

ONOMATOPEIA

EPISODE: Snapping Out of my Mind

[TAPE] [Mariana walks into the Bathhouse.](#)

MARIANA CASTRO: I heard a lot about this place called the Bathhouse when I lived in Williamsburg. It's a boutique spa on the corner of North 10th street and Bedford Avenue. I'd pass by it almost every day. But I never went in. The last time I went to a bathhouse was eight years ago...

[TAPE] [Music starts and lowers behind narration.](#)

MC: It was 2013, and I was living in London. My boyfriend at the time had come to stay with me for a couple months. We decided to take a trip to Austria to visit his aunt.

While we were there, she took us to this beautiful bathhouse. It overlooked the mountains. We had such a great time that I wonder, all these years later, what's stopping me from going to places like this again.

At first I thought it was the memories of my relationship.

But really, deep down, that doesn't add up. I had gotten over him years ago... Turns out it's something else entirely.

Theme music

I'm Mariana Castro, and this is Onomatopoeia, a podcast about the people and places of NYC. In this episode, snapping out of my mind.

Theme music fades out

[TAPE] [MARIANA: It is my first time. Thank you!](#)

MC: I check in and make my way towards the bathroom to change. Pants off, swimsuit on. Suddenly, I feel the urge to grab a towel to cover myself before making my way down to the baths.

I'm uncomfortable. .
Insecure.

I've always been shy about showing off my body, particularly in places like the beach or pools.

I've also always been very aware – maybe too aware – of people around me and what they were thinking. It was like whenever I was in those places, the voice in my head would take over, making me compare myself to other people, or saying I

wasn't good enough.

This might be normal when you're a teenager. But for me, it kind of never went away.

MC:

I've learned to ignore the voice by distracting myself.

A book.

My phone.

A friend

But this time, I have nothing. I'm alone and I'm not allowed to take anything into the baths with me.

So I try to tame my mind.

[TAPE] Music begins. Then volume lowers behind narration.

MC:

The towel remains tightly wrapped around my waist,

That's all it could cover. My heart is racing. My palms, sweaty.

As I make my way downstairs, the first thing I notice is the number of people. I count 22.

Too many. Most look older than me. A handful look my age. All of them seem to be there with someone else, either couples or friend groups... and me... Alone.... Great.

The space is relatively small. The lights are dim. No windows, just exposed brick and the reflection of the water. There are three doors on the brick wall. The music gives the place a cool, meditative vibe. Perfect if you want to relax, if only I could shut down my mind for just five seconds.

There are three pools in the middle of the space. The left one is the biggest, it's full. The right one is the size of a jacuzzi. And that's full too. So I head to the middle pool. It's empty. I stand there thinking, "People are staring, Mariana, just relax."

I try to act blasé. I take off my towel and make my way inside, until...

The water is COLD. No. I mean. FREEZING. Like the ice baths athletes take to relax their muscles. Except I'm not trying to do that.

I just stand there, trying not to freak out so people won't notice me. My arms wrap around my waist. I have to get out - my calves feel as though they might turn to ice and literally break away from my body.

I'm so focused on what other people are thinking, even now? I try to snap out of it.

Thankfully three girls come in shortly after me. They make a much bigger scene once they feel the cold. When they walk out, I follow. I rush to the pool next to it. The water is so warm it makes my feet hurt.

But it's better than the cold.

I sit on a corner of the pool.

Two men are in front of me, having a conversation in Italian. A couple is next to them. They move easily between the cold and hot pools.

Incredible.

I notice that people were minding their own business – as they should be. No one really cares if you scream in the cold water pool.

They don't care about what you're wearing. Or how your body looks. How my body looks.

I close my eyes, let myself feel the warm jet of water behind my back.

Allow my senses to speak louder than that little voice in my head.

If only for a moment.

Theme music

This episode of Onomatopoeia- was created by me, Mariana Castro. Onomatopoeia is a production of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. Joanne Faryon is our executive producer and professor. Original theme music by Lee Feldman. Other music by Blue Dot Sessions. Our graphic was created by Sunni Bean. Special thanks to Columbia Digital Librarian Michell Wilson.

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