

TANIA  
CANDIANI

**SOUNDING  
LABOR,  
SILENT  
BODIES**

July 1, 2020—January 17, 2021

# Sounding Labor, Silent Bodies

Tania Candiani's artistic practice spans sculpture, sound, film and performance to examine innovations of the past and present. Often responding to specific sites and local histories, she reanimates forgotten narratives, protagonists and material traditions that poetically call for a more just and inclusive future. For the past two decades, she has studied the breakthroughs and failures of dominant economic, scientific and technological structures. Whether commenting on US-Mexico border law, gender inequality or workers' rights, she creates objects and actions that provoke critical reflection on the commodification of time, land and labor.

Produced over the course of nearly three years and several visits to Cincinnati, *Sounding Labor, Silent Bodies* features historical visual ephemera alongside a new suite of work that mines the contradictions present in the rhetoric of progress that accompanied America's industrial past. Often mediated through the body, Candiani's work recognizes the politics of voice and insists on the expressive potential of repetitive movement, forming what the artist calls "a choreography of labor." The centerpiece of the exhibition is a three-channel film, created here in Cincinnati, that presents a women's choir reciting the sounds of disappearing forms of manual work. The resulting *a cappella* music, which recalls pouring, squealing, cutting, and hammering, echos through the galleries as a requiem for four industries — metal casting, meatpacking, printing, and woodworking — that employed Cincinnati's workforce in the late 19th century. In another film, shot in Music Hall, Candiani references the Industrial Expositions that put Cincinnati on the map. *Sounding Labor, Silent Bodies* highlights women as a corrective to dominant historical narratives that excluded their role as factory workers, and suggests parallels with current struggles against gender inequality.

*Organized by guest curator Kate Bonansinga,  
Director, School of Art, University of Cincinnati,  
in collaboration with Amara Antilla, Senior Curator,  
Contemporary Arts Center.*

**Tania Candiani** was born in Mexico City in 1974. Her work has been featured in exhibitions at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (2004); Sala Alcalá 31, Madrid (2005); Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw (2007); Cairo Biennial (2008); University Museum of Contemporary Art MUAC, Mexico City (2010); Cuenca Biennial (2011); Prix Ars Electronica, Linz (2013); Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2014); Jewish Museum, New York (2015); Polytechnic Museum, Moscow (2016); National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan (2017); Kochi-Muziris Biennial (2018), Havana Biennial (2019); ASU Art Museum, Phoenix (2020). In 2015, she was one of two artists to represent Mexico at the Venice Biennale. Candiani has received awards from the National Fund for Culture and the Arts, Mexico City (1999; 2006–07; 2012–15; 2016–19); John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, New York (2011); and the Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship, Washington D. C. (2017–18). Candiani lives and works in Mexico City.

## Ask Yourself

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- 1 How do the sounds Candiani created to represent Cincinnati's 19th century industries resonate with you? How do they impact your understanding of these industries?
- 2 What role does the machine play in Candiani's work? What role does the machine play in your daily life? How do we currently depend upon technology for access to jobs and prosperity?
- 3 How does Candiani address the hidden histories of women in Cincinnati's industrial history? What other examples can you think of where women's work has gone unrecognized?
- 4 The symbolism found in the Industrial Exhibitions to which Candiani responds — eagles, fasces, female personifications — originates in Ancient Rome, and was used at the founding of America to create connections to the ideals of the Republic, such as personal and civic virtue. How could these ideals encourage progress? How could these symbols of, or aspirations for, progress distract us from addressing unjust realities?



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Factory Whistle

Rails, carts, chains

Group 1

Group 2

Group 3

Group 4

A

D freely

f

f

pp

ff

pp

mp

B

B

F

KOKOKO

KIKIKI

A

C

D freely

f

pp

ff

sffz

pp

F

F

FI

KAKAKA

A

C

pp

ff

sffz

sffz

sffz

F

FU

KI

KI

B

p

C

f

gliss.

sffz

sffz

PSH

KO

KO

11

D rhythmically

Gr 1

Gr 2

Gr 3

mf

TKTKTK

CH K CH K

tktktktk

mf

KEKEKE

KIKIKI

D freely

pp

pp

mf

KOKOKO

KIKIKI

chkektckchke /

rhythmically and others