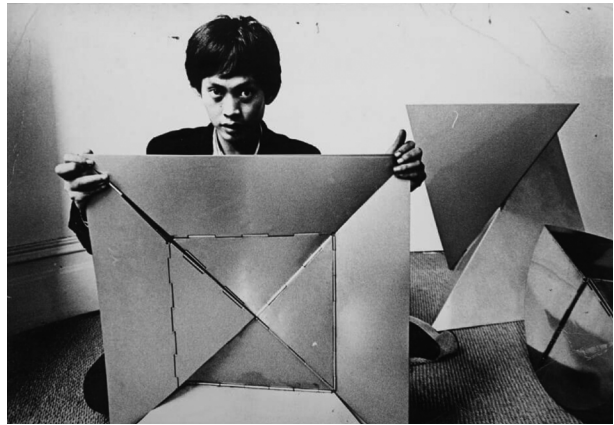


CORRESPONDING PROPOSITIONS: LYGIA CLARK AND DAVID MEDALLA

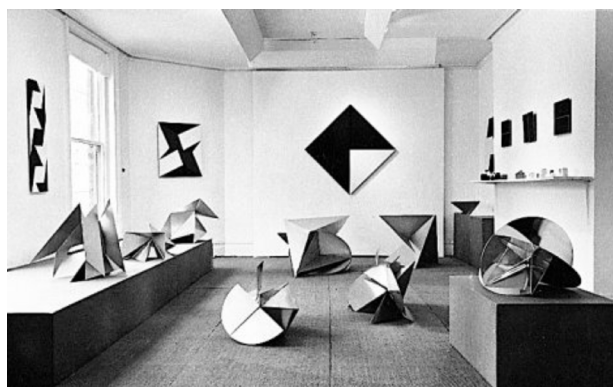
ABSTRACT — This essay explores a mid-1960s dialogue as it unfolded between two artists from opposite ends of the world: Lygia Clark from Brazil and David Medalla, originally from the Philippines. Through the London-based gallery Signals and its newsbulletin, they became catalysts for each other's work. Medalla, active not only as a kinetic artist but also as a writer, poet, and editor, played a key role in staging Lygia Clark's work in London and mediating it for an international audience. In turn, Clark offered direction to the younger artist by addressing a mode of art-making that challenges binary thinking and fosters audience participation. By closely examining both artist-writers' use of language—pragmatic, imaginative, and experimental—correspondences in their practices and thinking emerge, revealing how their early efforts to expand and complicate the notion of authorship were grounded in theory and supported by the possibilities of the artists' magazine.



// Figure 1

David Medalla with Lygia Clark's *Defoliated Animal* (*Bicho Desfolhado*), 1965. Photograph by Clay Perry

— Sometime in early summer of 1965, kinetic artist, sculptor, dancer, and writer David Medalla, originally from the Philippines, posed for a photograph not with one of his own works, but with an unusually flat sculpture by the Brazilian artist Lygia Clark [Fig. 1]. Made of hinged aluminum plates, the construction is held by Medalla, drawing attention to the moment just before it unfolds into different constellations, like the three-dimensional pieces standing next to him. The picture was taken on the occasion of Lygia Clark's first solo show in London, at a time when her work was gaining recognition in her home country yet remained largely unknown in Europe. In contrast to other photographs documenting the exhibition for later publication [Fig. 2], the one featuring Medalla with the planimetric square—part of a series titled *Bichos* in Portuguese and translated into English as *Animals*—served a different purpose. It was sent to Rio de Janeiro to initiate a dialogue with the Brazilian artist, whom Medalla had not yet met in person. On the back of the picture, he wrote:



// Figure 2

Installation view of the exhibition *Lygia Clark: First London Exhibition of Abstract Reliefs and Articulated Sculpture* at Signals London May–July 1965. Photograph by Clay Perry

Dear Lygia,
Here is a photo of myself
holding the sculpture which I want
to buy.
With best wishes,
David
Medalla

—Straightforward and pragmatic, the lines speak of the author's inclination towards the other artist's work. At the same time, both picture and writing build on an invisible, almost "magical" moment that occurred only a few months earlier, when Medalla helped prepare another show on *Modern Art from Latin America* in the same gallery space.¹⁾ Named Signals London, this space was established by a group of avant-garde artists, curators, and critics who aimed to make kinetic art from around the world better known [Fig. 3].²⁾ Medalla was one of the group's founding members and also served as editor of its bimonthly publication, *Signals Newsletter*.³⁾ In the spring 1965 issue, readers could learn about a discovery that he had made while handling an exhibit for the survey show:

When removing one of her [Clark's] sculptures from the Bedford van, one end, which I was holding accidentally slipped from my grasp. To my astonishment, the sculpture, instead of falling completely to the ground as I had expected, *began to unfold itself in the air*. The sculpture unfolded itself swiftly until, almost by magic, from a flat two-dimensional piece it transformed itself into a spatial construction shaped like an abstract bird.
(*Signals* 1, no. 6 [1965]: 11).

—Blending experience with imagination, the passage emphasizes that moment when the sculpture, while falling, seems to have a life of its own. With no accompanying reproduction, the text provokes curiosity and expectation, especially as Medalla, in the same article, announced Clark's forthcoming first solo show in London from May to July and concluded with the "hope that when you are in London then, you will come around and see it." Certainly not the only attempt to advance Clark's work abroad, Medalla's choice to "appreciate" her work in published form contributed to the show's international success. His analogies were taken up by other critics, for instance in a review for *The Times*, highlighting the "flowing

1)

The exhibition, titled *First Festival of Modern Art from Latin America*, ran through October 1964 and featured around 70 artists, amongst them Lygia Clark (1920–1988), Sergio de Camargo, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Alejandro Otero, and Jesús-Rafael Soto (see *Signals* 1, no. 2 [1964]: 12).

2)

International in scope, the group included artists such as the German Gustav Metzger, the Italian Marcelo Salvadori, the musician Christopher Walker, and the British critics and curators Guy Brett and Paul Keeler. Medalla (1942–2020) moved to Europe in 1960, alternating between Paris and London to maintain his visa status (Brett 1995: 43–47).

3)

The first issue, published in August 1964 with a print run of 3,000 copies, was titled *Signalz: Newsletter of the Centre for the Advanced Creative Study*. From the second issue (10,000 copies) until the final one in March 1966, the spelling changed to *Signals*, dropping the reference to the *Centre* as the gallery's predecessor. In 1995, all eleven issues were reprinted in a facsimile edition of 1,000 copies by the Institute of International Visual Arts, London (see Tyson 2017). For discussions of *Signals* as a community, exhibition space, and publishing project, see Lee 2004: 125–131. On Medalla's sculptural work in relation to *Signals*, see Praepitmongkol 2020: 339–359.



// Figure 3

Mailing *Signals Newsletter*, Cornwall Gardens, 1964. Clockwise from front: Guy Brett, Sergio de Camargo, Paul Keeler, Christopher Walker, David Medalla, Gustav Metzger. Photograph by Clay Perry

rhythm” that moves and surprises the viewer like an “unfolding musical line” (*The Times*, June 15, 1965: 15).⁴⁾

Throughout his life, Medalla often acted as a catalyst for other artists’ works. As critic and curator Guy Brett, another founding member of the group, noted, his support of artists from diverse backgrounds, at a time when much of the art world was focusing on Europe and North America, was a significant part of his own artistic practice (Brett 1995: 13–14).⁵⁾ Expanding on this observation, the following essay explores how Lygia Clark’s work was staged and mediated for an international audience in London and beyond. By closely reading key passages of Clark’s texts and focusing on David Medalla’s role as an artist, writer, poet, and editor of *Signals Newsbulletin* in introducing her artistic and theoretical approach, this essay reveals a dialogue: while engaging with Clark’s work, Medalla simultaneously found direction for his own. By examining both artist-writers’ use of language—in the sense of naming what is given and inventing what is or can be there—correspondences in their practices and thinking emerge, revolving around the question of audience participation. Although Clark and Medalla would later be recognized as “pioneers of participation art” (Cairns/Hellberg 2022: 119), it is no coincidence that their early efforts to expand and challenge the notion of *authorship* were grounded in theory and supported by the possibilities of the artists’ magazine.

Within the spectrum of 1960s artists’ magazines, *Signals Newsbulletin* presents a special case. As Gwen Allen notes, artists’ run periodicals, especially those focused on conceptual art, offered an “alternative space” for experimentation and exchange (Allen 2011: 7, 121–145). Sidestepping the constraints of galleries, museums, and profit-oriented art journals, they reached broader audiences through inexpensive printed matter. While *Signals Newsbulletin* shared this democratizing vision, it worked in tandem with Signals London: the newsbulletin and the gallery, run by the same group between 1964 and 1966, supported each other. The showroom fostered a local community, the newsbulletin reported on events for a global audience. Yet *Signals Newsbulletin* went beyond mere documentation. The group’s conviction that “everything was connected” (Whitelegg 2018: 21–38) shaped the magazine’s interdisciplinary approach. Reflecting wider 1960s trends such as systems theory, cybernetics, and the notion of an interconnected world, it proposed a holistic view, suggesting that all pursuits—whether in the arts, humanities, science, or technology—could benefit from one another.

Published in April 1965, the seventh issue of the newsbulletin, dedicated to the work of Lygia Clark, was remarkable in several

4)

The review was likely written by Guy Brett, then art critic for *The Times*.

5)

Medalla wrote appreciatively about other Latin American artists within *Signals Newsbulletin*, such as Mira Schendel and Jesús Rafael Soto. He likely invited Hélio Oiticica to present his projects in the magazine and dedicated another found-poem to Alejandro Otero.



// Figure 4

Cover of *Signals Newsbulletin* 1, no. 7 (April–May 1965)

ways [Fig. 4]. It was the first time a female artist was featured in a solo exhibition at Signals and, accordingly, was the subject of an entire special issue.⁶⁾ Moreover, unlike any other edition, it placed the artist's theoretical writings at its core, prominently featuring them on the first double-page spread (*Signals* 1, no. 7 [1965]: 2–3). Arranged chronologically from 1960 to 1964, the five reflections by Clark seek to bridge the gap between artist and “common man” and move from the examination of specific works to discussions on the relation between art and religion, time and space, for ultimately reaching metaphysical considerations. Medalla had arranged for this selection of texts to be translated into English, allowing Clark's words to reach a wider readership even before her collected writings appeared in Portuguese (Clark 1983).

Writing holds a central place in Clark's artistic practice, as is evident not only from its prominent placement on the first pages of the newsbulletin, but also from the signature that links the written words to their author and the artist's portrait above it [Fig. 5]. In this photograph, Clark looks directly into the camera, holding a cigarette: the relaxed posture of an intellectual, an artist who positions herself in front of her work and, while smoking, envisions a world in which not only she but also those who engage with her pieces become active participants in creation. The sentences and paragraphs, interspersed with reproductions of her works, convey the impression of encountering Clark in thought. Emphasizing her intellectual practice in this way anticipates a quote that appears just a few pages later, namely: “Lygia Clark is a thinker among artists” (*Signals* 1, no. 7: 6).⁷⁾

By the early 1960s, Clark had radicalized her understanding of art-making in terms of “relation,” “dialogue,” and “action,” as her first note on the series *Animals* shows. The title emphasizes the “organic aspect” of these works, made possible through incorporating hinges (*Signals* 1, no. 7: 2; all further quotes by Clark are from this source unless otherwise noted). Clark refers to this structure metaphorically, speaking of a “backbone” in order to transfer qualities inherent to living beings, such as movement, self-propulsion, and responsiveness, into the realm of objects. Accordingly, she also points out the “functional” interaction of the parts, heightening

6) Shortly before the gallery closed in October 1966, Mira Schendel was also featured in a solo show at Signals (Whitelegg 2018: 25). However, the planned newsbulletin issue was never published.

7) The quote is from Brazilian artist Sergio de Camargo, previously featured in the special issue of *Signals* 1, no. 5 (1964–1965).



// Figure 5
Signals 1, no. 7 (April–May 1965): 3

this idea through an as-if analogy with a “living organism.” The fictional approximation brings into focus the distinctive nature of experiencing Clark’s art—an experience grounded in reciprocity. Yet Clark does not anthropomorphize her works: “When asked what are these possibilities of movement, I usually answer: I don’t know, neither do you, but ‘he’ does.” By assigning a grammatical gender to the *Animal*, she introduces a distinction both from the neutral “it” and from her own gender. In doing so, she personalizes the relationship between *Animal* and viewer, yet without turning it into a substitute for the relationship between her and the viewer. For although, in this scene, only the “I” of the artist and the “you” of the viewer initially speak, the reference to “he” draws attention to the *Animal* as an equal third. Consequently, Clark refrains from self-reference in the further course of the text; her “I” disappears. Through writing, she opens a space for imagination and theoretical reflection, where she, as first-person narrator, can come and go freely. The detachment of the *Animals* from her own hands is thus grounded in writing, with the resulting texts and concepts still tied to Clark as their author. This seems to be the condition for focusing on what happens between the viewer and the *Animal*, a sequence of actions and reactions that Clark distinguishes from a “game,” instead presenting it as a “real relationship.”

— Medalla’s engagement with Clark’s *Animals* exemplifies not only the dialogue Clark envisioned but also its deeper implications. His narrative of encountering one of her *Animals* fictionally enhances its capacity to almost defy gravity, while his photographic portrait provides a moment of stillness to identify the work. Both Medalla’s narration and his annotated photograph reveal how physical interaction with the *Animal* can spark the desire to grasp this *other* and make it part of one’s own reality. It is likely that Clark was aware of this effect, as she had considered the edition of the *Animals* as multiples.⁸⁾ And yet, the text itself does not address this possibility. Rather, it introduces a second note on a piece that implicitly resolves the problem of accessibility by making use of the very material and medium on which Clark’s texts are printed: paper and the magazine.

— Dated 1964, Clark’s second note focuses on the work *Caminhando*, translated as *Going* in English. Its structure echoes her note on *Animals*, similarly commenting on the title with a phrase that leaves it open whether it originates from her: “My latest works have been called ‘going’ because of the absolute aspect of immediate action.” It remains unclear how closely the translation reflects the original, whether Clark indeed had “immediate action”

8)

In 1970, one of Clark’s *Animals* was presented in the exhibition *Multiples by Unlimited* at the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol. Around 2015, a plastic version of her *Bicho Caranguejo (Crab Critter)* was produced and is available for purchase online at <https://tienda.guggenheim-bilbao.eus/en/bicho-crab-critter> (accessed March 11, 2025).

in mind or, as later publications suggest, “immanent action” or “immanent act” (Clark in Borja-Villel/Enguita Mayo 1998: 151–152). What stands out, however, is the shift towards the performative. For Clark, this shift signifies nothing less than a step towards the “absolute,” which the text asserts as a fact. “It’s the absolute itself,” she claims, “that you hold in your hands.” Separated from the surrounding paragraphs by line breaks, this simple sentence contains dynamite for thought. Along with her later assertion that “the action is the only time there is,” it expresses Clark’s concern: to focus on that which cannot be arrested, caught, or captured—the present, the instant—but which, through bodily attention, becomes available for experience.

— Unlike later revisions, this version of the note is marked by a high level of abstraction. To characterize the action, Clark refers to the “substantial void,” “totality,” “metaphysical reality,” and an “a priori concept” from which she distances her work. The text reads as a preliminary sketch, where bold leaps yield theoretical fragments. These stand in stark contrast to the simplicity of the “action,” which involves handling paper and scissors by continuously cutting along the edges of a Möbius strip. Though Clark briefly mentions the strip’s subversion of conventional understandings of space and time, the text omits the work’s practical aspect, leaving readers in a state of wonder. Clark intensifies this effect of simultaneous obscurity and illumination by emphasizing unpredictability, as in the previous note: “When asked what will come out of this ‘going,’ my answer is: ‘I don’t know, neither do you.’ We will see how it reveals itself.”

— The similarity in syntax and phrasing to the note on *Animals* highlights the difference. The “I” and “you” merge into a collective “we,” while the work itself remains on the neutral level of “it.” Although “action” is the key term in this text, the use of the vague pronoun “it” raises the question of its reference: Does it pertain to a thing, an object, an event, or a process? While the theoretical pendulum swings towards the performative, Clark’s early verbalization, often overlooked in previous research, reveals that *Going* oscillates between different modes of being. This fluidity, itself an aesthetic effect, is evident in the fact that *Going*, Clark’s earliest “proposition,” is neither called a “proposition” nor is the “you” in the text addressed as a “participant.” Even at this point, however, *Going* challenges classical dichotomies: “You and the object—unique, total, existential reality. There is no separateness between subject and object.”

— What Clark seeks to initiate with *Going* is grounded in this fusion of subject and object, where the body becomes both medium and agent of experience.⁹⁾ While metaphorically “walking” and lit-

9)

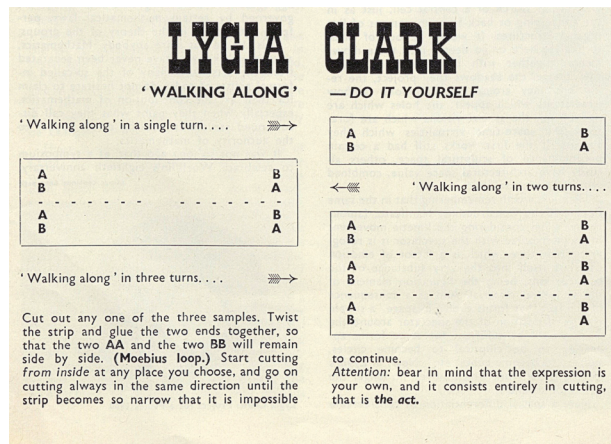
Though Clark did not explicitly draw on phenomenology in this context, her work resonates with Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s conception of the body as a nexus between self and world. Notably, art critic and poet Ferreira Gullar cited Merleau-Ponty in the 1959 *Neo-Concrete Manifesto*, which Clark co-signed (see especially Brito 2017: 89–142).

erally “cutting,” it always encounters a fork in the road, choosing one path over another. Consequently, Clark writes, “[. . .] it [*Going*] only exists in the dialogue that you will establish between yourself and the moment of action.” This condition raises the question of how such a work can be received in practice, and to what extent its *outcome*—be it a remnant or a trace—inevitably becomes an object that endows the action with an afterlife.

— If reading Clark’s writings remains as challenging as it is fascinating for readers past and present, what follows a few pages later seems all the more accessible. On page seven, at the bottom, a schematic diagram is printed, which consists of three rectangular cutting patterns for producing Möbius strips, labeled with the artist’s name, the title ‘*Walking along*’—*Do it yourself*, and explanatory instructions [Fig. 6]. The deviation of the title from the earlier *Going* is striking, suggesting that the theoretical concept has shifted into an instructional form:

Cut out any one of the three samples. Twist the strip and glue the two ends together, so that the two **AA** and the two **BB** remain side by side. (**Moebius loop.**) Start cutting *from inside* at any place you choose, and go on cutting always in the same direction until the strip becomes so narrow that it is impossible to continue.
(*Signals* 1, no. 7: 7).

Using the anonymous language of an operation manual, the writing is clear, precise, and unambiguous. In this sense, it recalls the word pieces that Liz Kotz, in her study of New York-based avant-garde artists, traces back to John Cage’s 1950s compositions. However, while those pieces, especially Georges Brecht’s event scores, tend to “focus attention on existing things” (Kotz 2007: 91), Clark’s approach differs in that her instructions, rather than highlighting what is given, lead participants to recognize their own action as “expression.” Accordingly, the last sentence deviates from the pattern of shortened imperatives: “Attention: bear in mind that the expression is your own, and it consists entirely in cutting, that is **the act**” (*Signals* 1, no. 7: 7). How can cutting be experienced as expressive? Unlike drawing a line on paper, cutting creates edges that can be razor-sharp. Each cut, violent or cautious, produces a separation, dividing one surface into two or more. Yet when cutting



// Figure 6

Lygia Clark, ‘*Walking along*’—*Do it yourself* (detail) in *Signals* 1, no. 7 (April–May 1965): 7

along a Möbius strip, this separation never fully takes place. Instead, it preserves material continuity, as loops of paper unfurl that remain interconnected. While increasing in structural intricacy, these loops decrease in recognizable shape. Drawing attention to this double movement, Esther Gabara writes: “*Caminhando* reimagines the shape, substance, and temporality of the work of art as an act of unmaking that is its making” (Gabara 2022: 86). Just as unmaking and making coincide, each becoming the condition and consequence of the other, Clark’s use of the Möbius strip reflects her interest in the paradoxical structures explored in topology.

— As Anna Dezeuze has pointed out, in parallel to Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory, both Clark and Lacan seem to have “used the Möbius strip [. . .] to challenge their [viewers’] usual binary thinking by questioning the simple opposition between inside and outside [. . .]” (Dezeuze 2013: 234). Moreover, if, for Lacan, the Möbius strip holds “the position of the unrepresentable” (ibid.), in Clark’s world, *Going* is tied “to the whole problem of the substantial void” (*Signals* 1, no. 7: 2). As this “emptiness full of potentialities” (Dezeuze 2013: 234) cannot be represented either, *Going* creates problems, or at least tensions, as soon as it is made accessible to an audience across space and time. For even if, as happened later, the act of cutting is photographed, the work’s temporality, the transformative experience that differs from person to person, evades representation.¹⁰⁾

— The challenges in grappling with such a work can be observed in the newsbulletin’s special issue as well. Unconsidered in the extant literature, the schematic diagram of ‘*Walking along*’—*Do it yourself* shows a curious discrepancy in scale. As soon as one imagines taking scissors to follow the instructions, it becomes clear that the printed samples are small, almost too small to glue the ends together, and certainly too small to cut along by hand. Although printed on the very material meant for use, Clark’s samples for the do-it-yourself work undermine their function. By scaling them down, the work seemingly leaps into the virtual and verges on self-contradiction, yet in doing so, it evades objectification. It requires readers to translate a model into a material action and to begin this process by first choosing a piece of paper that fits.

— At the same time, the schematic diagram of ‘*Walking along*’—*Do it yourself* was designed for publication in a magazine. In keeping with the newsbulletin’s emphasis on interconnectedness—not as the erasure of difference, but as the creation of meaning between cultural, aesthetic, socio-political, and scientific concerns—the diagram both contributes to and benefits from the adja-

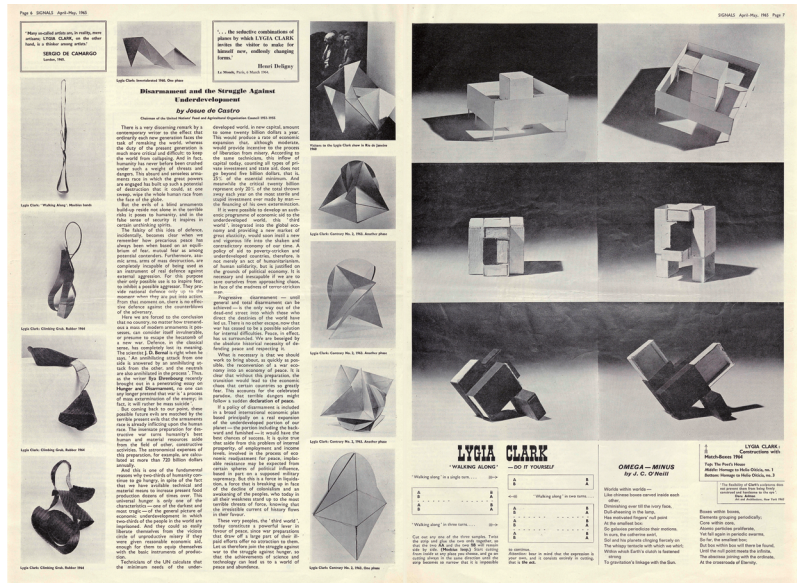
10)

Taken for a monograph on Clark in 1980, the photos show a woman cutting a Möbius strip with her head out of frame (Dezeuze 2013: 228; Gogan 2023).

cent pieces. This is immediately evident in Clark's *Constructions with Match-Boxes* (1964), presented as small-scale monuments occupying most of the page (right side of Fig. 7). These works not only allude to architectural models; they also blur the boundary between modernist building design and the imaginative reinvention of space. By interlocking matchboxes in open and closed forms, Clark explores their material and spatial possibilities, conjuring experiences in which interior and exterior merge. The resulting perceptual and epistemic uncertainty aligns with *'Walking along'—Do it yourself*, as both works generate complexity by interweaving seemingly simple things.

Medalla as the editor and producer of the newsbulletin was in charge of graphic design, layout, acquisition, and the selection of presented materials. By combining these tasks, he not only foregrounded the union of different arts into a more powerful collective, capable of becoming an active part of the world through their shared use of imagination, but also created what can be called a “constellation.” Coined by Walter Benjamin to refer to a “thought-image” in which past and present meet, the term disrupts linear modes of thinking and, on a general level, describes his “method of reading, writing, and philosophizing” (Sahraoui/Sauter 2018: xi). As grasping such a “constellation” gives rise to critical insight that affects “our perception of time” (ibid.), it may provide a useful lens for registering what happens on the pages of issue seven.

Consider the arrangement of pages five and six [Fig. 7] as a double-page spread: opposite the reproduction of *'Walking along'—Do it yourself*, an article by Josué de Castro takes centre stage. In this text, the former medical doctor and Chair of the Food and Agricultural Organization Council critiques the logic of militarization, arguing that it heightens the risk of global war and perpetuates poverty, hunger, and economic underdevelopment in the Third World. Advocating for an “economy of peace,” de Castro calls for political action, particularly from developing nations, to pursue “progressive disarmament” as a precondition for a sustainable future (*Signals* 1, no. 7: 6). As if to suggest that art, too, can be a space of



// Figure 7
Double-page spread of *Signals* 1, no. 7
(April–May 1965): 6–7

resistance and a viable path to transformation, de Castro's vision of a non-hegemonic world is framed by several reproductions of Clark's works. Amongst them is a seemingly inconspicuous photograph depicting three fragile, interconnected paper loops hanging on a wall. It is annotated: *Lygia Clark: 'Walking along': Moebius bands* [Fig. 8]. On its own, the photo could have passed as part of the *Climbing Grubs* series, which is presented underneath and indeed shows a formal affinity. With the caption, however, *'Walking along': Moebius bands* becomes legible as an afterimage that relates to the do-it-yourself work but raises doubts about whether it is part of it.

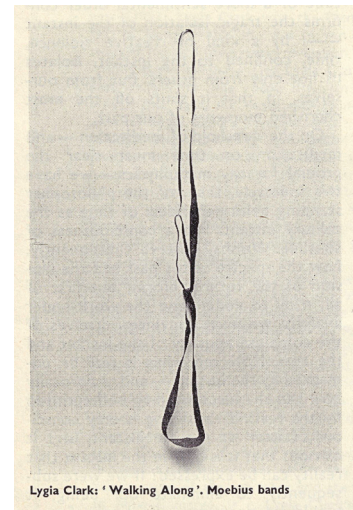
— The first published photographs—in the Brazilian newspaper *Tribuna da Imprensa* in 1964 and in *Signals Newsbulletin* in 1965—document *Going* precisely in this past state (Dezeuze 2013: 228, 230).¹¹⁾ In this context, Anna Dezeuze situates Clark's "most precarious work" at "the cross-roads of sculpture, instruction, performance, and participation" (Dezeuze 2013: 227, 230). Yet, as in other literature, the ambiguous role of these photographs and their impact on the work's reception remain unexplored, as does their relationship to the medium of the magazine, which allows the work's different manifestations to coexist in the same space.

— Given that a photo of an action's leftover at least partly takes away the surprise of future realizations, it reminds us that neither is the action meant to become a spectacle, nor is the leftover documented to make it last. Taken because the leftover will be thrown away, the photo acts as a witness; it presents a material trace that is neither simply a substitute nor a mere addition, but a "supplement," to use the notion introduced by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida to problematize how secondary structures lying at the edges sustain what is assumed to be primary (Derrida [1967] 1997: 157–164, 215ff.). Jumping in to fill what is missing in the "actual body," the supplement provides an opening towards the outside (Kofman 1984: 17). As both the photo and the diagram reach backwards and stretch forwards, they too seem to embrace that which evades representation—the present—which, for Derrida, always already constitutes an originary lack and defers meaning (see Spivak's "Translator's Preface," in Derrida [1967] 1997: ix–lxxxvii, esp. xvii, xxxii). And yet, the photo and diagram also function as visual and verbal bridges, prompting readers to explore new realizations and enact the proposed action.

— Introducing *Going* through these means, in combination with a theoretical text that reflects on the action as a singular event, transforms the work into something that needs to be searched for.

11)

Based in Rio de Janeiro, *Tribuna da Imprensa* was an influential daily that initially supported the 1964 civil-military coup. Despite its right-wing stance, it published cultural voices such as poet and art critic Waldir Ayala, who wrote a short article on Clark's latest invention. Describing her art practice as a "laboratory" and linking it to her upcoming trip to Europe, he suggestively titled the piece "Vamos fazer um 'Caminhando'?" ("Let's make a 'Going'?"), offering instructions but no diagram (Ayala 1964: 5; see also Gabara 2022: 86 on Ayala's phrasing and interpretation).



// Figure 8

Detail: Lygia Clark, *'Walking along': Moebius bands* (detail) in *Signals* 1, no. 7 (April–May 1965): 6

In contrast to the *Animals*, which were exhibited in the gallery and could be manipulated there, *Going* was absent from Clark's first London show. In 1965, it seems that either the setup for presenting such a work was not considered, or it was thought more appropriate not to include it in the physical exhibition. This second option is substantiated when considering that *Going* initially appeared in print on the pages of a newspaper and a magazine. These periodicals not only offered an alternative space but also gave 'unlimited' time for keeping *Going* precarious. It was here that the work could be encountered one-on-one; it was a genuine reading experience onto which a work that encouraged individual action could be grafted.¹²⁾

— If using the magazine as a medium for dissemination meant liberating the work from physical constraints, it simultaneously implied a loss of knowledge about how readers responded. Apparently, there is no extant documentation on whether and how *Going* was realized at that time. Facing this lack, Medalla's contributions in issue seven become even more revealing. Although he had frequently used the newsbulletin to present his own artistic work, the inclusion of two of his pieces in the issue dedicated to Clark can be read as an implicit response to her work, since no other contemporary artist's visual work was reproduced in that issue.

— Medalla chose the back side of issue seven for his contributions [Fig. 9]. The upper half of the page features a photographic detail of sinuous foam, produced by one of his bubble machines. Since 1964, these machines had made him known as a kinetic sculptor, although Medalla was also active as a writer, poet, mime, and dancer.¹³⁾ His textual piece in the lower half of the page is evidence of this boundary-crossing practice. The handwritten title reads *found-poem for TAKIS by David Cortez de Medalla*. Even though the piece is dedicated to the Greek kinetic sculptor Takis,¹⁴⁾ from whose tensile objects the Signals group took its name, its appearance in this issue gains significance through its proximity to Clark.

— Printed in a small typeface in a shimmering copper hue, it consists of ten columns of alphabetically ordered nouns, participles, verbs, and prepositions, for instance, "blast effect," "enemy," and "passed through" (*Signals* 1, no. 7: 12). Allowing multiple modes of reading and seeing, this found-poem is visibly a collage in print, displaying, on top of the listed words, a diagram of "THE NIGHT SKY IN MAY" and a vertical box with information for readers: "See page 11 [. . .] for instructions

12)

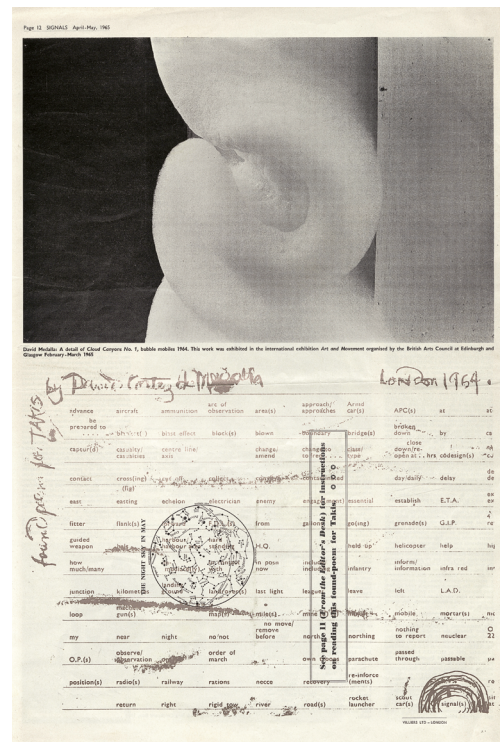
The *Times* review mentioned earlier confirms that, from the outset, *Going* was disseminated through print, where it could be closely linked to Clark's theoretical writings: "One of her 'works,' in fact, is no more than a set of simple cutting instructions, published along with some very intelligent writings, in the gallery newspaper" (*The Times*, June 15, 1965: 15).

13)

For Medalla's boundary-crossing practice, see Arriola 2024: 19–25; and Yve-Alain Bois, "Virtual," in Brett 1995: 212–214.

14)

Moving between Athens, Paris, and London, Takis was a seminal figure in the postwar European avant-garde and supported the activities of Signals from the start. In his autodidactic practice, he explored electro-magnetism, energy, and motion, producing a synthesis that resonated with the group's vision. In November 1964, Signals inaugurated its Wigmore Street space with a solo exhibition of his work, accompanied by a double issue of its newsbulletin (no. 3/4) dedicated to him.



// Figure 9

David Medalla, *found-poem for TAKIS by David Cortez de Medalla* in *Signals* 1, no. 7 (April–May 1965): 12

030

on reading this found-poem for Takis.” Within the poem, the reading instructions are referenced as structuring it, literally supporting it from the other side. Any expectation that the work could stand on its own is thus suspended and further questioned by Medalla’s account of how the found-poem came into being, namely, that it was found “in a printer’s storeroom in windsor” and may have belonged to an “army manual of the signals (?) corps.” (*Signals* 1, no. 7: 11). Medalla marks these details and the instructions on page eleven as coming “from the editor’s desk,” thereby changing roles and substituting authorship for the mediation of pre-existing material **[Fig. 10]**. “Go To Work On A Poem,” reads the headline of the instructions, asking readers to manipulate what is now generically called a poem. Medalla’s imperative corresponds with Clark’s do-it-yourself approach, opening up a field in which words turn into actions and poetry becomes an elastic and uncertain thing.

— Playful and witty, the procedures described in the instructions completely reverse the military connotations of the found-poem's possible source. Some of them leap into the imaginative, others turn to the pragmatic, and still others verge on the absurd, including baking or boiling it in the kitchen. While the list continues, accumulating more and more procedures through which the poem expands, almost all the instructions lead to a common task: that of reading.

Poem-sheet may be constructed into any origami shape; exposed words to be read as poem, hidden words to be read as counter-poem.
(*Signals* 1, no. 7: 11).

Reading in Medalla's world becomes a mysterious process that requires imagination. By adding the preposition "as," he encourages readers to jump to the level of hypothesis. Only through the readers' performances, be it silently in their heads or aloud with their voices, is the "poem-sheet" transformed into a "poem" and a "counter-poem," producing an aesthetic effect that emerges as instantly as it disappears. If Clark makes palpable the continuity between inside and outside, rendering the two interchangeable, Medalla expands



// Figure 10
David Medalla, “from the editor’s desk:
reading instructions (an extract)” in
Signals 1, no. 7 (April–May 1965): 11

on this fluid mode of thinking by creating an intertextual dialogue and placing several reproductions of Clark's work alongside his column. In particular, her coiled and twisted metal piece *inside is outside* (upper left of **Fig. 10**) erases the coordinates for spatial orientation and materializes the paradox referred to in the title. While it makes a topological idea available to sensuous experience, it also affects the reading of Medalla's work.

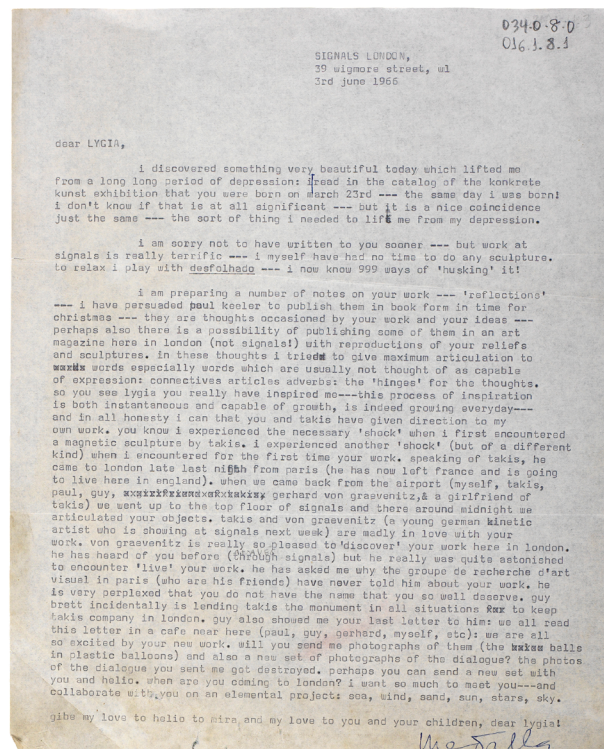
— Note that the arrow next to the reproduction's upper right directs the reader to Medalla's column, as if to suggest that *inside is outside* points to the operations at play in the found-poem's instructions. Placing Clark's paradoxical structure next to his "Go To Work On A Poem," Medalla not only recodes the poet's "work" as that of the reader but also renders the poem's location unstable. It literally slips away as soon as one starts working on it. The *found-poem for TAKIS by David Cortez de Medalla*, an appropriation from the beginning, branches out into another text, into specific procedures and material traces, and into the performances and events of others. What is at stake, then, is not only the transformation of a poem into something else, but also the process through which it is shared with, and adapted by, the reader. Medalla makes this clear at the end of his instructions, announcing a forthcoming publication: [. . .]

999 instructions on reading david medalla's found-poem for takis. Although this publication remained a fiction, its attempt to let no potential go uncounted opens a space for experimentation that no longer depends on Medalla as its (sole) author. In this way, he kept the readers' curiosity alive, suggesting a multitude of events to come.

— It was a similar sense of direction that he found through his encounters with Lygia Clark. A year after co-organizing her London exhibition and writing and editing a special issue on her work, he wrote her a letter—this time, more than a few words, using the full repertoire of language to share his reflections and express his affection, excitement, gratitude, and love [**Fig. 11**]. Dated June 3, 1966, Medalla reached out to Clark when *Signals Newsbulletin* and the showroom lost financial support (Brett 1995: 67).¹⁵ Although he describes "work at Signals" as "really terrific," it leaves him with no time to pursue his own artistic projects, a dilemma, it may seem, in which he nevertheless plans to publish a book with "thoughts occasioned by your work and your ideas:"

15)

Signals 2, no. 2 (January–February–March 1966) was the last issue released. From June to August 1966, the gallery still hosted a group exhibition titled *Towards the Invisible*, featuring "abstract reliefs and articulated constructions by Lygia Clark." The exhibition leaflet is available online at <https://portal.lygiac Clark.org.br/en/archive/59423/towards-the-invisible-signals-londres> (accessed March 11, 2025).



// Figure 11

Letter from David Medalla to Lygia Clark, June 3, 1966

032

[. . .] so you see lygia you really have inspired me—this process of inspiration is both instantaneous and capable of growth, is indeed growing everyday—and in all honesty I can [say] that you and takis have given direction to my own work. (Medalla in his 1966 letter to Clark, see **Fig. 11**; all further quotes by Medalla are from this letter).

Describing what Clark's work means to him, Medalla includes Takis at this point, relating his own work to two artists who are both approximately a generation older. To convey the impact of Clark's work, he speaks of inspiration, a concept articulated by ancient poets and philosophers to acknowledge the divine as either conditioning or influencing the act of creation. Although Medalla does not elaborate on this, he distinguishes between the temporal modes—immediate and durational—through which this “process” unfolds. Clark's work consequently appears as a source that may occur suddenly but does not cease to flow.

— Evidently taking pleasure in writing about these matters, Medalla moreover tells Clark about other artists who are “madly in love with your work,” but also “perplexed” as to why “you do not have the name that you so well deserve.” Dropping this remark casually in indirect speech, Medalla offers no explanation for this fact. He leaves unnamed what, from today's perspective, can hardly be seen as anything other than signs of gender inequality and euro-centrism. Instead, he focuses on actions that might help change the situation. His entire letter reveals how a lack of recognition can be countered. His being a member of the Signals group and making use of its network undoubtedly played a major role, acting as a lever to make Clark known in London and, from there, around the world.

— At the same time, Medalla's engagement is inseparable from his being an artist who wants to know Clark better. Jumping directly to the question of timing and omitting any considerations of (im) possibility, he asks her, “When are you coming to London?” and adds, “I want so much to meet you—and collaborate with you on an elemental project: sea, wind, sand, sun, stars, sky.” Medalla the artist and Medalla the poet speak equally here, formulating the first idea for a proposition to Clark as his reader. A few words that amplify through alliteration and expand in meaning, reaching, perhaps even literally, for the stars, his note for a collaborative project lists the basic ingredients for building a world to share. While the project remained unrealized, Medalla's letter strongly resonated with Clark. She imagined walking with him through the streets of London and sensed a “recognition between us, even though we do not know each

other personally.”¹⁶) Even as a mere possibility, belonging to a future that is past, Medalla’s proposition carries weight and sharpens our perception of what made it into publication. With a multitude of poems in mind and a notion of an “inside” that is “outside,” his words, his longing to make present someone who is far away, form the undercurrent of the issue that was dedicated to Lygia Clark. On the pages of *Signals Newsbulletin*, a correspondence emerged between their propositions, with Clark and Medalla both turning to a third—a reader, a “you”—who becomes an “I” by taking up the thread they left behind.

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16)

Written in Portuguese and undated, it is unclear if the letter was translated into English and sent to Medalla. Its first page has been digitized and is available through Lygia Clark’s archive at <http://portal.lygiaclark.org.br/en/archive/10769/de-lygia-clark-para-david-medalla-incompleta-1882131-carta> (accessed March 11, 2025).

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<https://portal.lygiaclark.org.br/en/archive/4955/dossie-david-medalla-para-lygia-clark>

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