A tall building in a city

Description automatically generated Contemporary Arts Center

*Tania Candiani: Sounding Labor, Silent Bodies*

Lesson Plan Ideas

1. Have students conduct research on a hidden history and present a short summary or narrative to describe that previously unknown aspect of history. To narrow down the prompt you could suggest or assign specific topics to have students research. For example: the origins of denim and its relationship to slavery or later the civil rights movement. Denim is known for its association with American industrial workers, but what are the parts history has left out when we discuss denim, a staple of American culture and identity?
   1. Variations can include writing a summary, poem, or monologue from the perspective of someone from this community or time period, creating a collage, or painting a portrait or scene.
   2. Supplemental example: compare and contrast these articles on the history of blue jeans. Who and what was lost to the original history?

<https://www.racked.com/2017/10/30/16496866/denim-civil-rights-movement-blue-jeans-history>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/the-origin-of-blue-jeans-89612175/>

1. Candiani’s work comments on the use of Roman symbolism in American art and architecture to connect ideals of the Republic such as personal and civic virtue (e.g. the eagle, liberty personified as a female figure). Her book, *Procession,* reminds us that American history encompasses many moments of oppression and violence, committed under and conflated with Roman and later American ideals of liberty, triumph, the republic, and justice. American identity can be expressed through these visual representations of moral and civic ideals. However, as demonstrated through Candiani’s work, American history can also be fraught with oppression and dark moments. For this lesson, have students identify their own ideal in a single word or phrase. Then prompt them to find or create a corresponding symbol. For example, how can truth be represented? Or equality? This lesson could incorporate many different types of mediums depending on student’s comfort level or your curriculum. Finally, have students discuss their ideal and the difficulty of expressing a big idea in just one representation. Does the symbol oversimplify the ideal? Does the symbol glorify the ideal? Why might that be an issue, or even become a good thing?
2. For music classes: Try sight-reading an excerpt from *Score of Four Industries*! Have students record themselves reading a four-bar excerpt from the *Woodworking Industry* movement. Students may think about unconventional music, how notations supplement the written notes with emotions and are expressive. Have students reflect on sounds of labor in their own life – perhaps the rhythm of repeated movements like chores or the sounds of modern machinery can become music. Students can be encouraged to listen for these sounds or even assigned to record some of them. For discussion, consider how these sounds of labor are often overlooked. Why might that be? Do we take for granted the labor occurring around us?