* (2024) (detail). Exhibition view: *Daya Benda*, Swiss Institute, New York (30 September 2025–4 January 2026). Photo: Daniel Pérez.

The artwork is alive: an oxygen machine and monitoring system manage and respond to signals from both the metabolism of the plants and the humans who have come to view them. As the system runs, tinny pop music and clicking sounds emanate from a music box, as though one were at work in a laboratory or a hospital ward. Pandega has mimicked how the natural world works: humans exhale carbon dioxide and plants ingest it, helping them grow. However, in his hyperpnea (a medical term for the way the human body increases its rate of breathing when it requires more oxygen) Pandega demonstrates how technology can be a principal strategy in saving rather than destroying our planet. In a video chat with me from his home in Bandung, Pandega reflects on the relationship between the two: ‘Can

technology and nature coexist without the heavy-handedness of humans?’



Bagus Pandega, *Hyperpnea Green* (2024) (detail). Exhibition view: *Daya Benda*, Swiss Institute, New York (30 September 2025–4 January 2026). Photo: Daniel Pérez.



Bagus Pandega, *Putar Petir Racing Team* (2025) (detail). Exhibition view: *Daya Benda*, Swiss Institute, New York (30 September 2025–4 January 2026). Photo: Daniel Pérez.

On the second floor of the exhibition is *Putar Petir Racing Team* (2025), an installation featuring a custom-built electric motorbike, made by the artist. With this bike, Pandega draws from the aesthetics of *jamet*, a word formed from ‘jawa’ and ‘metal’ that refers to Javanese fans of metalhead music. All the elements in *Putar Petir* embody the bright colours of *jamet*, mainly shiny reds, purples, greens, and gold. Although the word *jamet* has evolved to become sometimes derogatory, Pandega sets out to reclaim the aesthetics of this tradition in the same way he is reclaiming technology as a possible ally.

While *jamet* refers to a distinctly local subculture, the indiscriminate extraction of mineral resources required to build technology is a huge global issue. Indonesia is the world’s largest producer of nickel (often used in batteries), and is now a hotbed for electric vehicle companies extracting the mineral. ‘You can literally scrape nickel off the land,’ Pandega tells me.

Last year, in Raja Ampat—an archipelago known for its rich marine life off the north west of Indonesia—the government was forced, after protests against environmental damage, to revoke four out of five mining permits.



Bagus Pandega in his studio, 2025. Courtesy the artist and ROH, Jakarta. Photo: Maruto Ardi.



Courtesy Bagus Pandega.

With this work, Pandega's engagement with mineral extraction comes alive in a rather unexpected circle: although he has employed the same technology used by large companies in producing the battery that powers the bike, here he creates a work that explores how to use natural resources shrewdly, rather than exploitatively. Pandega's view of extraction is, then, not one of outright rejection. 'My father is a geologist and specialises in the study of stones and their compositions,' he says. 'Extraction for me is personal.'

In Pandega's world, progress does not have to come at an impossible cost—it is a world where mineral resources are not the exclusive preserve of elite companies; a world where integrating technology into cultural spaces becomes the norm. Rather than kill the earth, technology gives it life. —[O]

Bagus Pandega: Daya Benda is on view at the Swiss Institute in New York until 4 January 2026.

Main image: Bagus Pandega, *Anim Wraksa* (2025) (detail). Exhibition view: *Daya Benda*, Swiss Institute, New York (30 September 2025–4 January 2026). Photo: Daniel Pérez.