

THE UNIVERSITY BELL: A RESEARCH INTO TRADITIONAL METHODS OF BELL FOUNDING

Benjamin A. Sunderlin (Holly Streekstra), Department of Sculpture, IU Herron School of Art and Design, Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, Indiana 46202

Bell manufacturing companies no longer exist in the United States that utilize traditional craft procedures or are able to tune bells to standards based on 'true-harmonic' formula. Most bells in the United States used in the many forms of Campanology, or bell ringing, are imported from European foundries. These European bells are made using sensibilities that have existed for over 800 years. The few remaining foundries, John Taylor and Co. in England, Paccard of France, Petit Fritsen and The Royal Eijsbouts Bell Foundry located in The Netherlands, all provided the opportunity to conduct intensive study into the craft of bell making. By incorporating these craft traditions into a contemporary fine art practice, viewers and listeners are able to access an otherwise obsolete aspect of the history of our material culture.

Following closely in the theory and manufacturing procedures of these European founders, a bell of 110 lbs. titled *The University Bell* was cast at the Herron School of Art and Design's foundry. The metal for the project was sourced from a redundant bell of St. Michael's Parish Church Cornhill, London that was originally made in 1728 by Thomas Lester, one of the original founders of our 1752 Liberty Bell.

The University Bell is currently in the earliest stages of being tuned in Mooresville, Indiana for a final nominal tone of C#3 at A=440Hz. Assistance from Smith's Bell and Clock Service Inc., Bell Expert Richard Strauss, and John Taylor and Co. are contributing to the effort. *The University Bell* will later be installed in a series of sight specific performances.

The successful cast of *The University Bell* and the continuing efforts to oversee the professional creation of tuned bells in this country marks the return of a historic trade whose product has long resounded the democratic overtones of liberty and freedom.

Funding provided by the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP).