

SONORES 10 & More

by Ana Maria Asan

The first objects belonging to the SONORES project (a metonymy for Céramiques sonores) were born in 2010-2011, in a key moment of my life, in close connexion with what I really am as an artist and a person. This year and the next one, I will celebrate the first decade of the project's existence, a living, uninterrupted exploration of ceramics and its sonorous dimension that places my work in the field of contemporary art, both as sound art (experimental acoustic music) and contemporary ceramics (installation and sculpture).

Intrusion (detail), 2013, Le Studiolo, Paris, 2014, porcelain, body imprint





Untitled, 2011, Galerie Vertige, Brussels, 2013 (partial view), porcelain stoneware, strings, plexiglas, sound device, variable dimensions

As my work always met appreciation and enthusiasm abroad, it would be great to collaborate in the near future also with Belgian and Romanian art partners in relation with this ten year anniversary (regarding Ceramic Art Andenne 2021, I am optimistically working on it). Anyway, meeting a new audience anywhere in the world remains essential to me.

To begin with, I would like to express my warmest thoughts to those who vibrated in unison with me, supported partially the project or made it visible. Before starting it, the Belgian ceramist Jean-Claude Legrand generously taught me for several years almost everything I know about clay. With the intention of being sincere and bringing more to the reader than a display of trophies, I will recall more or less happy aspects of this journey. My determination to become an artist lead by a profound vocation could encourage the very young ceramicists to follow their own way in this changing world. Yes, with a personal art approach, a lot of work and faith it is possible!

Why a journey?

Defining myself as an explorer, somebody who needs to investigate new paths, to move, to breathe fresh air, to fly, to be free, I created SONORES in my own image. The deep and intuitive sonorous exploration of the ceramics associated with the investigation of different clays and shapes constituted the common thread all these years. Partially borrowed from design, partially from nature – but always streamlined – these shapes show off a relationship between the objects and the body: arms, mouth, hands... However, they are not conceived as musical instruments (I am the one who decides to handle them in front of the microphone or, rarely, it is the audience, in the case of specific installations). Through their sensuality, my ceramics lead to another dimension, introspection, even contemplation. Their sonorous potential reminds us of the human soul. Whether you take it into account or not, it exists anyway. Inextricably linked to life, art bears witness to who the artist is: every recording session I make stands in time as a unique radiography of a precise moment. In the creative process, I also determine the sound objects I want for composing, from this growing ceramics sound library. The result has nothing to do with randomness, so dear to the language of art nowadays! It is at the same time constructed and driven by inspiration. *Untitled*, 2011 and *There Is No White Noise Only Colourful Sound*, 2015, that became in time a se-



There Is No White Noise, Only Colourful Sound, 2015 (installation) Porcelain, stoneware, strings, sound device, h 160 cm, w 150 cm, d 50 cm

ries, belong to this approach. *Untitled*, 2013, investigates the relationship between ceramics as amplifying objects and Art versus Design. *Noisy Family 1*, 2014 and *Noisy Family 2*, 2020 combine ceramic sounds with amplified sound resulting from the handlings of other matters (in these two installations the ceramic objects are enhanced by mundane elements of everyday electric domestic appliances, but completely emptied of their functionality). They are Dada objects, an allusion to the absurdity of the items invading our living space more every day. If the visual result can make one smile, the surprise comes through the headphones because the sound composition reveals the unexpected richness of the sounds bringing us towards a deeper, poetic zone. The relationship between what is seen and what is heard holds a central place in my art because it operates in a subtle and unique way for every person. This is one of the main reasons for the absence of my sound compositions on the Web. Last but not least, the path taken by *Resonances*, 2018 – a special site specific installation I created for the Nicolas Gate of the Daugavpils Fortress in Latvia – is again a different one: the exploration of the relationship between ceramic objects and architecture, especially its acoustics, as well as the capture of the audience's natural desire to touch, to interact with the art objects, even with the risk of damaging them.

Noisy Family 1, 2014, CODA Museum Apeldoorn, The Netherlands 2015 (installation view), Stoneware, elements of domestic appliances sound device, H. 95 cm, W.75. cm, D. 50 cm





There Is No White Noise, Only Colourful Sound, 2015, Dome Museum, FLICAM, China, 2016 (installation), porcelain, stoneware, strings, sound device, h 160 cm, w 150 cm, d 50 cm

In less than 10 years, the project became a complex edifice with different levels intrinsically linked. We all know that the different cultures in the world created ceramic musical instruments. Some students and, surprisingly, some ceramic artists, who discovered the SONORES project's power and potential through art catalogues or in international events, tried to walk in my footsteps these last years, but they never went beyond the making or playing of crafted clay musical instruments. As mentioned before, the SONORES objects are not musical instruments. They are useless! Looking backwards, I congratulate myself for having "disobeyed" my ceramic teachers in La Cambre who wanted to make me tritely perform in front of the audience (anyway, more concerned by their own image and by spreading anachronistically a certain ideology, they never supported my art projects). In that corrosive atmosphere, none of my colleagues (in 2011, we were only three left!) stayed in the department to pursue a master's degree. So I decided to follow my intuition by conceiving a SONORES site-specific installation for the graduation exhibition, then quit the school for better horizon and study printed image at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels. For presenting *Untitled 2011*, I separated in two well-marked areas the exhibition space in order to give the audience the possibility to dedicate itself entirely first to the listening experience

(the spatialized acousmatic composition was broadcast through an 8 loudspeaker installation). Only after leaving this space could people discover the ceramic objects.

I mentioned the journey also because the whole project was conceived as a work in progress, opened to new possibilities, in a perpetual process of questioning myself and the audience. And in terms of possibilities, clay and sound are champions! From the variety of media I use, they are my favourite ones: the clay for its sensuality and its capacity to produce sound once fired, the sound for its profoundly emotional and prodigiously expressive nature. It takes time to listen to sound, you can't put it on a pedestal or hang it on a wall, and it costs money to broadcast

it, so I realise what a demanding medium I use, but from my first exhibition, the result was fantastic: people started to talk spontaneously to me about their memories, their feelings, their imagination while listening to the SONORES compositions. Some of them even came back to see and listen again and again... This consolidated my conviction that sound had the same triggering role as Marcel Proust's Madeleine. Based on this wide experience, my first short film and the lectures about ceramics and sound, perception and memory were born. SONORES project is an invitation to discover our rich perceptive potential and opens new possibilities for contemporary ceramics.

Visual and sound artist **Ana Maria Asan** counts over twenty participations in prestigious international art events in numerous European countries and Asia and eleven solo exhibitions, performances, happenings in Europe. She teaches art and ceramics in her studio and lectures on her SONORES project: *Ceramics and Sound, Perception and Memory*.

She was awarded a Honourable Mention at GICB 2015 South Korea, the 2016 ICMEA Gold FuLe Prize in Fuping, China, The Award of Excellence at Zagreb Ex-Tempore 2018 and a Honourable Mention in 2019, at the International Ceramics Biennale of Aveiro. On

the occasion of the Taiwan Ceramics Biennale 2016 she met curator R. Giovannini at Yingge Ceramics Museum and joined in Faenza his travelling exhibition *Espresso and Cappuccino Cups*. She is an invited artist in residency at The FuLe International Ceramic Art Museums and the Daugavpils Mark Rothko Art Centre. Under the title *Memories from the Future: Exploring the Fortress as a Woman*, the artist conceived two semi-permanent site-specific installations for the Daugavpils Fortress (Latvia). In 2017, she wrote and directed her first short film *What You See Is Not What You See, But What You Are*. In recent years, several of Asan's artworks entered private and art museums' collections in Europe, Asia and Canada.

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDmt_sqVR8Y