



Nalini Malani
You Don't Hear Me

19/06—29/11/2020

PRESS KIT

Fundació Joan Miró
* J... Barcelona

 **"la Caixa" Foundation**

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You Don't Hear Me. Nalini Malani. Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona
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Introduction

Nalini Malani

You Don't Hear Me

19 June - 29 November 2020

Curated by Martina Millà, Head of Exhibitions at the Fundació Joan Miró

Organized by the Fundació Joan Miró and "la Caixa" Foundation

The Fundació Joan Miró and "la Caixa" Foundation present *You Don't Hear Me*, Nalini Malani's first museum exhibition in Spain

As the winner of the seventh edition of the Joan Miró prize in 2019, the Indian artist has been fully committed to developing a project worthy of such a distinction.

The exhibition, conceived and curated by Nalini Malani and Martina Millà, invites visitors to explore some of the main topics at the core of Malani's practice over the decades. Specifically, the show focuses on her untiring defence of the silenced and the dispossessed all over the world, particularly women.

The selected works highlight the rich complexity of Malani's output, based on immersive installations and a multilayered imagery which comes from a profound knowledge of ancient mythologies and an acute awareness and condemnation of contemporary injustice.

***You Don't Hear Me* brings together some of the most important works from the past five decades of the artist's career and offers a unique dialogue between Malani's early films from the late 1960s, paintings series and installations from the past fifteen years, and her most recent digital animations.**

For the occasion, the artist has made site-specific wall drawings in the exhibition galleries, ephemeral works that will be disappeared on the last day of the exhibition during an erasure performance.

Press Release

Nalini Malani

You Don't Hear Me

19 June - 27 November 2020

Curated by Martina Millà, Head of Exhibitions at the Fundació Joan Miró

Organized by the Fundació Joan Miró and "la Caixa" Foundation

Barcelona, 18 June 2020. Nalini Malani (Karachi, now Pakistan, 1946) has devoted her artistic career to the defence of social, feminist and environmental justice. Malani's work is built as a narrative that intertwines literary and mythological references with Asian and Western aesthetic forms to create a distinct multilayer language. Her bold output, based on a prodigious intellectual curiosity and committed to the values of radical imagination and socio-political awareness, earned the artist the 2019 Joan Miró Prize, one of the most prestigious and best-endowed contemporary art awards in the world, granted jointly by the Fundació Joan Miró and the "la Caixa" Foundation.

The artist Nalini Malani –participating by videoconference–; Ignasi Miró, Director of the Culture and Scientific Divulcation Department, of the "la Caixa" Foundation, Marko Daniel, Director of the Fundació Joan Miró and Martina Millà, Head of Exhibitions at the Fundació Joan Miró, held a press conference to present *You Don't Hear Me*, the solo exhibition that is organised one year after the prize winner is announced.

The exhibition –Nalini Malani's first solo museum show in Spain– is curated by Martina Millà, Head of Exhibitions at the Fundació Joan Miró, in close collaboration with the artist. It features fifty years of Malani's career with works that illustrate prevailing concerns in her work, such as utopia and dystopia, recent and ancient history of abuse, as well as marginalized narratives, which result in a condemnation of inequality and structural violence that women and underprivileged groups suffer around the world.

You Don't Hear Me offers visitors the opportunity to see Nalini Malani's first films from the late 1960s, several painting series and immersive installations from the past fifteen years, as well as her most recent animations and wall drawings created specifically for this project. At the artist's request, the show only includes works from museums and private collections in Western Europe, to honour her commitment starting in the 1990s to follow sustainable exhibition practices. Accordingly, this project has received generous support from the Burger Collection, Castello di Rivoli and Galerie Lelong.

Two types of work that are characteristic of Nalini Malani's practice welcome visitors in the first room. The first is a shadow play titled *The Tables Have Turned* (2008), an installation with 32 reverse-painted cylinders standing on long-playing turntables that make the projected images rotate. The point of departure for this work is the myth of Cassandra and her gift of prophecy, which for Malani symbolizes the deep, intuitive

knowledge that lurks within us, as well as the way that women feel and think, which is often silenced or ignored. The second piece is a mural drawing from the *Can You Hear Me?* (2020) series, made specifically for the Fundació Joan Miró. This ephemeral piece will be erased right before the show is taken down, in the course of a performance conceived by Malani whose content will not be revealed to the museum organizers nor to the public until a few moments before it begins.

The fateful story of Cassandra and its contemporary relevance are also the inspiration for *Listening to the Shades* (2007), a painting installation shown in the following gallery. Almost thirty metres in length, the series spans the entire perimeter of the room with forty-two reverse paintings on acrylic sheet which offer a non-sequential narrative.

In the late 1960s, Nalini Malani emerged as a pioneering figure in experimental film in India. Her works denounced the discrimination women suffered in her country, a topic the artist has continued to explore throughout her work since. The next space in the show features her films produced from 1969 to 1976: *Still Life*, *Onanism*, *Taboo* and the two-screen installation *Utopia*.

Next, the exhibition moves on to a room showing painted works based on ancient poems of India, followed by the panoramic installation *All We Imagine as Light*, from the early 2000s. This painting series is also made with a technique that involves reverse painting on acrylic sheet panels. In both rooms, Malani creates a ripple in time, leading archetypal, mythological images from the past to coexist with passages from India's recent history in a dialogue between different temporalities that is very much the artist's own.

The last room in the exhibition features a recent, large video installation titled *Can You Hear Me?*, which includes seven simultaneous projections of fifty-six digital animation shorts. In her constant search for new media, Malani has never ceased to experiment with new technologies. Since 2017 she has been creating animation pieces on her tablet and sharing them regularly on social media. This room offers a selection of this work, which recaptures literary references from her previous work to react to questions that concern and challenge her in real time.

To accompany the exhibition, a publication will be launched focusing on the important role literature has played as a source of inspiration for Malani. The project's curator Martina Millà signs an essay on this aspect of Malani's practice and presents the exhibition through the readings and literary references that have informed its creative process.

In conclusion, the pieces on display in *You Don't Hear Me* are the result of an interdisciplinary exploration of female subjectivity and convey a firm condemnation of violence as a reminder of the vulnerability of human existence and of life in general. Malani's interest in certain female characters from ancient mythology –both Greek and Indian– and in the symbols of the modern world have enabled her to develop a universalist iconographic mix with no qualms about condemning contemporary forms of abuse. The past, the present and the future; memory, myth and resistance are the elements of an extraordinary language of the imagination and form, of sensory phenomena and complex meanings that turn Nalini Malani's exhibitions into transformative experiences for their visitors.



The Tables Have Turned (2008) i *You Don't Hear Me* (2020). Nalini Malani
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The Joan Miró Prize

With the prestige of the promoting institution, the Fundació Joan Miró, and the financial support of the "la Caixa" Foundation – which is responsible for the 70,000 euro cash award and for producing the exhibition – the Joan Miró Prize has reached its seventh edition and consolidated its position as one of the most outstanding artistic awards in the sphere of contemporary art. In previous editions, the prize was granted to the artists Olafur Eliasson, Pipilotti Rist, Mona Hatoum, Roni Horn, Ignasi Aballí and Kader Attia. In addition to receiving the cash award, the winning artist is featured in a large-scale solo exhibition at the Fundació Joan Miró.

The jury panel for the 2019 Joan Miró Prize included Iwona Blazwick, Director of the Whitechapel Gallery (London); Magnus af Petersens, Director of the Bonniers Konsthall (Stockholm); Alfred Pacquement, former Director of the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris); João Ribas, Curator of the Portuguese pavilion at the 58th Venice Art Biennale 2019; Nimfa Bisbe, Head of the "la Caixa" Foundation contemporary art collection, and Marko Daniel, Director of the Fundació Joan Miró (Barcelona). The jury members, all renowned professionals in the field of contemporary art, selected the winner, Nalini Malani, for her prodigious intellectual curiosity, her radical imagination and her socio-political awareness, values that also characterized the work of Joan Miró.

Jury Statement for the 2019 Joan Miró Prize

The jury considers the Indian artist worthy of the prize for her longstanding commitment to the values of radical imagination and socio-political awareness, also dear to Joan Miró. Over an extended career, Malani has been an unremitting voice for the silenced and the dispossessed, most particularly women globally.

By alluding to a myriad of cultural references from both East and West, she has built an impressive body of work that engages viewers through complex, immersive installations that present her vision of the battered world we live in. Her interest in ancient mythology, both Greek and Indian, as well as in modern symbols and image-making, has allowed her to develop a very personal, cosmopolitan iconographic mingling that boldly denounces contemporary violence and injustice, and their effects on planetary life.

In addition, just like Joan Miró, Malani has explored and mixed different disciplines and media, most notably theatre, installations, drawing, film and video, going back to the 1960s. Her prodigious intellectual curiosity and continued dialogue with some of the most outstanding luminaries of our times has also inflected her output, just as Miró's friendships with Artaud, Leiris, Bataille and Kandinsky profoundly impacted him and enriched his oeuvre. For all these reasons, the jury is enthusiastic in acknowledging the extraordinary stature of Nalini Malani's artistic contribution and unanimously grants her the 2019 Joan Miró Prize.

Barcelona, 23 May 2019

The Artist



Nalini Malani, drawing at the walls of the Fundació Joan Miró. © Fundació Joan Miró. Photo: Tanit Plana

*Art has to go under
the thick skin we have developed*
Nalini Malani

Nalini Malani is one of the most influential contemporary artists in India, with a solid trajectory that has received broad international acclaim. She was born in Karachi in 1946, one year before the separation of India and Pakistan following independence from the British Empire. Her family sought refuge in Kolkata in 1947 and then moved to Mumbai in 1954, where Malani continues to live today. The personal and collective trauma of the Partition of India, her early experience of displacement and her refugee status marked her biography and her artistic output, which developed, in her own words, as an attempt to “make sense of the feelings of loss, exile and nostalgia” that had such an impact on her childhood.

Malani’s work addresses the recent history of the Indian subcontinent and delves boldly into pressing, universal themes such as violence, war, fundamentalism, the oppression of women, the effects of globalisation and the destruction of the environment. Her work is built as a narrative that intertwines the mythologies and aesthetic forms of East and West, reassessing their legacy. A pioneer in introducing the feminist dimension of art into her home country in the 1970s, Malani places particular emphasis on female archetypes in an attempt to recover and amplify the voice of women of all times. Significantly, in her role as a curator, Malani organized the first group show of Indian woman artists in Delhi in 1985. For her, “*understanding the world from a feminist*

perspective is an essential device for a more hopeful future, if we want to achieve something like human progress.”

With the practice of painting as its point of departure, Nalini Malani’s output has gradually shifted towards space and time to the extent of being expressed in immersive installations that integrate painting, audio-visual elements, traditional arts, and performance. In the early 1990s, Malani was one of the first artists in India to break away from classical painting – and from cultural and economic elites – to explore new media that would allow her to reach a broader public, thus bridging the gap between modern and contemporary art in her country. Since then, ephemeral mural drawings, video and other traditional forms of moving image, such as kaleidoscopic lanterns and shadow plays, have become vehicles of memory and emotion for the artist. “The form that I use in my video and shadow plays,” Malani explains, “are rotations or revolutions [...] that don’t repeat the superimpositions. [...] The artwork forms before one’s eyes. It gets completed in your presence and immediately changes. [...] It is like life, in that one unique moment will never come back again. It grows and dies in front of you while you are part of the artwork itself.” Through the ephemeral character of the images, Malani emphatically states: “Another aspect that I want to negate is ‘market value’ and bring back memory value.”

Accordingly, her charcoal drawings made directly on walls are erased in public, so that viewers can feel the fragility of all the images, of life itself, and, eventually, their loss. In her own words, “The artwork is like a gossamer thread of fleeting experience.”

Malani studied fine arts at the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art in Mumbai. During that time, she set up her studio at the Bhulabhai Memorial Institute in Mumbai, where artists, musicians, dancers and actors gathered. Soon after graduating, Malani worked in film and photography. From 1970 to 1972, she received a scholarship from the French government to study art in Paris, where she encountered the theories of Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes and Noam Chomsky, among others. In 1973 Malani moved back to India, determined to contribute to her country’s modernization and intellectual emancipation through art.

In 2010, the San Francisco Art Institute granted Malani an honorary doctorate and in 2013 she became the first Asian woman to receive the Arts & Culture Fukuoka Prize. She has received other salient distinctions as well, such as the St. Moritz Art Masters Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014 and the Asian Art Game Changers Award in 2016.

Malani’s broad range of interests has often driven her to work alongside artists and thinkers from various fields, such as anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, actress Alaknanda Samarth, Butoh dancer Harada Nobuo and theatre director Anuradha Kapur. These collaborations attest to her ongoing exploration of interdisciplinary forms to inquire into and communicate the personal and political questions that shape her art.

Over the course of five decades and with more than three hundred exhibitions to her name – two hundred of which were international – her output has been shown at the leading contemporary art venues in the world, with solo exhibitions at the ICA (Boston), the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), the Irish Museum of Modern Art (Dublin) and the New Museum of Contemporary Art (New York); and retrospectives at the Castello di Rivoli – Contemporary Art Museum (Rivoli) in 2018, the Centre Pompidou (Paris) in 2017, the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (New Delhi) in 2014, the Musée des Beaux Arts (Lausanne) in 2010 and the Peabody Essex Museum (Salem) in 2005. Her work has been featured in twenty biennials, such as the 12th Shanghai Biennale in 2018; dOCUMENTA 13 in 2012 in Kassel; the 2008 Biennale of Sydney; the 52rd and 51st Venice Biennale exhibitions in 2007 and 2005, and the third Seoul Biennale in 2004. Nalini Malani's works are included in thirty museum collections throughout the world.

For more information about Nalini Malani and her trajectory, visit www.nalinimalani.com

Chronology

1946

Born in Karachi (Sindh), the only child of Satni Advani (Sindhi Sikh) and Jairam Malani (Theosophist).

1947

During the Partition of British India, the family is displaced from Karachi and has to leave behind all their belongings. Nearly 12.5 million people on both sides were forced to flee their homes and the estimated loss of life was over several hundred thousand.

1948

Nalini Malani's father obtains a job at Tata Airlines (later Air India) in Calcutta.

1954

Moves to Bombay due to her father's job transfer, where the family begins to live in an apartment block in one of the colonies built for displaced Sindhis.

1958

Makes a series of international journeys to Tokyo, Paris and other parts of the world thanks to her father's airline job. Japanese culture and the Egyptian section at the Louvre make a lasting impression.

1960

Inspired to become an artist while still at high school through biology lessons in anatomy and nature.

1964-69

Diploma in Fine Arts, Sir JJ School of Art, Bombay. This was one of the first art schools established in India by the British where students were trained in the European oil painting tradition.

1964-67

Acquires first studio space at Bhulabhai Desai Memorial Institute, Bombay, where artists, musicians, dancers and theatre artists worked individually and as a community.

Gets the opportunity to interact with artists such as Tyeb Mehta, Nasreen Mohamedi, V.S. Gaitonde, and M.F. Husain.

1966

First solo exhibition of oil on canvas paintings while still at art school. The works explore different aspects of the most basic but complex human emotions. Literature becomes an important basis for this exhibition and future works.

1969

First overseas exhibition, the *5th International Young Artists Exhibition*, takes place in Tokyo.

Participates in the legendary Vision Exchange Workshop (VIEW) in Bombay. It was here that Nalini Malani, as the youngest contributor, made a series of camera-less photographs, 8mm and 16mm films.

1970-72

Awarded the French Government Scholarship for Fine Arts to study in Paris.

Attends lectures at the Sorbonne by Noam Chomsky and Claude Lévi-Strauss, and gets involved in Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir's public initiatives.

Meets Joan Miró at his solo exhibition at Galerie Maeght, whose art inspires and has an enduring influence.

1973

Decides to return to India motivated to contribute to the making of the young Indian nation. Moves into studio at Lohar Chawl located in the heart of a bustling wholesale market in Bombay.

Continues to work on film and makes the short production *Taboo*.

1976

Disappointed with the direction in which India is developing, makes a double film installation *Utopia*, in which the early work *Dream Houses*, is juxtaposed with a new black and white film.

1976, 80, 83, 88

Participates in workshops and collective projects involving national and international artists at the Kasauli Art Centre in Himachal Pradesh.

1978

Starts *His Life* series of oil paintings that continues till 1984, reflecting on the hierarchies within middle-class Indian families through the format of the Greek tragedy.

1979

Meets Nancy Spero and May Stevens at the A.I.R. Gallery in New York, the first artist-run non-profit space for women artists in the United States. Invited by the collective to exhibit her work there.

1979

Invited for a solo exhibition at the Lalit Kala Akademi in Bhopal, Nalini Malani invites Vivan Sundaram and Sudhir Patwardhan to join. During this project, the idea of the exhibition *Place for People* is born.

1981

Initiates and organises, along with Vivan Sundaram, the landmark exhibition *Place for People*. The project involved a collective of artists who wished to focus on the ideas of the local and the indigenous in their work as distinctive from the then dominant abstractionist Bombay Progressive Artists' Group.

1984-89

Awarded the Art Research Fellowship from the Government of India. Studies different types of drawing techniques from Ajanta murals, Nathdwara and Kalighat paintings.

1986

Plans to organise an exhibition with 20 female artists in an attempt to give them a voice in a male-dominated milieu. However, there are no sponsors for an exhibition such as this. Eventually a small group is formed with Nalini Malani, Madhavi Parekh, Nilima Sheikh and Arpita Singh. They travel across India over three years with a show titled *Through the Looking Glass*.

Participates in the international biennial in Havana, Cuba.

1987

Curates *The Sculpted Image*, an exhibition with seventeen sculptors, during the Bombay Arts Festival at the Nehru Centre as a tribute to the female sculptor Pilloo Pochkhanawala.

1988/89

Vivan Sundaram, Nalini Malani and Bhupen Khakhar create a glass panel mural at the Shah house in Bombay. From then on she begins using the reverse glass painting technique and extends its use to Mylar, acrylic and Lexan in paintings, shadow plays as well as in theatre.

1989

Travels extensively in the USA on a USIA Grant and receives a fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown, Cape Cod. Meets Nancy Spero, Leon Golub and Thomas McEvilley in New York, and Eric Orr in Venice, CA.

Participates in *Artists Alert* organised by SAHMAT. This initiative was set up in response to the fatal attack on the theatre artist Safdar Hashmi on 1 January 1989. This would become a continued engagement with Malani participating in subsequent SAHMAT programs to promote democracy and pluralism in India through cultural interactions.

Begins work on a series of limited-edition artist's books titled *Degas Suite* and *Hieroglyphs, Lohar Chawl*. Besides the hardcover bindings, she makes accordion books titled *Dreamings and Defilings, Caste Off* and *Musings*.

1991

Creates her first shadow-play installation *Alleyway, Lohar Chawl* that allows the public to walk through and participate.

1992

Makes her first ephemeral wall drawing installation *City of Desires*, at Gallery Chemould in Bombay. This as a tribute to the damage on the traditional wall-paintings in the temples of western India, and a protest against the commercialisation of art. At the end of the exhibition, the work was obliterated with white wash, becoming her first *Erasure Performance*. Makes her first video artwork based on *City of Desires*.

1993

Collaborates with actor Alaknanda Samarth on the play *Medeamaterial* by Heiner Müller as a project for the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Bombay. The production was deferred for a year due to the attacks on the Babri mosque at Ayodhya and the riots that followed in 1992.

1994

Begins *Mutant* painting series about the de-gendered female on milk-carton paper.

1996

Makes her first video erasure animation *Memory: Record/Erase* for the theatre production *The Job*.

Meets the scientists Winin Pereira and Jeremy Seabrook. Besides designing the cover of their new book Malani comes up with the title *Global Parasites*. This leads to a series of art works concerning ecology and globalisation.

1997

Collaborates with theatre director Anuradha Kapur on the play *The Job or By the Sweat of Thy Brow Shalt Thou Fail to Earn Thy Bread* based on a story by Bertolt Brecht. A project with the Max Mueller Bhavan presented at the Experimental Theatre of the NCPA in Bombay.

Collaborates with Pakistani artist and art historian Iftikhar Dadi on the occasion of 50 years of Indian and Pakistani independence to create the installation *Bloodlines* using sequins.

Max Mueller Bhavan Bombay publishes her first monograph titled *Nalini Malani: Medeaprojekt*.

1998

Participates with Australian artist Judith Wright and Japanese artist Kaoru Hirabayashi in the travelling exhibition *Another Landscape: History/Life/Language*.

Makes her first multi-channel videoplay *Remembering Toba Tek Singh* in protest against the Indian government's nuclear tests on the birthday of the Buddha.

1999

First Indian solo museum exhibition, *Remembering Toba Tek Singh*, at the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, takes place and attracts more than 25,000 visitors in a period of ten days.

1999/2000

Six months residency at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum. Produces the videoplay *Hamletmachine*, in collaboration with the Butoh dancer Harada Nobuo, in protest against sectarian elements that were eroding the idea of a secular India.

2001

Shows her first video/shadow play *Transgressions* at the exhibition *Unpacking Europe* curated by Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi at the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam. The work is acquired by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

Starts the ongoing series *Stories Retold*, reverse painting on acrylic and Mylar, bringing tales from *Bhagwad Purana* and *Alice in Wonderland* into a contemporary context.

2002

First international solo museum exhibition called *Hamletmachine* at New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York curated by Dan Cameron.

Solo video exhibition inaugurates the Apeejay Media Gallery in New Delhi.

2003

Creates the videoplay *Unity in Diversity* as reaction to the massacre of two thousand Muslims in Gujarat.

2005

Presents the five-channel videoplay *Mother India: Transactions in the Construction of Pain* at the 51st Venice Biennale.

First retrospective called *Exposing the Source* curated by Susan Bean at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem.

2007

Moves to new studio close to the Gateway of India in Bombay.

Creates the 14-panel painting installation *Splitting the Other* for the Italian pavilion of the 52nd Venice Biennale curated by Robert Storr.

First European museum solo exhibition at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin curated by Enrique Juncosa.

2008

The Museum of Modern Art in New York acquires the video/shadow play *Gamepieces*.

Makes with Robert Storr the artist's book *Listening to the Shades* based on a series of 42 paintings inspired by the mythic figure of Cassandra.

2009

Shows with Wang Jianwei in Beijing in the two-person exhibition *Himalaya project: Studies in the Visualisation of Cultural History*.

2010

First European museum retrospective exhibition called *Splitting the Other* curated by Bernard Fibicher at Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne.

Conferred an Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts from the San Francisco Art Institute.

2012

The Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney acquires the videoplay *Mother India: Transactions in the Construction of Pain*, around which Jackie Menzies curates a solo museum exhibition.

2012

Participates in dOCUMENTA (13) curated by Carolyn Christov Bakargiev with a new site-specific six-channel video/shadow play *In Search of Vanished Blood* that becomes one of the key works of the exhibition. Makes with Arjun Appadurai the artist book *The Morality of Refusal* for dOCUMENTA(13).

2013

The comparative study *William Kentridge, Nalini Malani: The Shadow Play as Medium of Memory* by Andreas Huyssen is published.

Wins the Fukuoka Award in the category of Arts and Culture that started in 1990. Earlier winners are Nam June Paik, Xu Bing and Cai Guo-Qiang.

2014

Retrospective at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in New Delhi called *You Can't Keep Acid in a Paper Bag* curated by Roobina Karode.

Wins the St. Moritz Art Masters Lifetime Achievement Award. Earlier winners are Ilya & Emilia Kabakov, Ai Wei Wei and Robert Indiana.

2015

The MoMa in New York presents the video shadow/play *Gamepieces* in its year-long exhibition *Scenes from a New Heritage*.

2016

Wins the Asia Arts Game Changer Award in Hong Kong for her transformative work in the field, together with the artists Cai Guo-Qiang and Yoshitomo Nara.

The MoMA in New York presents the premiere of her rediscovered 1969 film *Dream Houses* in the exhibition *From the Collection 1960-1969*.

The indepth study *In Medias Res: Inside Nalini Malani's Shadow Plays* by the cultural theorist/artist Mieke Bal is published in conjunction with Malani's solo exhibition at the ICA in Boston.

2017

The Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam presents a solo exhibition which includes the video/shadow play *Transgressions* acquired in 2001.

Centre Pompidou collaborates with the Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, on a pan-European two-part retrospective called *The Rebellion of the Dead*. In Part I, in Paris, the selection is structured around the video/shadow play *Remembering Mad Meg* from the Pompidou collection.

2018

Castello Di Rivoli exhibits Part II of the retrospective *The Rebellion of the Dead* with a different selection of works and a second catalogue.

Exhibits *In Search of Vanished Blood* at the Power Station of Art as part of the 12th Shanghai Biennale, after it had been rejected several times by the Chinese censor board.

2019

Wins the seventh edition of the prestigious Joan Miró Prize, a bi-annual award given since 2007. Previous winners are Olafur Eliasson, Pipilotti Rist, Mona Hatoum, Roni Horn, Ignasi Aballí and Kader Attia.

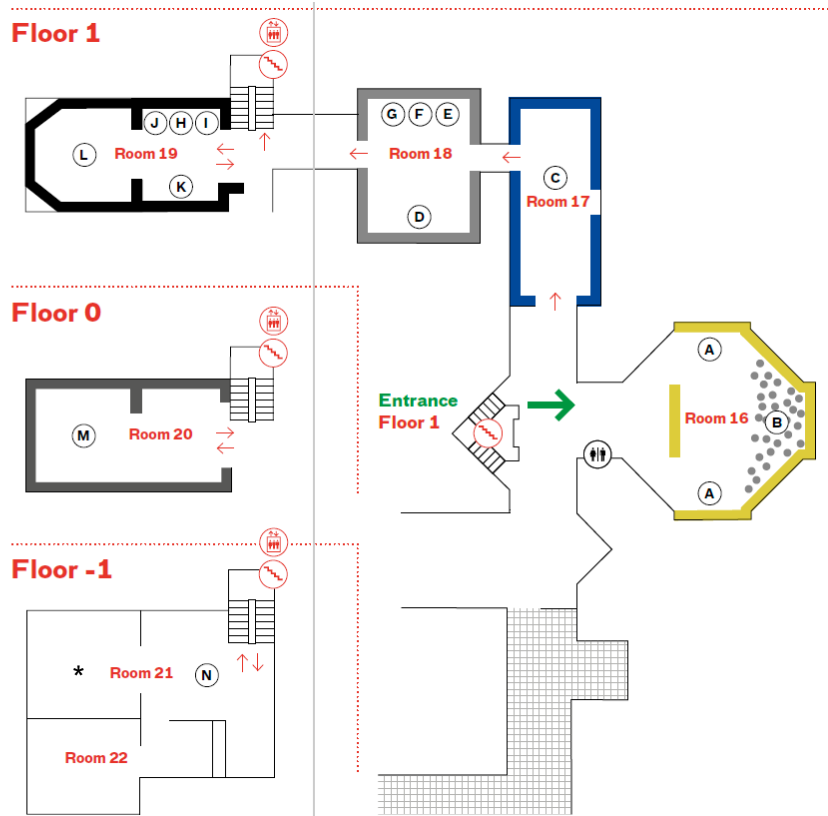


Podeu partir els núvols? (2020). Nalini Malani
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Exhibition Layout

Map

- A *You Don't Hear Me*, 2020
- B *The Tables Have Turned*, 2008
- C *Listening to the Shades*, 2007
- D *Utopia*, 1969–76
- E *Still Life*, 1969
- F *Onanism*, 1969
- G *Taboo*, 1973
- H *Sita II*, 2006
- I *Sita I*, 2006
- J *Radha*, 2006
- K *Part Object*, 2008
- L *All We Imagine as Light*, 2017
- M *Can You Hear Me?*, 2019
- * N Participatory space



*Due to Covid-19, this room will be temporarily closed.

Rooms and Selection of Works

Room 16

You Don't Hear Me starts with two of Nalini Malani's signature artworks: a wall drawing that concludes with an erasure performance and a shadow play.

You Don't Hear Me is a site-specific wall drawing series that spans most of the exhibition rooms and concludes with an erasure performance at the end of the exhibition in early September. Wall drawings that are later erased have been an essential part of Malani's practice. Each wall drawing/erasure performance remains only as a memory. This working method, where studio and exhibition walls collapse, began in 1992 with her exhibition *City of Desires* at Gallery Chemould, Bombay. That project was a protest against the growing influence of right-wing Hindu nationalists in the Indian context. It was also a tribute to the Jaipur mural artists from the Krishna temple in Nathdwara, whose works were being destroyed at the time due to grave negligence on the part of the authorities. Just as the subject matter of the wall drawings changes with the exhibition location, the corresponding erasure performance changes as well. The audience is not informed about its nature, and even the exhibition curator is only told at the very last moment, right before the performance is to take place.



Nalini Malani

You Don't Hear Me, 2020

Ephemeral wall drawing, charcoal, ink

Variable dimensions

Courtesy of the artist. With the collaboration of Vanesa Varela

© Fundació Joan Miró. Photo: Tanit Plana

The second work in the room is a shadow play installation titled ***The Tables Have Turned*** (2008). It consists of 32 reverse painted cylinders standing on simulated, long-playing turntables that rotate at 4 rpm. The images from the paintings revolve, repeat and mingle, in a shadow play that speaks of the dystopia of city life: a Byzantine angel, skulls, fleeing dogs in the style of Muybridge's photographic sequences, fratricidal violence between Cain and Abel as a quote from Dürer's woodcuts, all engage in a visual dance as the consorts of Indian gods painted in the Kalighat style look on helplessly. The title ***The Tables Have Turned*** is inspired by Christa Wolf's book *Cassandra: A Novel and Four Essays* (1983). For Nalini Malani, in our times the Trojan princess Cassandra represents the profound insights individuals have that are not paid heed to, as humanity continues its path in a direction further away from a non-violent, progressive society. The voice-over in this shadow play is an adaptation from Wolf's *Cassandra*, recited by actor Alaknanda Samarth.



Nalini Malani

The Tables Have Turned, 2008

Shadow play, 32 turntables, acrylic paint, ink, reverse painting on 32 Mylar cylinders, sound piece performed by Alaknanda Samarth

20 min; variable dimensions

Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino

© Fundació Joan Miró. Photo: Tanit Plana

Room 17

The second room of the exhibition, with walls painted in an intense blue colour, features ***Listening to the Shades***, an all-encompassing painting installation that spans the entire perimeter of the room. The 42 reverse paintings read as a non sequential narrative. Together they form an extensive, almost 30-metre-long storyboard for a film script. Like the shadow play in the opening room of the exhibition, this series delves into the contemporary relevance of Cassandra's ancient plight. It tells the story of Cassandra's prophecies, of the way her inner instinctive voice and her warnings were systematically ignored. In the key image or leitmotif of the storyboard, the lower part of a spinal column comes out of Cassandra's mouth, while war jets battle and explode in her head. Although apocalyptic in approach, in this sequence Malani ends the tragic story on a more hopeful note, as she finds a space for—in her words—gendered thought. For Malani, Cassandra symbolizes the unfinished business of the women's revolution: women's thoughts and premonitions are still not understood nor taken into consideration.



Nalini Malani
Listening to the Shades, 2007
 Acrylic, ink and enamel on acrylic sheet
 Polyptych, 42 panels, 45 x 66 cm each
 Burger Collection, Hong Kong
 © Fundació Joan Miró. Photo: Tanit Plana



Room 18

The sound of film projectors precedes your entry into the next room of the exhibition. As a female visual artist working with experimental film in the late 1960s, Malani was a true pioneer. To create her early films, she became a one-person film crew all unto herself. She did the script writing and took care of set design, lighting, camerawork, splicing as well as editing. Made at the legendary Vision Exchange Workshop (VIEW) in Bombay, her first film animation was ***Dream Houses*** (1969). It was made at the height of the modernization drive sparked under Nehru. It was a time of hope for a new India that was to give rights and dignity to the toiling masses and work towards abolishing the prevailing caste system. *Dream Houses* became a scintillating colour fantasy of a utopian urban landscape inspired by the colour theories of Bauhaus teacher Johannes Itten. It also reflected Malani's engagement and enthusiasm for building a new, modern India along with other artists of her generation.

In 1976 she made a second film, to function as a pair to *Dream Houses* in a diptych titled ***Utopia***. In the later film, one sees a young disillusioned woman looking down over Bombay. ***Utopia*** was Malani's first multiple-screen installation, meant to be exhibited with two film projectors. Here she juxtaposed two different moments: one full of the idealism and hope that modernism brought about for the Indian middle class, and also for the poor, in the Nehruvian period of the sixties, in contrast with the dystopian urbanism of the seventies. Malani's critical perception of those decades reached a new level when the disillusioned dreamer and her dream merged into a single experience.



Nalini Malani

Utopia, 1969-1976

Still

Black and white 16 mm film and 8 mm colour stop-motion animation film, transferred on digital medium,
2-channel projection

3:49 min

Courtesy of the artist

In that same period, Malani made three 16 mm black and white films. They are reflections on the exclusion and discrimination suffered by women in India, a concern that the artist would further explore in all her later work. Despite the apparent wave of sexual liberation that reached India in the sixties, female sexuality was still closeted and restricted by traditional mores. **Still Life** (1969) is a subjective camera stroll through an apartment interior. Emotions are created without actors, as everyday objects in their natural setting take on a sensuous character. The viewer's position is that of the camera, a voyeur to the intimacy between two characters. **Onanism** (1969), like *Still Life*, was Malani's open revolt against such orthodoxy. Beyond the intention to simply shock, Malani at this young age already deeply believed in an engaged artistic practice that could establish a more humane and liberal understanding of the position of women. Lastly, **Taboo** (1973) was shot in a community of weavers in Rajasthan. The low-end jobs, such as spinning, were done by the women, but under no circumstances were they allowed to touch the loom, which was the domain of male weavers. Thus women were excluded from the most important and creative part of the process, where male supremacy ruled.



Nalini Malani
Taboo, 1973
 Still
 Black and white 16mm film transferred on digital medium
 1:58 min
 Courtesy of the artist

Room 19

After the early films, **You Don't Hear Me** continues ahead with a large room whose walls have been painted black. It is divided in two sections, both filled with reverse paintings from the early 2000s. This room takes us back again to ancient times, to South Asian foundational narratives that, like the ancient Greek myths and legends Malani revisits at the beginning of the exhibition, are at the origin of pervasive female archetypes.

The first part of this section features three vertical paintings facing, across the room, a twelve-panel painting, all based on ancient Indian epics: the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhaagwat Puranas*, which are full of fantastical stories. While some Western ur-narratives present good and evil as a clear divide, in the Indian tales the gods can also engage in negative actions and the demons can achieve god-like powers through meditation and good deeds. With the rise of Hindu fundamentalism in India since the 1980s, the very quality of the imagery of the Hindu gods and goddesses in the visual arts and literature were mutated and transformed. Fundamentalists have wanted to sanitize Indian culture of all that is playful, sensuous and pluralistic. Conversely, in **Sita I** and **Sita II** (2006), Malani reworks the story of the Indian goddess Sita, an alchemist born from the earth, who bears similarities to Medea, the Greek priestess. Both of them were betrayed by their men; were de-gendered and deprived of their mothering status. The other female character Malani has reworked is seen in the painting **Radha**. An older, married woman who was in love with the divine lover Krishna, she had secret trysts with her lover in the forest thus defying the limitations of her social status.



Nalini Malani

Sita I, 2006

Acrylic, ink and enamel reverse painting
on Mylar sheet

191,5 x 79 cm

Burger Collection, Hong Kong

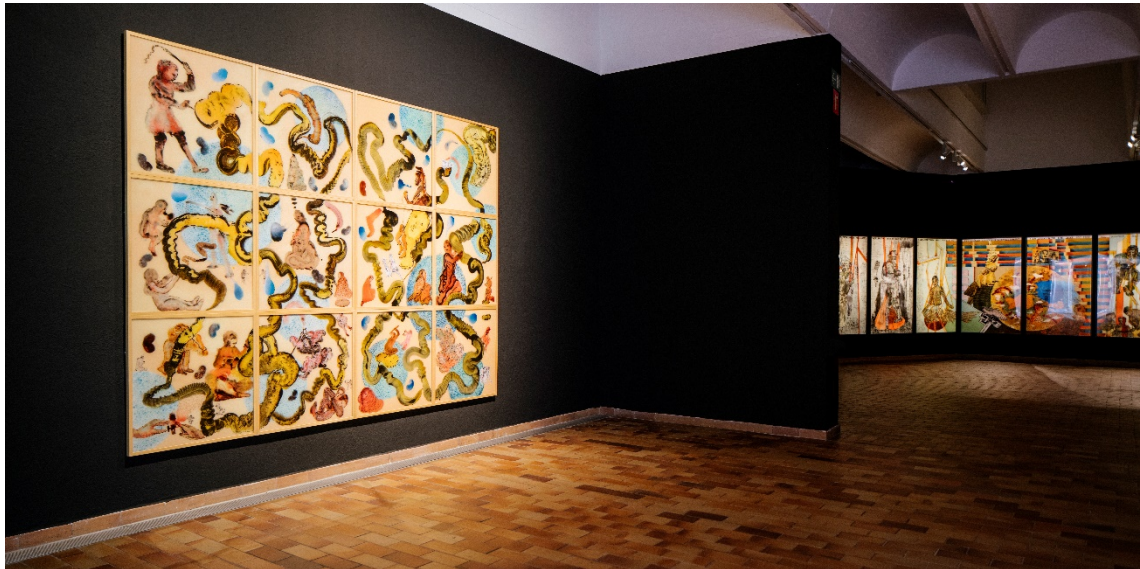
Sita II, 2006

Acrylic, ink and enamel reverse painting
on Mylar sheet

183 x 82 cm

Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co

Facing these paintings is **Part Object** (2008), a polyptych consisting of twelve paintings where the depicted human figures in each of the panels can only see part of the large figure that swirls over the whole. The title refers to a term from the Object Relations theory developed by child psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1882-1960). At this developmental stage, infants identify parts of a person and extrapolated them to represent the whole, while experience can only be perceived as all good or all bad.



Nalini Malani
Part Object, 2008
 Polyptych, 12 panels. Acrylic, ink and enamel paint on acrylic sheet
 236 x 315 cm
 Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co
 © Fundació Joan Miró.
 Photo: Tanit Plana

In the second section of the room, the painting installation **All We Imagine as Light** is presented as an enveloping panorama. This eleven-panel reverse painting captures the pain of parting, and the deep human feelings of affinity and affection which bind people together. The title references the Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali (1949-2001). In his poems, which combine his Hindu, Muslim, and Western heritage, his reflections about death and memory are profoundly conveyed in verse form. Malani's painting is based on a longing for those from whom one cannot bear to be parted. The narrative is built through a number of figures who connect to each other in an undefined space, floating as if in a dream-state galaxy. Off-centre three children bend over a sphere, which appears as a hole in the earth, showing them the damaged landscape of Kashmir, one of the regions that has suffered most from the traumatic partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. The children in the painting are surrounded by colour graphs, as if humankind could be reduced to mere numbers and statistics. On the right side of the sphere, a boy, who has suddenly grown old, stands holding a gigantic balloon in his hand, like a thought bubble that contains a fantasy of modernist promises.



Nalini Malani
All We Imagine as Light, 2017
 Reverse painting on acrylic
 183 x 100 cm
 Burger Collection, Hong Kong
 © Fundació Joan Miró.
 Photo: Tanit Plana

Room 20

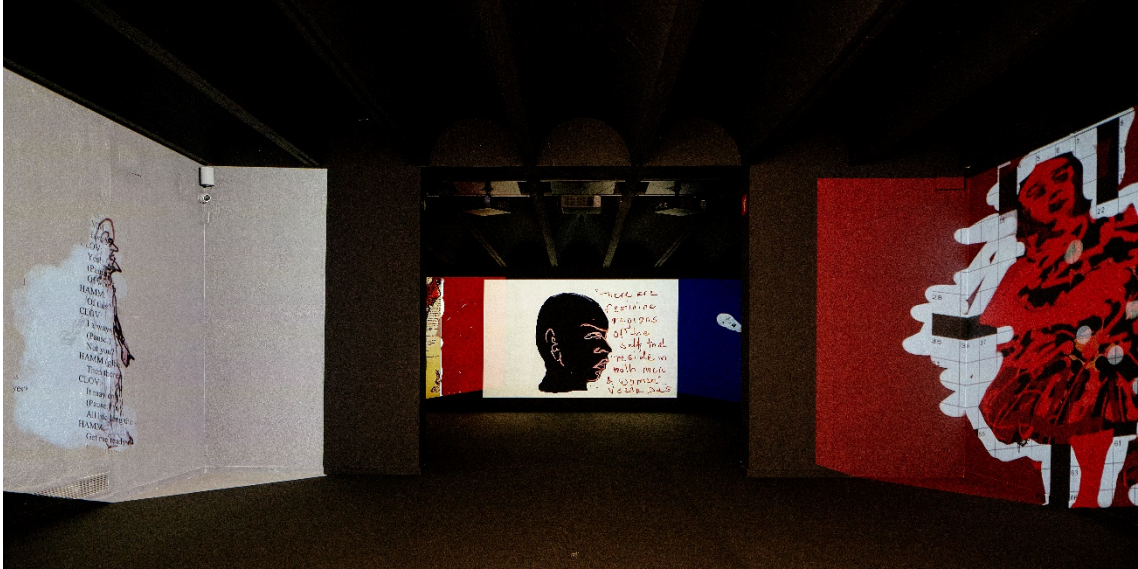
Downstairs, the last exhibition room is turned into what Malani calls an 'animation chamber'. This seven-channel video work titled ***Can You Hear Me?*** consists of a black box featuring a series of fifty-six short animations. As the pioneer of video art in India in the early nineties, Malani continues to experiment with technology to this day. In 2017 she taught herself to make animations on an iPad, to which she also added soundtracks of her own making. These are works that she regularly exhibits as 'free artworks' on her instagram account: @nalinimalani

Can You Hear Me? retakes the theme the exhibition started with through the myth of Cassandra: the fact that women's views, foresight, and opinions continue not being heard. In the list of titles of the recently made animations this work has two connotations. The titles may be similar but, in fact, they address two different types of concerns. *Can You Hear Me?* with a question mark, is the scream of a minor girl who is being violently raped but nobody hears her cry. *Can You Hear Me*, without the question mark, is a strident command, and has to do with exerting 'power,' with demanding that one be heard.

These animations are like 'Thought Bubbles' in their character and function. When Malani sees or reads something that captures her imagination, she has a need to react with a drawing, to respond and question, to show a different angle, to laugh or to protest. Not exactly in its own terms, but more as a 'Memory Emotion'. Each of these voices in her head come from different ideas and need therefore a different penmanship. For this she has developed a language that can be either comic, sad, modest, energetic, hysterical or piercing.

In her reaction to whatever has engaged or irritated her at any given moment, Malani often starts out with a quote from a wide range of writers, whose texts she has been reading for decades, such as Hannah Arendt, Veena Das, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Sa'adat Hasan Manto, Heiner Müller and Wislawa Szymborska. Similarly, in the spirit of a graffiti artist, she culls images from a number of different sources: from Goya or Grosz, Japanese prints of the floating world or Kalighat paintings, to her own early paintings.

The combination of these sources is quite automatic and the making of the animations flows as if by itself and can go in any direction, with different levels of transparency and opacity. In these phantasmagoric illusions, there is room for the satirical, the comic and the absurd, but the main trigger for Malani are the following questions: Where has the idea of Utopia left us? How did we start out and what are we heading towards now? With the death of Modernism and the progressive socialist state, what is our current excuse to maintain the present state of affairs and to not confront the future? Our avoidance to be made accountable for the current situation reminds her a verse from the poem *Nothing Twice* by Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska: *We come improvised. There is no time to rehearse life, and nothing can be redone.*



Nalini Malani

Can You Hear Me?, 2018-2020

7-channel, stop motion animation installation, sound

Variable dimensions

Courtesy of the artist

© Fundació Joan Miró.

Photo: Tanit Plana

List of Works

Sala 16

You Don't Hear Me

2020

Ephemeral wall drawing, charcoal, ink

Variable dimensions

Courtesy of the artist. With the collaboration of Vanesa Varela

The Tables Have Turned

2008

Shadow play, 32 turntables, acrylic paint, ink, reverse painting on 32 Mylar cylinders, sound piece performed by Alaknanda Samarth

20 min; variable dimensions

Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino

Sala 17

Listening to the Shades

2007

Acrylic, ink and enamel on acrylic sheet

Polyptych, 42 panels, 45 x 66 cm each

Burger Collection, Hong Kong

Sala 18

Utopia

1969-1976

Black and white 16 mm film and 8 mm colour stop-motion animation film, transferred on digital medium, 2-channel projection

3:49 min

Courtesy of the artist

Still Life

1969

Black and white 16mm film transferred on digital medium

4:07 min

Courtesy of the artist

Onanism

1969

Black and white 16 mm film transferred on digital medium

3:52 min

Courtesy of the artist

Taboo

1973

Black and white 16mm film transferred on digital medium

1:58 min

Courtesy of the artist

Sala 19**Sita II**

2006

Acrylic, ink and enamel reverse painting on Mylar sheet

183 x 82 cm

Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co

Sita I

2006

Acrylic, ink and enamel reverse painting on Mylar sheet

191,5 x 79 cm

Burger Collection, Hong Kong

Radha, 2006

Acrylic, ink and enamel reverse painting on Mylar sheet

190 x 79 cm

Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co

Part Object

2008

Polyptych, 12 panels. Acrylic, ink and enamel paint on acrylic sheet

236 x 315 cm

Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co

All We Imagine as Light

2017

Reverse painting on acrylic

183 x 100 cm

Burger Collection, Hong Kong

Sala 20

Can You Hear Me?

2018-2020

7-channel, stop motion animation installation, sound

Variable dimensions

Courtesy of the artist

Public Programming

A Morning with Nalini Malani

In this encounter with secondary students, Nalini Malani dialogues with Martina Millà, curator of the exhibition, on how art might contribute to the denouncement of contemporary injustices.

Malani's works evoke the vulnerability and precarious state of human existence, with a personal iconography referencing ancient and universal mythologies. Social, feminist and ecological justice is at the core of her artistic work. Malani has developed an interdisciplinary body of work where she combines drawing, painting, video, immersive installations and theatre, allowing her to research and communicate work that is deeply political, denouncing injustice and its societal effects.

Monday 9 March 2020, at 12 pm

Location: CCCB

Activity for secondary students

Activity organised in collaboration with the CCCB

Little Stories, Great Women. Museums from a Women's Perspective

Nine museums offer a dramatized storytelling activity about women related to the respective museum's history, collections or content. This group initiative is linked to International Women's Day and meant for a family audience.

Every day between 23 and 31 May, a new video story has been released on Youtube.

The nine videos will be permanently available on this new channel for children.

At the Fundació Joan Miró, the project has been led by Indian artist Nalini Malani, winner of the 2019 Joan Miró Prize. We can learn more about her life as we travel around the world with her from the perspective of her feminist thinking and her denouncement and condemnation of violence.

Activity co-organized by: Museu de Ciències Naturals de Barcelona; Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya; Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya; Museu Marítim de Barcelona; Museu Picasso; Museu del Disseny de Barcelona; Museus d'Esplugues de Llobregat; Fundació Joan Miró, and Museu d'Història de Catalunya.

Participative Space

Due to Covid-19, this room will be temporarily closed.

*If more attention were paid to the
female thought perhaps we might reach
something called progress*
Nalini Malani

A large blackboard featuring the epigraph “Women who, in a certain way, have been relevant in your life” becomes the expanding registry of women’s names, some known, others anonymous. This list is the affirmation of a plurality of female voices that have been significant in the evolution of knowledge and in the lives of individuals.

The second part of the space is comprised of five interactive projections, each associated with a woman or a women’s collective, which through their commitment or activism have contributed to raising the awareness of other people, other communities or society as a whole: Caddy Adzuba (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Aleta Baun (Indonesia), Berta Cáceres (Honduras), Las Patronas (Mexico) and Malala Yousafzai (Pakistan).

The projections are accompanied by the inspiring biographies of each of these women, written by Francisco Llorca.
Suitable for all audiences

General Information

Due to Covid-19, the Fundació will open on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 11 am to 7 pm until further notice. Check the updated schedules on our [website](#).

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, except public holidays

From November to March

10 am – 6 pm

April to October

10 am - 8 pm

Sunday

From November to March

10 am - 3 pm

April to October

10 am - 6 pm

Monday, except public holidays

Closed

Special reopening price during the month of June: € 7

General Admission

Permanent collection + temporary exhibition: €13 Concessions*: €7

Temporary exhibition: €7 Concessions*: €5

Espai 13: €3 Concessions*: €2

*Students aged 15 to 30 and seniors over 65

Children under 15 and the unemployed (proof required): Free admission

Annual pass: €14

Multimedia guide €5

Accessibility



Images and a digitized **press kit** are available at our virtual press room at www.fmirobcn.org/press and at <https://bit.ly/You-Dont-Hear-Me>

Follow the exhibition *You Don't Hear Me* on social media with the hashtag [#NaliniMalaniFJM](https://twitter.com/NaliniMalaniFJM) and online at www.fmirobcn.org

Fundació Joan Miró
 Barcelona

 **"la Caixa" Foundation**

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