

Grayson Perry's major new work *Covid Bell* is to be unveiled at the Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition (Tuesday 21 June to Sunday 21 August, 2022).

Made during the pandemic, Grayson Perry's elaborately decorated bronze bell marks this unprecedented period whilst celebrating London's great bells and their long history in marking time, mourning death and celebrating life. Members of the public visiting the Summer Exhibition will be invited to ring the *Covid Bell*.

Working with Factum Arte, Grayson Perry made the bell to help shed light on the dying art of bell casting in the UK and in particular to support the campaign to reinstate the Whitechapel Bell Foundry which closed in 2017. The Whitechapel Bell Foundry had an illustrious history of bell casting, going back almost 500 years, and famously cast Big Ben and the Liberty Bell among many other historic bells around the world.

Grayson said: "I've always wanted to make a bell; it is one of the categories of objects that are traditional and potent. This bell I conceived as a memorial to the dead of the pandemic, it is covered in what looks like an aerial view of a multicultural cemetery. It also features a doctor and a patient. It could also be rung as a celebration that we have survived."

Grayson Perry, *Covid Bell*, 2022, was fabricated by Factum Arte in Spain, cast by Pangolin Foundry, Gloucestershire and tuned by Nigel Taylor working with Nicholson Engineering in Dorset. The *Covid Bell* weighs almost 400kgs and was made by Grayson Perry with the help of Nigel Taylor to support the newly formed London Bell Foundry. Nigel Taylor is a master bell maker who worked at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry for 40 years.

Factum Foundation worked with Re-Form and other heritage organisations to prove the viability of a new approach to bell making which sought to continue and preserve historical bell making skills while bringing new technologies, and commissioning world-renowned artists to make editions of bells. Grayson Perry's first commission marks the start of the revival of bell making in the UK. One year after the government's decision to turn the Whitechapel Bell Foundry into a boutique hotel and despite huge protest, locally and nationally, the site on Whitechapel Road remains empty and looks increasingly run down. Since the Public Inquiry was held in October 2020, the London Bell Foundry has been formed, the first bell by Grayson Perry has been finished, the second and third commissions are about to be announced and a film about traditional bell casting has been commissioned with Nigel Taylor, the former Tower Bell Manager at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry.

About the Summer Exhibition

The Summer Exhibition is the world's largest open submission contemporary art show which has taken place at the Royal Academy of Arts every year without interruption since 1769.

The Summer Exhibition 2022 will run from Tuesday 21 June – Sunday 21 August 2022.

Tickets for the Summer Exhibition can be booked [here](#).

About Factum Arte

Factum Arte was founded in 2001 in Madrid and has a reputation for its innovative approach to fabrication merging digital technology and craft skills. Factum Arte consists of a team of artists, technicians and conservators dedicated to digital mediation. The main focus is on the production of works for contemporary artists and to the application of new technologies to the creation of objectively accurate facsimiles. The workshop was conceived as an interdisciplinary studio where diverse skill sets collide on a daily basis. Artists such as Grayson Perry, Conrad Shawcross, Marina Abramović, Anish Kapoor, El Anatsui and many others have taken advantage of Factum Arte's craftsmanship and bespoke technology to create new works of art.

Images

Publicity images can be requested from the RA Press Office: press.office@royalacademy.org.uk

Summer Exhibition Press View

For journalists wishing to feature the Summer Exhibition, the press view will be held on Tuesday 14 June, 10am -1pm. Please contact press.office@royalacademy.org.uk for further details.

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