

# ANA MARIA ASAN

The last years of the Romanian Communist regime are dreadful when it comes to austerity and individual's control. Everything is censored, nothing escapes ideological indoctrination. Yet, some people hope that the alienation can't last forever: better days will come and the fool will be defeated.

My Bucharest family felt a big hope when I was born. Edmond-Bazil is more than mature, but he will be the best father of the world, at the same time jolly and guardian of the solid education he received before the War, in a beautiful and prosperous Romania. My mother, Cornelia, is young and brave. She will face continuously the aberration and absurdity of the system to protect me. It's her who will instil the love of nature, along with the strength of character.

My childhood and adolescence are placed under the sign of great music (studying piano at the George Enescu school, singing at the Romanian Radio Choir). A very old upright piano, manufactured in Leipzig and heavy as a dead whale, with ebony keys and an outdated sound print, comes home. It's my first companion. Numerous rehearsals and recordings with the choir immerse me in the specific atmosphere of the recording studios. The butterflies in the stomach on stage, the blinding lights, the emotion and the joy exploding when one becomes a voice in Beethoven's Ninth (a feeling that only the work with the smelting furnace can match!), I lived them with exuberance and intensity, hallmarks of the young ones. These years are also dedicated to the learning of French and to the deepest friendships.

Before my nineteenth birthday I enter the University of Bucharest to study Romance Languages and Literature. Sometimes, I sneak in the Faculty of Architecture next door to follow the Art History course. Several professors impress me by their erudition and generosity. It's also a privileged time for friendship and mind opening. Exceptionally, I have the opportunity to visit the great museums in Paris and Munich. The rest happens in the library, at the theatre or at the concert hall... Alternative exhibition and "off" theatre venues show up in Bucharest to capture the cultural effervescence which floods the post-communist transition. Many books are published, newly written works as well as those forbidden before. At last, authors who were silenced can be read. And they are so many! But this authenticity and depth last only a few years: the difficulties of the transition, the political dilettantism, the return of the "old guys" in command, along with the draconian efforts to integrate the EU strike head first the different sectors of the population. The middle class, who tries to live and grow with dignity, is blown away.

A turn in my life happens when I meet my future husband and leave to Brussels. Suddenly, everything tipped over: home, climate, mentality... Being a Romanian in the West nowadays is not a piece of cake, but I keep my head straight up and my heart open. Family and friends are afar, some of them will scatter also into the world, in the common destiny of Romanians today. Thanks to the permanent love and help of my husband, I can now follow my vocation: art. As soon as I arrived in Belgium, I begin to study drawing and ceramics techniques. My curiosity and

## Noisy Family 1

2014, stoneware, elements of domestic appliances, sound device  
h 95 cm, w 75 cm, d 50 cm, casting, assemblage, sound mix





All pictures: SONORES" (work in progress)

my thirst for knowledge being so vast, I explore everything. Thanks to diverse workshops and to the Belgian network of Art Academies allowing people to study and experiment in different locations, I work hard and enter in 2008, with great success, the Ceramics department in the ENSAV de la Cambre. The school, inspired by the Bauhaus, enjoys a good reputation, is set in a charming site and provides some very interesting courses (especially the life drawing one), but the Ceramics department is unfortunately old, lacks air and perspectives.

So, I decide to finish the Bachelor Degree and turn towards other horizons. It's during the last year in La Cambre that the SONORES project associating ceramics and sound is born, from my will to let others discover the infinite possibilities of the ceramics, as well as our outstanding perceptive potential: Listening with the ears, seeing with the inner eyes. The early ceramic objects are formally related to the household design (a tongue-in-cheek reference to the long history of ceramics functionality) but the result is far from industrial precision: the seams are visible, the

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firings primitive. This sets them in an ambiguous zone: between the mechanical and the organic, bound to disappear. Some are indeed very fragile and keep the wear traces due to their handling in front of the microphone. Undoubtedly, ceramics has a "voice"! Yet these objects are not musical instruments – they are useless – and as an artist I do not call myself a composer, even though in my sound creations there is always a development, an opening and a closure. Whether I work with clay or

edit sound, the same gestures are used: gathering, cutting, juxtaposing, overlapping ... The size of the objects is directly related to the body (hands, mouth...) and during the recording, I use my body to make them sound.

The first installation presented at the end of my studies is supposed to be acousmatic, but the teachers reject the idea because they MUST SEE the objects. Therefore, I isolate the exhibition space dedicated to the auditory experience, where the loudspeakers are, by erecting walls and displaying the objects separately. The sense of circulation is from the sound to the objects to let the listener's



Intrusion, 2013, porcelain, nylon strings, variable dimensions, casting, body imprint



top and below - There Is No White Noise, Only Colourful Sound (detail), 2014





**There Is No White Noise, Only Colourful Sound**, detail, 2014, porcelain, stoneware, sound device, h 160 cm, w 150 cm, d 50 cm, duration : 6'47", various techniques, sound mix, photos – Ana Maria Asan

imagination run free. I realize that sound has the same triggering role as the Proust's madeleine.

All the installations of the SONORES project "talk" to us about what we are: MEMORY.

During my art studies, I also experiment with the transfer of images onto ceramics, which led me to complete a Master in Silk Screening at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles. In 2012, I set up my independent studio and initiate a workshop, Ceramic & Sound Lab, aimed primarily at people with disabilities, but also open to those who wish to discover ceramics outside the path most travelled. 2013 and 2014 are dedicated to the first solo exhibitions in Brussels and Paris, and to international events. The SONORES installations and other artworks are also selected in contemporary art events in Europe (Spain, Austria, Slovenia, The Netherlands, Italy) and, since 2015, in Asia (South Korea, Taiwan, China). The 2015 Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale awards my work with an Honourable Mention and in 2016, the installation "There Is No White Noise, Only Colourful Sound" receives the ICMEA Gold FuLe Prize in China awarded by the editors of ceramics magazines, and enters the museum's collection. With the aim to meet a wide audience not always used to pass the threshold of museums or galleries, I install also in situ in alternative spaces.

Visual and sound artist, **Ana Maria Asan** invites us to reflect on what we are: MEMORY. Her work encompasses different mediums and constantly brings the viewer towards a poetic zone, introspection and wonder. It does not matter whether she has to mix sound, throw a lump of clay or cast glass. Taking risks is a way of life for her.

She studied Literature and Linguistics at the Bucharest University, her home town, and obtained a Bachelor in ENSAV de la Cambre and a Master in Visual Arts (2012) at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, where she lives and works. Her creations include objects, sculptures and installations, all at a crossroads of artistic disciplines. With the objective of meeting a large audience, she exhibits her work in prestigious locations dedicated to contemporary art and in alternative places as well. For the last five years, she has mainly developed the SONORES project, which associates ceramics and sound. After Belgium, Spain, Austria, France, The Netherlands, Slovenia, Italy, South Korea and Taiwan, she presents her work in China. In 2016, The International Ceramics Magazines Editors Association awarded "There Is No White Noise, Only Colourful Sound" the Gold FuLe Prize in Fuping, China.

#### STATEMENT

As a visual and sound artist, the main part of my work associates ceramics and sound. Clay being one of my materials of choice, I try to use it, discover it and reveal it to others through less common aspects. For me, ceramics has always this sonorous dimension, which means space and time.

Intrusion; Noisy Family 1; There Is No White Noise, Only Colourful Sound, ... belong to this artistic approach and to an ensemble of objects and installations I have called SONORES. They highlight my interest on the sound possibilities of the fired clays and the shapes I often borrow to design (a tongue-in-cheek reference to the long history of ceramic functionality and its evolution). Sometimes the ceramic objects are enhanced by mundane elements of everyday electric domestic appliances, but completely emptied of their functionality. From the imaginary sound to the actual experience, SONORES push the viewer to become an attentive listener and bring him towards a deeper, poetic zone of perception. Not only Proust's Madeleine can make us travel in the past, sound too. My creation is about what we are: MEMORY.

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